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**The emergence of youth protest music and arts as alternative media in Zimbabwe: A
Gramscian analysis.**

**Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Arts in Journalism and Media Studies**

RHODES UNIVERSITY

By

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December 2016

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank Samm Farai Monro (Comrade Fatso) and Tongai Leslie Makawa (Outspoken), the subjects of this study, for being so generous with their time.

I am grateful to my supervisor, Professor Larry Strelitz, for his guidance, mentorship and patience with a middle-aged student.

I remain eternally grateful to Amina and Sinosi Kabwato.

Abstract

The primary goal of the research is to examine the reasons for the emergence of - hip-hop-based youth protest music and satirical video comedy in Zimbabwe in a context where democratic and media practice has been restricted. The study examines the strategies and platforms that the young urban-based, musicians and cultural activists employ as they contest the meta-narrative of political nationalists who control the public mass media. The study recognises culture as a site of struggle and seeks to tease out the meaning of specific art forms ('conscious' hip-hop music and faux-news satire) in this very specific period of Zimbabwe's history. The study proposes that the rise of these new forms of hip-hop based protest music, poetry and satirical comedy indicate how through the production and circulation of popular culture, ordinary Africans are able to debate pertinent issues that are marginalised by the official media channels. The study thus sees these artists as organic intellectuals who use alternative media to engage with different publics as they seek to counter hegemonic discourses.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

This study is an investigation into the origins of a particular form of protest arts driven by young artists and largely based on hip-hop and reggae music formats and comedy. I seek to link the emergence of protest music and the nature of the content of the songs and satire to the narrowing of media and democratic spaces in Zimbabwe, especially from year 2000 onward. Recognising that “creating restrictions on democratic space everywhere naturally leads to a search for alternative spaces for citizen engagement” (Dumisani Moyo 2012: 179) this study uses the example of Magamba Network – a leading Harare-based organization of arts activists – to illustrate the emergence of counter-hegemonic alternative media and arts opposed to the narratives of the regime of the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF). The poet-musician-cum-comedians, Samm Farai Monro, who uses the moniker Comrade Fatso, and Tongai Leslie Makawa, who calls himself Outspoken, describe their network thus:

Magamba is Zimbabwe’s leading urban culture organisation and works on the cutting edge of culture, activism and new media. Magamba has been pioneering in its involvement in the poetry, hip-hop and comedy movements in Zimbabwe. Magamba’s vision is a free and just Zimbabwe where arts and culture are used as a tool for positive social change...Magamba means ‘Heroes’ or ‘Freedom Fighters’, signifying the youth of today reclaiming the legacy of the struggle. (<http://www.magambanetwork.com/>)

1.1 General background of the study: a personal note

My interest in the rise of protest arts in Zimbabwe, especially poetry and music, comes from my background in literature. I studied Zimbabwean, African and world literature (covering English, Russian and Caribbean literatures) at the University of Zimbabwe in the late 1980s and despite my career trajectory into film and media, I have remained engaged with the Zimbabwean literary arts. In 2007, I organized a commemorative event for Zimbabwean writer, Dambudzo Marechera (1952-1987) and asked one of the poets that forms part of this study to perform at the function. By then these young artists had started ‘open mic’ poetry sessions at Harare’s Book Café under the rubric ‘House of Hunger’ – a reference to Marechera’s 1978 novella set in the ‘hunger’ of Rhodesia.

More broadly, though, I was part of a generation that witnessed the birth pangs of Zimbabwe’s independence and had a lot of hope invested in the country. However, by the time I

finished university in 1990 the euphoria of independence had vanished and had been replaced by disillusion with the corruption and crass materialism, much of it exposed in Zimbabwean newspapers. The state had become even more repressive than before and the economy was in a tailspin. It seemed as if the warnings in the post-independence literature of Ghanaian Ayi Kwei Armah (*The Beautiful One Are Not Yet Born*) and Kenyan Ngugi Wa' Thiongo (*A Grain of Wheat*) were becoming the reality of my Zimbabwean existence. I wrote extensively about this unravelling of our national dream in my column *Out of South Africa* which appeared in Zimbabwe's weekly newspaper, *Financial Gazette*, from 2001 to 2002.

My initial thesis proposal in 2009 was to look at the Zimbabwean protest poetry 'movement' as a whole and attempt to identify the factors that had led to the birth of this urban-based phenomenon. Together with my sister, Ethel Kabwato - a published writer and poet - I had written an essay on the new Zimbabwean poetry in a magazine published by the Swiss cultural agency, Pro Helvetia. Due to my own cultural and civic initiatives in Zimbabwe, including a photography project called Zimbabwe in Pictures, I was well connected in the arts circles of Harare. I had ready access to the country's premier arts event, the Harare International Festival of the Arts (HIFA), which further enabled me to attend and document various cultural events. In discussions with my supervisor I was able to narrow down the focus of my thesis to the Magamba Network as a grouping of cultural workers responding to the closure of media and democratic space by using their music, poetry and other artistic means to contest the dominant nationalist and anti-imperialist discourse of the Zimbabwe government. The two artists, Samm Farai Monro aka Comrade Fatso and Tongai Leslie Makawa aka Outspoken were readily available to me in person and via e-mail. As this is a qualitative study, the issue of the representatives of this group of cultural workers was less important in how my study would enable me to reflect on theories of cultural production during periods of repression (Bryman 2001: 324).

The study is based on materials comprising three transcripts of individual and group interviews with Farai Samm Monro (Comrade Fatso) and Tongai Leslie Makawa (Outspoken); notes from my viewing of Zambezi News Season 1 Episode 2 and Season 2 Episode 1; transcripts of lyrics of Comrade Fatso's songs, *House of Hunger*, *Identity*, *Bread and Roses* and *Ma-Streets*; transcripts of lyrics of Outspoken's songs, *Freedom Train*, *The Slave Master's Whip*, *Rise – Spirit of Nehanda* and *Hip-hop Is In Me*; observational notes from 2009 live music

concert; and brochure of 2013 Shoko Festival. In selecting these materials I felt they most represented the counter-hegemonic work of Magamba Network.

1.2 Objectives of the study

The primary goal of this study is to examine the reasons for the emergence of youth protest arts that create a hybridised music incorporating hip-hop and Afro-beats and also uses comedy in a context where the media and democratic spaces are restricted. The study examines the strategies and platforms that the young urban-based cultural activists employ as they contest ‘patriotic history’ which authoritarian nationalists disseminate via the public mass media (television, radio and newspapers) and party and government ceremonies. Taking a cue from Antonio Gramsci (cited in Bennett 1981) that every revolution is preceded by an “intense labour of criticism” this study, therefore, recognises culture as a site of struggle and seeks to tease out the meaning of specific art forms (hip hop protest music and comedy) in a very specific period in which the media space has been constrained. In order for one meaning to be regularly produced, it has to win credibility and legitimacy for itself and this involves “marginalising, down-grading or delegitimising alternative constructions” (Hall 1982: 67).

As the mass media played a key role in the dissemination of government propaganda and the marginalization and emasculation of dissenting voices, the ZANU-PF government had to ensure that the media environment was carefully controlled. As a result the mass media in Zimbabwe operate in a highly restrictive environment in spite of what Moyo terms ‘cosmetic changes’ to the media regulatory laws and policies (2012: 177). Laws such as the Public Order and Safety Act (POSA), the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA), the Official Secrets Act and the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Services Act are regularly used to circumscribe private media (MISA 2011: 170). For example, journalists cannot practice without official accreditation from the Zimbabwe Media Commission (MISA: 172).

1.3 Significance of the study

It is important to see the rise of this new form of hip-hop based protest music as an indication of how in the African context, popular culture and media have been an essential means through which ordinary people have sought to engage, debate and contest the state (Willems 2011: 48). Through various productions of forms of popular culture, ordinary Africans bring up matters of concern and songs, jokes and drama are used as crucial channels of communication for people

who are not granted access to official, formal media channels (Willems 2011: 49-50). Moyo synthesizes a helpful definition of ‘alternative media’ that corroborates the above observations:

...these *media* are alternative not simply because they *non-mainstream*, but because they position themselves in opposition to the mainstream, challenging both structural media concentration and the dominant discourse (content) it produces. By nature, alternative media are ‘radical’ in the sense that they contest established power with the aim of fostering wider social emancipation (Couldry & Curran 2003). (2007: 87)

With the narrowing of the media and democratic spaces, a new form of Zimbabwean protest music based on ‘conscious’ hip-hop has emerged to become part of the ‘subaltern publics’. Fraser uses this term to refer to members of subordinated social groups who “invent and circulate counter-discourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests and needs” (1992: 13). The significance here is that a youth culture became a sophisticated and progressive oppositional culture. Williams explains that “the facts of alternative and oppositional forms of social life and culture, in relation to the effective and dominant culture, have to then to be recognized as subject to historical variation, and as having sources which are very significant as a fact about the dominant culture itself” (1980: 40).

Although studies have been done on Zimbabwean music, the focus has principally been on the major musicians such as Thomas Mapfumo, Oliver Mtukudzi and Leonard Dembo (Zindi 1985, Kwaramba 1997, Turino 2000, Vambe 2000) and very rarely on youth music and subcultures. This is so even though “as Zimbabwe’s economy underwent a recession in the late 1990s, protest music became more daring and pronounced... more musicians began to record songs that were critical of the ZANU-PF government” (Chitando 2002: 90).

Through in-depth interviews this study probes the personal ideologies of the artists, the appropriation of an African-American musical form (hip-hop) and the indigenisation of same via the use of ‘Shonglish’ (Shona-English mix) and fusion with Afro-beats. It also examines the parody of Zimbabwe Television (Zambezi News) and its messages that seek to counter the ‘Third Chimurenga’. For a discussion on the meaning and implications of ‘Third Chimurenga’ please see Chapter Two (Section 2.2).

Winston Mano (2011: 91) argues that musical texts authored during social upheavals and crises are often invested with meanings that offer an important avenue to mediate key political

topics that their public yearn for but cannot find in the mainstream media. For the young activists who are the subject of this study, social media tools have also become critical in allowing them to engage different publics in cyberspace. These publics can thus be constituted in multiple spaces through debate and contestation about matters of common concern in cyberspace, regardless of geographical boundaries and of national boundaries (Haupt 2012: 65).

This study is not about the success or failure of the Magamba Network in countering the hegemonic discourses of the ruling party in government in their dual roles of artists and activists. Rather, in line with qualitative research, it is about process: the birth and sustenance of ideas expressed via alternative media that seek to counter or challenge the narrativization of a nation's history and its future from a single point of view that is backed by the apparatus of 'public media', state, army and police. ZANU-PF has sought to claim itself as the sole legitimate voice of "nation-building" and "national purpose" (Saul and Sanders: 2005) and the Magamba Network co-founders have sought to chip away at this hegemony "using oral forms as a conscious strategy...for specific political and social purposes" (Brown 1998: 167). As Outspoken comments on his artistic intentions: "It is almost like wanting to ignite minds that can then free the enslaved populace - who might not be enslaved physically, but have that mentality of 'these are our freedom fighters, we owe them our lives'..."

1.4 Thesis outline

The thesis consists of six chapters. Chapter One covers a general background of the study and then presents the research objectives and the significance of the study. It also provides an outline of the thesis as a whole.

Chapter Two discusses the broader social, economic and political factors that shaped the media landscape especially from the year 2000 onward when ZANU-PF faced potential electoral defeat from a newly-formed opposition party. The chapter discusses the various draconian media laws that were introduced to stifle private media and the practice of journalism whilst ensuring the public mass media, specifically radio and television, were deployed to disseminate the ruling party's highly partisan messages. Furthermore, the chapter looks at the use of mobile and internet technologies as alternative spaces for citizens' debate and sharing of information.

Chapter Three is focused on theoretical frameworks that inform the study. The chapter probes the Habermasian concept of the Public Sphere and how hegemonic discourses are challenged by counter narratives. This is followed by Gramsci's theory of hegemony and

attendant reflections on ‘organic intellectuals’ and popular culture. The chapter then expands the discussion on popular culture and draws on Valentin Volosinov’s work on language as an “arena of struggle”. Using perspectives from Peter Dahlgren and Douglas Kellner, the chapter closes with a snapshot of how the internet is changing forms of civic or political engagement and references the social media practices of the Magamba Network.

Chapter Four starts with a discussion of the qualitative research methodology and its suitability for the study of the “insider perspective on social action” (Mouton 2001: 270). The chapter then discusses the research methods used: qualitative content analysis, in-depth semi-structured individual interviews and observation. The chapter illustrates each method with observations from the actual deployment of the methods.

Chapter Five analyses the findings of the study in relation to the research issues outlined in the first chapter and the literature discussed in Chapter Three. In presenting the results, the chapter frames these under four themes that arose from thematic coding my interview transcripts, the videos and songs produced by the Network, and notes from observation:

- i) Free expression and creative spaces
- ii) Hegemonic discourses - contesting narratives of patriotism and sovereignty
- iii) The politics of identity and critical appropriation of language, music and symbols at local and global levels
- iv) The role of organic intellectuals in the struggle for democracy and social justice

Chapter Six provides the conclusion to my study and provides some recommendations on possible paths for further research on the role of youth cultures and resistance and/or cooptation.

CHAPTER 2

LOCATING THE MAGAMBA NETWORK IN THE MEDIA LANDSCAPE OF ZIMBABWE

2.1 Introduction

In order to obtain a fuller appreciation of the birth of the Magamba Network and its evolution, it is necessary to examine briefly the dimensions of the so-called Zimbabwean crisis, that is, the political, economic and social developments in the country from the late 1990s through the first decade of the millennium. In particular, the rise of Magamba has to be located within the constrained and hostile media space that has obtained in Zimbabwe, particularly from the year 2000 when Zimbabwe's ruling party, ZANU-PF, was faced with an unprecedented political challenge in the form of organized civil society and a new popular urban-based party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). Opposition to state rule was communicated through a variety of different media forms.

Moyo writes:

...creating restrictions on democratic space everywhere naturally leads to a search for alternative spaces for citizen engagement... Oppositional forces, civic groups and individuals have sought to break out of these restricted spaces to offer counter-discourses to the official government-manufactured 'truth' through alternative media such as the internet, clandestine radio and mobile phones.
(2012: 179)

Similarly Willems observes that:

In a context in which Zimbabweans had restricted access to alternative views of the crisis due to the high costs and lack of availability of print media and alternative broadcasters, they began to express themselves through a range of popular and informal media. New technologies such as the Internet and mobile phones played an important role in enabling the spread of dissenting voices.
(2011: 55)

This chapter will analyse relevant sections of the 2013 Zimbabwe constitution as they pertain to freedom of the media. It will also look at three key laws that inhibit freedom of the media, namely, the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (2002), the Broadcasting Services Act (2001) and the Criminal Law and Codification and Reform Act (2004). As argued

above, in analyzing the key media laws that came into being from 2001 onwards, it is useful to examine the political and economic context that informed the introduction of draconian legislation. Such an overview will illustrate the motivations that influenced the government's stance and attitude towards the role of the mass media whilst also providing an understanding of the context in which the Magamba Network arose.

2.2 The context of the media laws and the implications for democratic participation

The context of the restriction of free expression from 2000 onward in Zimbabwe has been the contestation for political, economic and cultural ascendancy. The Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) has been in power since 1980 and in the over three decades of President Robert Mugabe's leadership, the country has witnessed mixed fortunes — an expansion of education and health in the period 1980 to 1990, and from 1998 onwards the collapse of the economy and the emergence of an increasingly repressive state (Raftopoulos 2009: 201-2).

As Sam Moyo et al observe:

By the late 1990s, there emerged crises for the political regime on both economic and political fronts. On the one hand, there arose an [Economic Structural Adjustment Programme]-related macro-economic crisis that resulted in a contraction of the economy and rampant inflation. On the other hand, a broad-based political opposition in the urban areas (trade unions, civics, the National Constitutional Assembly and the MDC) was questioning the hegemony of the ruling ZANU-PF party and its particular rendition of "the nation". In the face of the crises of the crises of profitability and legitimacy, the ruling party found itself "in a corner". (2008: 13)

James Muzondidya (2009: 188) states that gains made in the provision of social services were steadily eroded by the economic decline of the 1990s as a result of a series of droughts, drastic fall in exports, closure of industries, cuts in public spending and the retrenchment of workers. The implementation of the IMF/World Bank Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) in 1991 saw average economic growth decline from 4 per cent to 0.9 per cent and unemployment rose from 32.2 per cent in 1990 to 44 per cent in 1993 (Muzondidya: 188-189).

The first salvo in the political struggle between the MDC, civil society and ZANU-PF was fired in the Constitutional Referendum of February 2000 which witnessed the first official polling defeat of the ruling party since independence (Moyses 2009: 43).

Moyses elaborates:

An ironic consequence of that referendum was that it not only provided government with a useful tool to measure increasing public resentment to its rule, a timely warning of the drastic action it would need to take to retain power – it also allowed government to identify the most dangerous threats to its survival: a vibrant civil society which had just given birth to a massively popular political opposition – and an increasingly effective private media. (2009: 43-44)

Facing electoral defeat at the hands of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), ZANU-PF declared the ‘Third Chimurenga’. This new phase had several characteristics including a ‘return’ to a radicalism of transformation and anti-imperialist struggle; the ‘rediscovery’ of the land issue as the link between the First and Second Chimurengas (1896-7 uprisings and the 1970 war of liberation) and the new era; a dismissal of human rights and good governance as less critical than ‘decolonization’; the introduction of ‘Patriotic History’ as the fulcrum of party and government propaganda; and a dichotomy between ‘sell-outs’ and ‘patriots’ (see Chung 2006: 20; Tendi 2010: 1; Ndlovu-Gatsheni et al 2009: 963; Ranger 2004: 215).

Patriotic history was premised on four themes: land, race, a dichotomy between ‘sell-outs’ and ‘patriots’, and the rejection of Western interference based on what are perceived as ‘Western ideals’ such as human rights (Tendi 2010:1). The land issue was the primary theme for the Third Chimurenga as ZANU-PF could use this to link to the First and Second Chimurenga, that is, anti-colonial resistance struggles of the 1896-7 and the liberation war of the 1970s, respectively. While land was a crucial material resource in ZANU-PF’s struggle for power, histories and memories of the liberation war also proved an important resource to be mobilized for ZANU-PF’s political agenda (Ndlovu-Gatsheni et al, 2009: 963).

Ranger has written extensively on the characteristics of ‘patriotic history’ which he describes as an attempt to proclaim the continuity of the Zimbabwean revolutionary tradition (2004: 215). The target of this project is the youth as their parents and teachers are perceived to have forgotten or betrayed revolutionary values:

It repudiates academic historiography with its attempts to complicate and question. At the same time, it confronts Western ‘bogus universalism’ which it depicts as a denial of the concrete history of global oppression. (Ranger 2004: 215)

The array of platforms that ZANU-PF used to propagate the messages of the Third Chimurenga included television and state-controlled press, youth militia camps, new school history courses and textbooks, cultural performances and commemorations of events such as Independence Day, Heroes Day and Unity Day (see Ranger 2004: 215; Ndlovu-Gatsheni et al 2009: 945). Using a range of cultural activities, the ruling party sought to legitimize its continued rule in the face of the challenges posed by an increasingly popular MDC and the growing number of civil society organisations. Through the specific genre of the “music gala”, cultural nationalism came to attribute new meanings to concepts such as ‘independence’, ‘heroes’ and ‘unity’ in the changed political context of the 2000s (Ndlovu-Gatsheni et al, 2009: 945).

As Moyo points out, the mass media were “appropriated to narrativise and disseminate a highly selective discourse of the Zimbabwean nation which was deliberately calculated to interpellate the people of Zimbabwe as well as whip up pan-African sentiment across the continent in the fight against Western enemies seeking to overthrow the country’s hard-won independence” (2012: 177). Furthermore, Last Moyo notes that the restrictive media policies in Zimbabwe directly and indirectly created a media institution that traded in “polemic, sensationalism and propaganda” (2010: 112). He calls these the “defining discourse markers of the broader crisis” and usefully summarises how state-controlled media constructed nationhood in terms of binary oppositions (2010:120):

<i>Us</i>	<i>Them</i>
Heroes	Villains
Patriotic	Unpatriotic
Revolutionaries	Anti-revolutionaries, puppets
Nationalists	Traitors, sell-outs
The People, the State	Enemies of the People, Enemies of the State

Insiders to the myth of nationhood are thus described as ‘comrades’, ‘the people’, ‘revolutionaries’, ‘patriots’ and ‘peace-loving Zimbabweans’. In contrast, outsiders are vilified for their different political opinions through epithets such as ‘sell-outs’, ‘enemies of the state’, ‘detractors’, ‘puppets’ and ‘thieves’ (Moyo 2010: 120).

The mass media have been key in the dissemination of the ZANU-PF government propaganda and in marginalization and emasculation of dissenting voices, thus the media environment has been heavily circumscribed through legislation and policies.

2.3 The media regulatory environment

The Zimbabwe Constitution enacted in 2013 contains a number of important provisions that directly protect the media, including publishers, broadcasters, journalists, editors and producers. Importantly, it specifically enshrines the right of every person to freedom of the media, which includes “protection of the confidentiality of journalists’ sources of information” (Limpitlaw 2013: 608).

However, the new constitution is not in consonance with the laws that have been used extensively in the new millennium to muzzle media freedom, freedom of expression and the right of assembly. Laws such as the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA), Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act, Public Order and Security Act (POSA), Broadcasting Services Act (BSA), Official Secrets Act and Censorship and Entertainment Controls Act, are some of the laws whose provisions are ultra vires the Constitution (MISA 2014:1).

As Wallace Chuma correctly observes, to a large extent the Zimbabwean media environment still reflects what Ronning and Kupe (2000) characterize as the “contradictory dual legacy of democracy and authoritarianism” (2013: 11). This is manifested in the mainly liberalized print media, a state-dominated though partially liberalized broadcasting sector, and a legal and policy environment that poses significant impediments to media freedom (Chuma: 2013: 11).

A summary background to the history of the print media since Zimbabwe’s independence in 1980 does provide significant insights into how the ZANU PF government’s views on the role of the media have evolved due to political, economic and social pressures. In January 1981 the new independent government created the Zimbabwe Mass Media Trust (ZMMT) which was intended to serve as a vehicle for changing staff and editorial policy and to oversee the transition

in the management and operation of the public print media from white minority control to serving the interests of the broad section of Zimbabwean society (Ronning et al 2000: 158). The government emphasized that the press should be free and also responsible to the national interest and that it should be mass-oriented, nonpartisan and easily accessible nationally. The ZMMT was thus constituted as a nongovernmental, nonparty, not-for-profit-making trust, with a constitutionally prescribed nonpartisan board of trustees. It was to have administrative and financial autonomy and the government would not interfere in the running and management of its affairs (Ronning et al 2000: 159). It was through the ZMMT that government bought Zimpapers from the South African newspaper company, Argus. The ZMMT was supposed to simultaneously serve two interests, namely, the development agenda of the new government and also to demonstrate the commitment by government to the independence of the press (Ronning et al 2000:159).

However, as Ronning and Kupe (2000: 160) demonstrate, the ideal of a public press insulated from political interference proved untenable as the party's project of acquiring total hegemonic control over the political sphere, the state, and civil society with the explicit aim of introducing the one-party state unfolded in the 1980s. In this context, the ZMMT and its component media became increasingly submerged in political struggles for leadership in the state and civil society. The Trust's appearance as a neutral barrier between the state and the ruling party on the one hand and an independent public press and civil society on the other became increasingly hollow (Ronning et al 2000: 160) and in 2001, the state dissolved ZMMT, in effect removing that 'buffer' (Chuma 2013: 13). This resulted in the Department of Information and Publicity in the President's Office assuming direct control of editorial processes and decisions at Zimpapers (Chuma 2013: 13).

The draconian media and security laws passed after 2000 not only created an environment in which practice of journalism became increasingly risky, but also resulted in the closure of one of the country's biggest newspapers, *The Daily News*, which had dozens of journalists in its employ (Chuma 2013: 28). Given the centrality of the contentious laws in the closing down of the media and democratic space in Zimbabwe it is important to detail the aspects of these key laws (AIPPA, the CODE and the BSA) and their effects.

2.3.1 Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA)

The Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 2002 (AIPPA) (Chapter 10:27) is one of the most notorious pieces of legislation to emanate from the Zimbabwean Government and is seen as symptomatic of the country's descent into undemocratic practices (Limpitlaw 2013: 632). Despite its name, AIPPA contains numerous sections that do nothing to secure access to information or protect privacy. Many of its other provisions have had severe implications for freedom of the press, particularly of the print media.

The most repressive sections of AIPPA relate to the registration of the media and the registration of journalists. Section 65 of AIPPA restricts ownership of 'mass media', which is defined in section 2 as including newspapers, magazines, or broadcasting services that are intended to be read, seen or heard by an unlimited number of people. Sections 65(1) and (2) make it clear that only individuals who are Zimbabwean citizens or permanent residents, or corporate entities which are controlled by Zimbabwean citizens or permanent residents, may hold share in a mass media service – that is, a newspaper, magazine or broadcasting service (Limpitlaw 2013: 632). Exemptions from this local ownership requirement can only be granted at the sole discretion of the minister of information.

Section 66 provides that mass media owner may carry on the activities of a mass service only after registering and receiving a certificate of registration in terms of AIPPA. Certificates of registration issued by the Zimbabwe Media Commission are valid for a period of five years and maybe renewed upon application.

Section 72 provides that a person who operates a mass media service without a valid registration certificate is guilty of an offence and is liable, upon conviction, to a fine, imprisonment for a period not exceeding 18 months, or both. Furthermore, all products, equipment or apparatus used in the production of a mass media service may be forfeited to the state (Limpitlaw 2013: 632).

Section 78 (4) of AIPPA provides that no mass media service shall employ any journalist on a full-time basis unless such a journalist is accredited with the Zimbabwe Media Commission (Limpitlaw 2013: 633).

According to the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA), the enactment in March 2002 of AIPPA sounded the death-knell for a vibrant, free and diverse media in Zimbabwe (2010: 2). Through selective application and enforcement of this repressive law, hundreds of

media practitioners were refused registration, deregistered, harassed, persecuted, arrested, detained, maliciously prosecuted, and ultimately silenced (MISA 2010: 2).

The law was so repressive and the assault on the media so great, that it immediately resulted in self-censorship for self-preservation, ‘underground’ journalism, and the fleeing of journalists and other media practitioners from Zimbabwe in search of better and safer environments. Its effects were felt more vividly during periods leading up to elections and other key national events, where journalists were targeted for punishment even where they had complied with all the tenets of good and ethical journalism (MISA 2010: 2).

2.3.2 The Criminal Law Codification Act (Chapter 9:23)

One of the legislative tools that has in the past perpetuated the restrictions and limitations to the citizens right to freedom of expression and in particular severely restricted media, is the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act No. 23 of 2004 (the CODE). This law, upon coming into force on 2 June 2005, emerged as draconian piece of legislation that impinged on Zimbabweans’ basic liberties (MISA 2010:28). Section 31 of the CODE criminalises publishing or communicating statements prejudicial to the state with one of the elements of this offence being communication or publication of falsehoods. Section 33 of the CODE deals with the offence of “undermining the authority of or insulting the President”. It prohibits the making, publicly and intentionally, of any false statement about or concerning the President or Acting President, if the person knows or realizes that there is a real risk or possibility of engendering feelings of hostility towards or causing hatred, contempt or ridicule, whether in his official or personal capacity (MISA 2010: 28).

The chilling effect of the CODE was how it was used, not necessarily to successfully prosecute alleged offenders, but to threaten the populace into conformity. Those who have been arrested include ordinary citizens who posted remarks on Facebook that were deemed to have insulted President Mugabe, journalists and editors at private newspapers and a former editor of the state-controlled *The Sunday Mail* who was alleged to be behind a Facebook account with the pseudonym Baba Jukwa that supposedly leaked ZANUPF and government secrets (*NewsDay*, 20 June 2014, accessed 3 January 2015).

The state has continued to use the CODE although the statute was successfully challenged in the Constitutional Court in June 2014. The court declared that criminal defamation

was “not reasonably justifiable in a democratic society and is inconsistent with the freedom of expression guaranteed in the Constitution”

(<http://www.theindependent.co.zw/2014/06/13/concourt-decriminalises-defamation/>, accessed 8 January 2015). Ironically the most recent use of the CODE was when a former leader of the Zimbabwe War Veterans Association, Jabulani Sibanda, was arrested and detained by the police for having made a public statement that Robert Mugabe and his wife, Grace, were planning a “bedroom coup”, implying that the latter was being positioned for leadership of the country (*The Herald*, 29 November, 2014 <http://www.herald.co.zw/jabulani-sibanda-arrested/> - accessed 3 January 2015). Sibanda had fallen out with a faction of the ruling party that was aligned to Grace Mugabe.

2.4 The broadcasting regulatory environment

Since the promulgation of the Broadcasting Services Act (BSA) in 2001, the broadcasting sector in Zimbabwe has not developed in any meaningful way. This can largely be attributed to the repressive nature of the broadcasting laws, which are laden with cumbersome requirements for prospective broadcasting players, especially in the areas of licensing and ownership restrictions (MISA 2010: 13). In 2012 there was an “opening up” of the airwaves that saw two private commercial radio stations, Star FM and Zifm, licenced. The licencing was “controversial because one of the recipients of the licence is the state-owned Zimpapers which dominates the print sector, while the second recipient is a company whose owners are known to be ZANU-PF supporters or sympathisers” (Chuma 2013: 14). The licensing authority, the Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe (BAZ), is also politically aligned to ZANU-PF (Chuma 2013: 14).

It is important to note that Zimbabwe is one of the few countries in the world that have not licenced community radio. These developments contradict the African Charter on Broadcasting 2001 which is explicit on what it believes constitutes the ideal broadcasting environment:

The legal framework for broadcasting should include a clear statement of the principles underpinning broadcast regulation, including promoting respect for freedom of expression, diversity, and the free flow of information and ideas, as well as a three-tier system for broadcasting: public service, commercial and community. (accessed 1/2/2015
http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/files/5628/10343523830african_charter.pdf/african%2Bcharter.pdf)

To fully appreciate the constrained broadcasting it is necessary to examine the content of the relevant legislation, namely, the Broadcasting Services Act (BSA) of 2001 and two subsequent Broadcasting Services Amendment Acts of 2003 and 2007. The Broadcasting Services Act 2001 in its Section 3 establishes the Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe (BAZ) as the regulatory and licensing authority for the sector. According to the First Schedule of the Act, the Posts and Telecommunications Authority of Zimbabwe (POTRAZ) “shall manage and allocate the frequencies for all broadcasting systems or services in Zimbabwe” (Chiumbu et al 2009: 15). The BAZ has the responsibility to “plan and advise on the allocation and distribution of the available frequency spectrum” and “to receive, evaluate and consider application for the issue of any broadcasting licence or signal carrier licence” (Chiumbu et al 2009: 15). The Amendment Act 2003 gives the BAZ (and not the minister in charge of broadcasting, as was the case under the principal 2001 Act) the power to determine who is to be issued a licence and when, to set the terms and conditions applicable in each individual case and to decide on the amendment, suspension and cancellation of licences (Chiumbu et al 2009: 15).

The BAZ consists of twelve members (Section 5 of the Amendment Act) and nine of these are appointed by the President after consultation with the minister in charge of broadcasting and parliament’s Committee on Standing Rules and Orders (Chiumbu et al 2009: 56). The nomination and appointment process is not subject to any public involvement or input. In effect the President has an almost free hand to appoint a board of his or her choice, given that the Act only requires consultation with the minister and the parliamentary committee but not their consent (Chiumbu et al 2009: 56).

On 30 September 2009, Media, Information and Publicity Minister Webster Shamu (ZANU-PF) announced the appointment of a new BAZ Board to be chaired by Tafataona Mahoso, the head of the former Media and Information Commission who in 2003 had ordered the closure of independent newspapers, among them *The Daily News*. This appointment is seen as clear signal that ZANU-PF wants to block the entry of new players which it may regard as critical of the party (Chiumbu et al 2009: 56-57). According to Section 7 of the BSA, the Broadcasting Authority is in charge of licensing broadcasting services that include commercial, community, subscription satellite, subscription cable, narrowcasting, datacasting, roadcasting, railwaycasting and webcasting (Limpitlaw 2013: 642-3).

The regulatory mechanisms for broadcasting in Zimbabwe do not comply with major regional and international freedom of expression instruments (see Chiumbu et al 2009: 60; Limpitlaw 2013: 650). First and foremost, the regulatory environment is focused on prohibiting free expression rather than fostering it. This is clear from content prohibitions and from the extremely unusual and problematic registration requirements for media houses and journalists (Limpitlaw 2013: 650). Such prohibitions run counter to Clause 7 of the Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa states:

- 1) Any public authority that exercises powers in the areas of broadcast or telecommunications regulation should be independent and adequately protected against interference, particularly of a political or economic nature.
- 2) The appointments process for members of a regulatory body should be open and transparent, involve the participation of civil society, and shall not be controlled by any particular political party.
- 3) Any public authority that exercises power in the areas of broadcast or telecommunications should be formally accountable to the public through a multi-party body (cited in Chiumbu et al 2009: 60).

Against these international norms it is clear that the broadcasting regulatory environment in Zimbabwe is seriously deficient. Within this restricted context, the most influential media institution in the country is the state-controlled Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation. The activist organization Media Institute for Southern Africa (MISA) has recommended that amendment to the law should focus on ensuring that the airwaves are immediately freed (2010: 18).

The Broadcasting Services Act 2001 in Section 2 defines ‘public broadcaster’ as ‘the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation...or any other broadcasting entity established by law which is wholly owned or controlled by the State’ (Chiumbu et al 2009: 63). The Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (Commercialisation) Act of 2001 repealed the original Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation Act of 1973. Under its Section 3 the ZBC was transformed into two successor companies: a broadcasting company which took over the functions of broadcasting and was to be known as Zimbabwe Broadcasting Holdings (ZBH), and a signal carrier company to take over the functions of signal carriage, TransMedia. Just a year later the Broadcasting Services Amendment Act 2003 in the section dealing with definitions reintroduced the name

‘Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation’ for the ‘national broadcasting service formed as the successor to the former Corporation in terms of section 3 of the [Commercialisation Act]’.

According to the ZBC (Commercialisation Act), the state is the only shareholder in both companies and the board of governors is appointed by the minister of information and publicity in consultation with the President. There is no process of public nomination or any other form of public involvement in the selection of the board. To the contrary, political interference in the running of the affairs of the state broadcaster and the dismissal of top management have been frequent occurrences and in one period of 8 years the ZBC went through five chief executive officers (Chiumbu et al 2009: 64)

Given the absolute control of the broadcasting airwaves by the ZANU PF government the resulting content from radio and television has been overtly propagandistic especially since the declaration of the Third Chimurenga. As Moyo observes:

The Mugabe government did not only have the power to select which shreds and patches to weave into the nationalistic narrative; it also exercised control over the spaces and platforms where this narrative was told and retold. Cultural programmes on national television, such as *Nhaka Yedu* (Our Heritage), ‘National Ethos’ or ‘New Farmer’ became critical platforms for ‘narrating the nation’ from an exclusively ZANU-PF perspective. These programmes featured prominent ZANU-PF ideologues and sympathisers, and focused on issues of land, national history, culture and identity – which also happened to be ZANU-PF’s campaign themes in the national elections in 2002, 2005 and 2008. These themes ran across all programming formats and genres, and several slogans created around them. (2012: 189)

Tendi (2010: 14) identifies what he terms an “exclusive cabal of nationalistic intellectuals aligned with power” who included Tafataona Mahoso (ironically, also chair of the Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe), Claude Mararike, Vimbai Chivaura, Sheunesu Mpepereki, Godfrey Chikowore and Ibbo Mandaza as key in churning out Patriotic History via government-owned national newspapers, television and radio whilst acting as ‘analysts’ and ‘experts’.

It is important to note that the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation has long had an unofficial policy of ‘banning’ content including music and Mano quotes a ZBC official stating:

“We will promote everything that seeks to build the nation, but the national broadcaster will not give room to music that seeks to denigrate and undermine our national identity and aspirations.” (2007: 71)

The music of artists and cultural workers, Comrade Fatso and Outspoken, does not receive airplay on Zimbabwean public radio which the former refers to as ‘Dead BC’. As Comrade Fatso explains in an interview “state-controlled media don't report the struggle and the narrative that we are pushing but we do get support from private media as well as online media...”

Mano captures the *modus operandi* of the ZANU-PF regime in relation to censoring discontent:

The account of the journalistic functions of popular music would be incomplete without focusing on how, especially from 1997 to 2005, the Zimbabwean government responded to the growing power of “music as journalism”. It “banned” such music and restricted its play on national public service radio. Critical music by Mapfumo, Zhakata and Mtukudzi was excluded from the national airwaves. Official media attacked and under-mined the reputation of these musicians. (2007: 75)

2.5 Diasporic media

In addition to the locally-based news media, the Zimbabwe media environment also consists of diaspora-based media which report primarily on the events and processes in the country, and relies predominantly on Zimbabwe-based journalists some of whom also write for the local media (Chuma 2013: 14). Perhaps the most prominent among this section of the media are short-wave radio stations (whose critics refer to them as pirate radio stations) that include Voice of America Studio Seven (VOA), Voice of the People (VOP) and, until 2014, SW Radio Africa. In an environment characterized by state domination of the airwaves, the short -wave stations arguably provided alternative spaces for the articulation of voices other than the ‘official’ ones. At the same time they are often criticized, sometimes justifiably, for articulating a narrow ‘regime change’ agenda more with a view to propitiating their funders than to promoting democracy and active citizenship in Zimbabwe (Chuma 2013: 14). In addition to radio stations, there also several websites which also carry Zimbabwean news and these include NewZimbabwe.com and NehandaRadio.com.

It is important to note the ZANU PF government’s use of other repressive laws such as the Public Order and Security Act (POSA) which as Raftopoulos notes:

POSA was the most commonly cited Act in the arrest of citizens trying to hold meetings; it was used in a politically partisan way effectively to prohibit normal democratic activities; torture, assault and psychological harassment were systematically used by the police and other law enforcement agents while arresting civilians, and when they were held in custody; the state showed little inclination to pursue cases against most of those accused and detained, indicating that the primary motive was to intimidate and prevent protest actions. (2009: 214-5)

Artists and cultural workers have also faced various forms of harassment and censorship. Owen Maseko, a visual artist, was arrested in March 2010 for mounting an exhibition that spoke to a taboo subject in Zimbabwe – the state-sanctioned massacres of 20,000 people in Matabeleland and Midlands in the 1980s (Maseko 2011: 9). Maseko was charged with publishing and communicating false statements with the intention of inciting violence. In 2016 alone many activists faced intimidation from unknown assailants, assault by police, wrongful arrest and, in two cases, abduction and disappearance. Victims included Itai Dzamara a freelance journalist and human rights defender who was abducted by unknown people on 9 March 2015 and is still missing. An article of 19 September 2016 in *The Legal Monitor*, a weekly newsletter of the not-for-profit Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights, captures the essence of the proscription of the democratic space:

BULAWAYO - Courts have, once again, rubbished attempts by the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) to ban citizens from exercising their right to demonstrate and hold public meetings. Magistrate Sheunesu Matova last week on Tuesday said the police were offside when they banned the Zimbabwe Human Rights Association (ZimRights) from holding a public meeting in Victoria Falls, Matabeleland North province. The case is the latest in a string of cases which the courts have ruled against police attempts to muzzle citizens. Now the police are in a fix over the demonstrations being rolled out across the country, especially because the country's courts continue ruling against their attempts to stop citizens from exercising their rights. Due to frustrations over the deteriorating economic situation and human rights violations, Zimbabweans have been demonstrating almost daily since early July. While this is in line with their rights enshrined in the country's Constitution, police have sought to ban most of the demonstrations. Where demonstrators have defied such illegal bans, the Zimbabwe Republic Police has used water cannons, tear gas and brute violence. On the other hand, the courts have consistently ruled on the side of citizens by overturning the demonstration bans imposed by the police. (<http://www.zlhr.org.zw/?p=393>, accessed 12 December 2016)

2.6 *The information and communication technology context*

In relation to the digital context for Zimbabwe, a Freedom House report made the following observations in relation to the country:

Zimbabwe's internet access is expanding incrementally, growing from a penetration rate of 19 percent in 2013 to 20 percent in 2014, according to estimates by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). By contrast, official government statistics report an internet penetration rate of 50 percent as of December 2014, up from 42 percent in 2013, which includes both fixed-line and mobile internet subscriptions. Approximately 99 percent of internet access is via mobile telephony, while access via fixed-line internet remains low at less than 1 percent. The mobile phone penetration rate, which is over 100 percent, includes users with multiple SIM cards, thus belying the actual number of Zimbabweans who have access to mobile services—estimated at only 60 percent. (https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/resources/FOTN%202015_Zimbabwe.pdf, accessed 10 July 2016)

The report also noted that in the period June 2014 to May 2015, frequent power outages disrupted Information and Communication Technology networks, resulting in cut-offs of both mobile networks and internet connections for hours at a time and that the leader of the “Occupy Africa Unity Square” movement initiated on Facebook was abducted in March 2015 and remained missing as of June 2015.

The years 2015 and 2016 saw the rise of ‘#hashtag’ movements such as #ThisFlag, #Tajamuka, #ThisGown which attempted to connect virtual activism with physical demonstrations against perceived social, economic and political injustices. The use of Twitter, WhatsApp, Facebook and YouTube by mostly urban Zimbabweans and those based outside the country alarmed the government of Zimbabwe and the ruling party leading to threats to arrest and prosecute individuals (<http://www.techzim.co.zw/2016/07/heres-zimbabwean-governments-warning-social-media-abuse/>, accessed 1 August 2016). In July 2016 the Post and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (POTRAZ), together with the mobile network service providers, issued a warning citing statutory Instrument 142 of 2013 as read with the Post and Telecommunications Act, which requires all mobile phone users to register their SIM cards. In part the statement read: “We are, therefore, warning members of the public that from the date of this notice, any person caught in possession of, generating, sharing or passing on abusive, threatening, subversive or offensive telecommunications messages, including WhatsApp or any other social media messages that may be deemed to cause despondency, incite violence, threaten citizens and cause unrest, will be arrested and dealt with accordingly in the

national interest” (Brezhnev Malaba, <http://www.africanindy.com/news/cyber-activists-counter-shutdown-5402121>, accessed 1 August 2016). POTRAZ also denied or slowed down access to the internet and social media applications when deemed “necessary” as happened during the protests of 6 July 2016 (Malaba 2016).

The implications of the above are that whilst mobile internet access offers opportunity for opening up the public sphere, this is still constrained by deficiencies in the infrastructure, cost of data and the threats of prosecution using the various laws discussed above.

Conclusion

In this chapter, in order to provide some context for the rise of Magamba, I have briefly examined the dimensions of the so-called ‘Zimbabwean crisis’ which, refers to the political, economic and social developments in the country from the late 1990s through the first decade of the millennium. I have also discussed the constrained media space that has obtained in Zimbabwe, particularly, from the year 2000 when Zimbabwe’s ruling party, ZANU (PF), was faced with an unprecedented political challenge. For, as I will argue, it is the restriction and policing of this media space which has given rise to a network of poet-musicians, comedians and arts administrators who have sought to challenge the hegemonic discourses of the government and ruling party via their music, faux-news comedy, festivals, online publications and other cultural activities.

CHAPTER 3

THEORIES AND PERSPECTIVES ON THE PUBLIC SPHERE, HEGEMONY AND POPULAR CULTURE

3.1 Introduction

In German philosopher Jürgen Habermas' ideal liberal model of the Public Sphere all citizens are guaranteed freedom of assembly and association and there is an assumption that rational critical argument underpins this sphere (Calhoun, 1992: 2). However, this is not the case in Zimbabwe where one consequence of the restricted public sphere is that the nature of public discourse is polarized between the 'nationalists' and the 'pro-democracy' activists. As demonstrated in Chapter Two, freedom of association and freedom of expression are severely constrained in that country. This chapter seeks to set out the theories and perspectives that will be deployed in the examination of the contestation of ideas and power between the ZANU-PF government on the one hand and civil society and opposition political parties, on the other. Most importantly it will serve to situate the emergence and continued role of Magamba Network as a counter-hegemonic force in contemporary Zimbabwe. Firstly, I shall probe the contrarian nature of the Public Sphere and how hegemonic discourses are challenged by counter narratives generated by, among others, organic intellectuals or 'subaltern publics' (Fraser 1992). Moving on from Habermas, I shall discuss Gramsci, in particular his theory of hegemony and reflections on organic intellectuals and popular culture. I shall then expand the discussion on popular culture to include nationalism given that the driving force of the ZANU-PF government is a constructed national identity that draws on myths from the war of liberation. In discussing culture and nationalism, I shall also seek to draw on Volosinov's work on how language becomes an "arena of struggle" when different forces attempt to naturalise their discursive constructions of particular 'realities' (Volosinov cited in Hall, 1982: 77). ZANU-PF uses language to indicate who is included or excluded in its narrow definition of both patriotism and citizenship. Using perspectives from Peter Dahlgren and Douglas Kellner, I will close the chapter with a brief look at how the internet is changing forms of civic and political engagement. The internet plays a key role in the circulation of Magamba Network's subaltern counter discourses.

3.2 The Public Sphere

Craig Calhoun (1992: 1) describes Jürgen Habermas' book *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* as an "inquiry into at once normative ideals and actual history". Underpinning the

idea of the public sphere is the notion of open and accessible rational discussion of public matters in which status is immaterial (Fraser, 1992: 113). Habermas elaborates:

By “public sphere” we mean first of all a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed. Access is guaranteed to all citizens... Citizens behave as a public body when they confer in an unrestricted fashion – that is, with the guarantee of freedom of assembly and association and the freedom to express and publish opinions – about matters of general interest. (1974: 49)

Habermas’ argues that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries there emerged a bourgeois public sphere which mediated between the state and society, the latter comprising of private individuals assembled into a public body (1974: 52). He sets out to establish what the category of public meant in bourgeois society and how its meaning and material operation were transformed in the centuries after its constitution (Calhoun, 1992: 5).

The early bourgeois spheres were composed of narrow segments of the European population, mainly educated and propertied men and they conducted a discourse that was exclusive of other members of society (Calhoun, 1992: 3). Key to the concept of the public sphere is public opinion which refers to “the tasks of criticism and control which a public body of citizens – formally and informally – exercises over the state” (Habermas, 1974: 49). By definition public opinion comes into existence on the presupposition of a rational public (Habermas, 1974: 50). Practical reason was institutionalized through norms of discourse and, thus, the quality of discourse and the quantity of participation were the hallmarks of the public sphere (Calhoun, 1992: 2). Here the daily political newspapers assumed a critical role, especially in the second half of the eighteenth century, when they moved from being “dealers of news” to “bearers and leaders of public opinion” (Habermas, 1974: 53).

While most critics agree on its enduring value, the concept of the ‘public sphere’ is a heavily contested one. Todd Gitlin summarises the theory as follows:

“The public sphere”: the phrase has ballooned into the God-term of democratic discourse theory. It represents the ideal: the unmoved mover and sacred sphere against which standard violations and deviations are to be measured. The notion of a sovereign public – both deliberative and rational – stands at the heart of the Enlightenment ideal of a democratic republic. If the State is to be the instrument of the public good, the public must first be sovereign and capable of ascertaining this end, the public needs *access* to information about matters of public moment; it needs *deliberation*. (1998: 168)

The key point here is that the public sphere represents a normative ideal. The foremost critic of the Habermasian public sphere, Nancy Fraser argues that the idea is a “conceptual resource” that needs to be subjected to “some critical interrogation and reconstruction if it is to yield a category capable of theorizing the limits of existing democracy” (1992: 110-111), Fraser contends that Habermas not only idealises the liberal bourgeois public sphere but also fails to examine other competing public spheres that were both non-liberal and non-bourgeois (1992: 115). She debunks what she sees as the four central assumptions of the bourgeois, masculinist conception of the public sphere (Fraser, 1992: 117-118). The first is that it is possible for interlocutors in a public sphere to put aside their status and deliberate as if they were equals. The second is that a single public sphere is preferable to a multiplicity of publics as that is a step away from, rather than toward, greater democracy. The third assumption is that the common good should be the focus of the deliberation in the public sphere and that private interests and private issues are not welcome. The final one is that a clear separation between civil society and the state is a prerequisite for a functioning democracy.

Citing a variety of scholars, Fraser notes the exclusionary nature of the bourgeois public sphere in terms of gender and class:

...discursive interaction within the bourgeois public sphere was governed by protocols of style and decorum that were themselves correlates and markers of status inequality. These functioned informally to marginalize women and members of the plebeian classes and to prevent them from participating as peers. (1992: 119)

Thus one major flaw in the conception of the bourgeois public sphere is the assumption that there can be a public space bereft of a cultural ethos whereas the reality is that in stratified societies “unequally empowered social groups tend to develop unequally valued cultural styles” (Fraser, 1992: 120). In the absence of an elimination of social inequalities there is marginalization of the contributions of members of subordinated groups both in everyday contexts and in official public spheres (Fraser, 1992: 121).

In response to the assumption of a single unitary public sphere, Fraser contends that a plurality of competing publics is better placed to promote the ideal of participatory parity (1992: 122). She then introduces a key concept of the “subaltern counterpublics”, that is, “members of subordinated social groups – women, workers, peoples of colour, and gays and lesbians” who

find it necessary and strategic to constitute parallel publics that invent and circulate counter discourses (Fraser, 1992: 123). The subaltern publics have a dual character:

On the one hand, they function as spaces of withdrawal and regroupment; on the other hand, they also function as bases and training grounds for agitational activities directed toward wider publics. It is precisely in the dialectic between these two functions that their emancipatory potential resides. This dialectic enables subaltern counterpublics partially to offset, although not wholly to eradicate, the unjust participatory privileges enjoyed by members of dominant social groups in stratified societies. (Fraser, 1992: 124)

Fraser's assertion that the official public sphere is the "prime institutional site for the construction of the consent that defines the new, hegemonic mode of domination" (1992: 117) takes us into our next theoretical framework, Antonio Gramsci's hegemony.

3.3 Hegemony

The Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci (1891 – 1937) provides some very useful concepts relating to culture, hegemony, ideology, intellectuals and the State through which to analyse the contestation of power and ideas in a given society. Gramsci is "primarily concerned with the ways in which the whole complex series of cultural, political and ideological practices work to 'cement' a society into a relative – though never complete – unity" (Bennett et al, 1981: 192). Gramsci elaborates on the key tenets of hegemony thus:

The methodological criterion on which our study must be based is the following: that the supremacy of a social group manifests itself in two ways, as "domination" and as "intellectual and moral leadership". A social group dominates antagonistic groups, which tend to "liquidate", or to subjugate perhaps even by armed force; it leads kindred and allied groups. A social group can, and indeed must, already exercise "leadership" before winning governmental power (this is one of the principal conditions for the winning of such power); it subsequently becomes dominant when it exercises power, but even if it holds it firmly in its grasp, it must continue to "lead" as well. (cited in Bennett, 1981: 197)

For Gramsci history is a process of conflicts and compromises where one fundamental class will emerge as both dominant and directive not only in the economic but also in moral and intellectual terms (Bennett, 1981: 198). Hegemony is understood as accomplished principally by means of winning the active consent of subordinated classes and groups (Hall, 1982: 87). In an effective and extensive form of hegemony there will be relative equilibrium and harmony but Gramsci stresses that when hegemony begins to come apart, the dominant class will resort to coercive measures:

If the ruling class has lost its consensus, i.e. is no longer “leading” but only “dominant”, exercising coercive force alone; this means precisely that the great masses have become detached from their traditional ideologies, and no longer believe what they used to believe previously, etc. The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear. (cited in Bennett, 1981: 199)

The structure of domination and subordination is never static (Fiske 1987: 255). Hegemony is the process by which a dominant class wins the willing consent of the subordinate classes to the system that ensures their subordination (Fiske 1987: 259). This consent must be constantly won and re-won, “for people’s material social experience constantly reminds them of the disadvantages of subordination and thus poses a constant threat to the dominant” (Fiske 1987: 259). As John Clarke et al sum it up:

Hegemony, then, is not universal and ‘given’ to the continuing rule of a particular class. It has to be won, worked for, reproduced, sustained. Hegemony is, as Gramsci said, “a moving equilibrium”, containing ‘relations of forces favourable or unfavourable to this or that tendency’. It is a matter of the nature of balance struck between contending classes: the compromises made to sustain it; the relations of force; the solutions adopted. (1981: 61)

It is useful then to probe further as to how hegemony is maintained. In the domain of culture, this contestation takes the form of the struggle for meaning, in which the dominant classes attempt to “naturalize” the meanings that serve their interests into the “common sense” of the society as a whole. Subordinate classes resist in different ways and invent their own meanings to serve their interests (Fiske, 1987: 259). One of the ways in which ‘leaders’ and the ‘led’ are kept together is through ‘popular belief’ which is similar in import to ‘common sense’ (Bennett 1981: 199). Gramsci calls common-sense the “substratum of ideology”- ideology being the more general term for the ways in which certain sets of ideas and assumptions become dominant material forces in society (Bennett 1981: 207).

Gramsci defines ideology as follows:

One must therefore distinguish between historically organic ideologies, those, that is, which are necessary to a given structure, and ideologies that are arbitrary and, rationalistic, or ‘willed’. To the extent that ideologies are historically necessary they have a validity which is ‘psychological’, they ‘organise’ human masses and create the terrain on which men move, acquire consciousness of their position, struggle, etc. To the extent that they are arbitrary they only create individual “movements”, polemics and so on (though even these are not completely useless, since they function like an error which by contrasting with truth, demonstrates it). (Bennett 1981: 209)

For Gramsci ideology is both a material force and a question of political beliefs – ideology ‘organises’ human masses, and ‘creates the terrain’; it also has an ‘internal’ psychological dimension (Bennett 1981: 209). Gramsci radically broke away from “the conception of ideology as false consciousness, that is, a distorted representation of reality because it is determined by the place occupied by the subject in the relations of production” (Mouffe 1981: 233). Seeming to echo Gramsci, John Thompson sums up ideology as ‘meaning in the service of power’, that it is, meaning which serves in particular circumstances, “to establish and sustain relations of power which are systematically asymmetrical” (1990: 7). The enduring asymmetries in societies (when particular groups are endowed with power which excludes other groups) are those based on class, gender, race and nation-state (Thompson 1988: 371). Hall elaborates:

Ruling ideas are not guaranteed their dominance by their already given coupling with ruling classes. Rather, the effective coupling of dominant ideas *to* the historical bloc [of social forces] which has acquired hegemonic power in a particular period is what the process of ideological struggle is *intended to secure*. It is the object of the exercise, not the playing out of an already written and concluded script. (italics in the original, 1996: 44)

The above quotation is important in understanding how hegemony and dominance operate, that is, the systematic attempts by a ruling class to ‘manufacture consent’ through ideas that appear as ‘common sense’. The next question we could pose is around who disseminates ideology. Gramsci identifies the key propagators of ideas as ‘intellectuals’ who operate in key institutions such as the school but his definition of this group of people is wider than the traditional understanding of intellectuals:

By ‘intellectuals’ must be understood not those strata commonly described by this term, but in general the entire social stratum which exercises an organisational function in the wide sense – whether in the field of production, or in that of culture, or in that of political administration. (cited in Bennett 1981: 210)

Gramsci calls these ‘organic’ intellectuals in contrast to the ‘traditional’ intellectuals. For Gramsci “non-intellectuals” do not exist because every person “participates in a particular conception of the world, has a conscious line of moral conduct, and therefore contributes to sustain a conception of the world or to modify it, that is , to bring new modes of thought” (cited in Bennett 1981: 212). In Chapter Two I discussed how ZANU-PF aligned intellectuals sought to defend the ideals of the ‘Third Chimurenga’ on special television and radio programmes and in

newspaper columns. In contrast, the cultural activists of the Magamba Network assume the roles of organic intellectuals who offer counter hegemonic discourses to those of the ‘Third Chimurenga’. In execution of this role they identify their position as a subaltern group engaging ‘relationally’ and ‘historically’ with a ruling political class.

Magamba, a network of artists, represents a significant counter-hegemonic cultural force within contemporary Zimbabwe. The founders, Samm Farai Monro, who uses the moniker Comrade Fatso, and Tongai Leslie Makawa, who calls himself Outspoken, describe their network thus:

Magamba is Zimbabwe’s leading urban culture organisation and works on the cutting edge of culture, activism and new media. Magamba has been pioneering in its involvement in the poetry, hip hop and comedy movements in Zimbabwe. Magamba’s vision is a free and just Zimbabwe where arts and culture are used as a tool for positive social change...Magamba means ‘Heroes’ or ‘Freedom Fighters’, signifying the youth of today reclaiming the legacy of the struggle (<http://www.magambanetwork.com/>).

Magamba has five major projects, namely, Shoko Festival, Zambezi News, Be the Media Project, Artist Project and Moto Republik Project and through these the network engages in live music concerts, hosts a Bang Bang Comedy Club, runs an annual hip-hop music festival, publishes *Kalabash*, an online magazine, and conducts social media training workshops in the townships of Harare, the capital city. Zambezi News TV is a project which spoofs the content and style of delivery of news on the government-controlled Zimbabwe Television. Zambezi News TV was launched on DVD and distributed widely across the country and has a dedicated online channel on Youtube.com/zambezinewstv.

Comrade Fatso and Outspoken are organic intellectuals (see Chapter 3) who see their role along the lines of Fraser’s subaltern counterpublics – the subordinated groups using alternative arenas to circulate counter discourse messages (1992). Operating in an environment of virulent cultural nationalism backed by authoritarianism (Saul and Sanders 2005; Ndlovu-Gatsheni et al 2009), the Magamba artists use their poetry, music, comedy and digital media activities to challenge the dominant discourse. In terms of their roles Comrade Fatso describes himself as “an artist, a comedian, satirist, spoken word artist... creative director and founder at Magamba Network” (interview). Outspoken is the Projects Manager and also a co-founder of Magamba.

The extract below serves to illustrate how the artists see their role within Magamba:

Interviewer: ...describe to me what Magamba Cultural Network is.

Outspoken: I would say... it's a network that facilitates free expression, increase of democratic space through the avenues of its productions like Zambezi News TV, community events and concerts, Be The Media where we host the Kalabash Media site, our Artist Agency, and the Shoko Festival which is more like a celebration of the four elements coming together. And apart from the expression, I think it is also like a discussion vehicle for bringing about discussion, communication, further debate on the state of affairs in the country.

Interviewer: When was it formed and why?

Comrade Fatso: November 2007. My original focus was on spoken word and hip hop and using that form of cultural activism to open up democratic space. But as Out [Outspoken] points out it has really evolved over the last six years and our vision and our focus has evolved. It's much along the lines of really waking up one morning and saying "You know we really like comedy. Why don't we do comedy?" But new media iri kufaya so... [new media is happening so let us...]

Interviewer: There has been that organic growth?

Comrade Fatso: As Out [Outspoken] was saying is about using cultural activism, media activism, youth activism as a form of opening up democratic space and building a new Zimbabwe.

The common refrain in the above excerpt is the desire to expand freedom of expression and to open up democratic space. Such language is what ideologues of the ZANU-PF regime dismiss as 'liberal' and 'ahistorical' protests on censorship and repression. Terence Ranger quotes Tafataona Mahoso, a key pro-Mugabe intellectual, arguing that such protests are based on 'narcissism' and 'bogus universalism' (2004: 224). Mahoso further chides the political opposition and their 'foreign sponsors' for lacking an understanding of history and argues that Mugabe is the custodian of history. To Mahoso, Mugabe stands in contradistinction to the opposition which represents a neo-liberal 'end of history':

The narcissist replaces the real world of history and society with what he/she thinks... in contrast to the African who says 'I relate, therefore I am'. [There is] a compulsive desire to lie in order to protect the unipolar view of the world.

(Ranger, 2004: 224)

To Mahoso a clamour for human rights (freedom of expression, freedom of movement/assembly et cetera) in a repressive Zimbabwe is an individualistic Western-inspired exercise. It is this contestation around free expression, democracy, citizenship, social and economic justice that

defines the contours of the discourses and counter discourses between the cultural work of Magamba and the Zimbabwean ruling party, government and state.

Having outlined the key Gramscian concepts that underpin his theory of hegemony and linked this to the work of Comrade Fatso and Outspoken, the ‘organic intelligentsia’, it is useful to examine how popular culture is a site for struggle.

3.4 Popular Culture

Gramsci notes that:

... every revolution has been preceded by an intense labour of criticism, by the diffusion of culture and the spread of ideas amongst masses of men (sic) who are at first resistant, and think only of solving their own immediate economic and political problems for themselves, who have no ties of solidarity with others in the same condition. (Bennett 1981: 194)

It is necessary to attempt to define popular culture and to then explore how the contestation over meaning plays out in struggle over language. The terrain on which this hegemony is won or lost is the terrain of the superstructures; the institutions of civil society and the state (Clarke et al 1981: 59). The ‘total social authority’ of the dominant class over the subordinated groups involves the exercise of a special kind of power to frame alternatives and contain opportunities, to win and shape consent, so that the granting of legitimacy to the dominant classes appears not only ‘spontaneous’ but natural and normal (Hall 1981: 59). Williams productively locates the sites of dominant culture and reiterates the *modus operandi*:

... we can only understand an effective and dominant culture if we understand the real social process on which it depends: I mean the process of incorporation. The modes of incorporation are of great social significance. The educational institutions are usually the main agencies of the transmission of an effective dominant culture, and this is now a major economic as well as cultural activity; indeed it is both in the same moment. Moreover, at a philosophical level, at the true level of theory and the level of the history of various practices, there is a process which I call *selective tradition*: that which, within the terms of an effective dominant culture, is always passed off as ‘*the tradition*’, ‘*the significant past*’. (italics in the original, 1980: 38)

This practice of selectivity is crucial as it is the way in which from a whole possible area of the past and present, certain meanings and practices are chosen for emphasis, certain other meanings and practices are neglected and excluded (Williams 1980: 38). Borrowing heavily from

Williams, John Clarke, Hall et al define the “culture” of a group or class as “the peculiar way and distinctive “way of life” of the group or class, the meanings, values and ideas embodied in institutions, in social relations, in systems of beliefs, in mores and customs, in the uses of objects and material life (1981: 53). Clarke et al elaborate:

A social individual, born into a particular set of institutions and relations, is at the same moment born into a peculiar configuration of meanings, which give her access to and locate her within a “culture”... These structures – of social relationship and of meaning – shape the on-going collective existence of groups. But they also limit, modify and *constrain* how groups live and reproduce their social existence. (1981: 54)

Dominant and subordinate classes will each have distinct cultures but when one culture gains ascendancy over the other and when the subordinate culture experiences itself in terms prescribed by the dominant culture, then the dominant culture has also become the basis of a dominant ideology (Clarke et al 1981: 55).

Jesus Martin-Barbero notes that Gramsci links popular culture to the subaltern classes, but not in a simple way. Although the linking of popular culture to an underclass “implies that the culture is inorganic, fragmentary and degraded, it also affirms that this culture has a particular tenacity, a spontaneous capacity to take advantage of the material conditions so that, at times, this culture becomes a force for political and social transformation” (Martin-Barbero 1993: 74). It is this transformative potential of the culture of the subaltern counterpublics that is critical for this study:

... the importance of the popular does not rest on its authenticity or beauty but rather on its sociocultural representativity and on its capacity to make material and to express the ways of living and thinking of the underclasses. The popular refers to the ways these classes survive and to the strategies through which they filter and reorganize what comes from the hegemonic culture and then integrate and fuse this with what comes from their own historical memory. (Martin-Barbero 1993: 74)

Gramsci himself assists us in the definition of ‘popular’ which he sees “as a conception of the world and life” which is “in opposition (implicitly, mechanically, objectively) to the conception of the official world (or in a broader sense, in opposition to the learned sectors of the official world) that has emerged historically” (cited in Martin-Barbero 1993: 74). In the African context popular culture and media have been essential means through which ordinary people have sought to engage, debate and contest the state (Willems 2011: 48). Through the production of forms of

popular culture, ordinary Africans are able to debate issues and bring up matters of concern; this is in stark contrast to the elite public sphere described by those scholars inspired by Habermas' work (Willems 2011: 49). Using songs, jokes and drama as crucial channels of communication is of great importance to people who are not granted access to official, formal media outlets (Willems 2011: 50). Preben Kaarsholm explains this process in relation to Zimbabwe:

Together with other cultural forms – magazines, theatre groups, churches, newspaper-carrying teachers, country buses, musicians, story-tellers, *n'angas* – literature in post-independence Zimbabwe is part of a landscape of voices, genres and institutions that make out the contours of a public sphere. This has been a landscape full of breaks and ruptures, but one also entailing much movement towards overcoming these breaks: and much intellectual noise and music, made in order to be heard and understood, not silenced. (2005: 23)

Barber's observations on the meaning of the "popular" are most useful in building a typology on popular culture in the African context. First, "there is a powerful sense of people naming the inequality they suffer from, and recognizing, often with humour and bitter irony, their own struggle and endurance" and, second, there is an aspiration to a better life. Spaces like shebeens, taxis, dance halls, churches et cetera where texts and genres are produced and received become "sites for emergent consciousness" (1997: 6).

At the root of popular culture is memory:

Whether it is folktale, myth or fable, one is discussing strategies of remembering and recuperating viable values from the past in order to forge new relations with people in the present. Orality as a form of cultural memory is critical in restoring a sense of collective identity. (Maurice Vambe 2001: 7)

Translated into art that memory serves as a critical role and in the case of popular music it becomes "a source of history as well as a summary of a people's experiences" (Alice Kwaramba 1997: 6). Kwaramba elaborates:

.... [Songs] are reservoirs of the untold experiences of the dominated people especially in relationships where these experiences are deliberately not represented or understated to maintain hegemonic structures of power and dominance. Therefore an analysis if such music can reveal the unrepresented feelings and sentiments of 'the people' in that society and the social tensions that produced them. (1997: 6)

Thus a cultural genre such as music “can empower a public to express its discontent, provide an outlet for despair and rally the masses against corrupt, underwhelming governments” (Toyin Falola et al 2012: 17).

Mano (2011: 91) argues that musical texts authored in upheavals and crises are invested with meanings that offer an important avenue to mediate key political topics that their public yearn for but cannot find in the mainstream media. African musicians inform and mobilise citizens on topical issues, including health, economic and political topics that are usually neglected or insufficiently covered by the mainstream media (Mano 2011: 91). The existence of this “news-through-music element is crucial because across Africa journalists have suffered intimidation, arrest and some have been killed by undemocratic forces thus popular texts, just like journalism texts, project multifaceted versions of realities that are meaningful to their audiences” (Mano 2011: 91). This grassroots popular response is not unique to Africa. In the context of Chile in the aftermath of the 1974 coup d’état that toppled the democratically elected government of Salvador Allende, Ariel Dorfman wrote:

The culture that expresses itself publicly is not only a means to keep a voice alive, of exercising vocal chords, of preparing oneself for songs and messages to come; it is also the way in which to mount a counter-culture... Thus, since the days of the coup, jokes, anecdotes and allusive songs have proliferated: shouts have appeared on bathroom walls, chalkboards, and in the streets. (1983: 208-209)

3.5 Critical appropriation

The subaltern classes also engage in what Gramsci defines as a process of ‘critical appropriation’:

Creating a new culture does not only mean one’s own individual discoveries. It also, and most particularly, means the diffusion in a critical form of truths already discovered, their ‘socialisation’ as it were, and even making them the basis of vital action, an element of coordination and intellectual and moral order. (cited in Mayo 1999: 51)

Different terms such as hybridity (Haupt 2008), syncretism, cosmopolitanism (Turino 2000), cannibalization (Jewsiewicki 1997), acculturation (Coplan 1985) and creolization (Nuttall et al 2000) have been used to describe the processes by which marginalized groups create new cultural forms by tapping into local and global reservoirs of language, religion, artistic forms et cetera. Robert Young argues that “hybridisation as creolization involves fusion, the creation of a new form, which can then be set against the old form of which it is partly made up’ (cited in

Nutall and Michael 2000: 7). In response to the moral panics about cultural imperialism, cultural homogenization and the loss of ‘tradition’, scholars such as Francis Nyamnjoh have responded that “Africa’s creativity simply cannot allow for simple dichotomies or distinctions between old and new technologies, since its peoples are daily modernizing the indigenous and indigenizing the modern with novel outcomes” (2011: 20).

Haupt’s study of hip-hop music in post-apartheid South Africa offers an excellent illustration of how subordinated groups (in this instance ‘coloured’ youths) indigenize an American musical form using “local dialects and idiomatic expressions to challenge discursive formations” (2012: 34). Before briefly discussing Haupt’s findings, it is useful to define hip-hop and its roots:

Rap is dj and MC music. Like talk over and toasted reggae it relies on pre-recorded sounds. In the case of rap the basic beat comes from hard funk rather than Jamaican rhythms, and it is true that there are important differences between rap and reggae. But the process leading to the production of dj reggae and rap is basically the same. The MCs “rap” – speak and in some cases half-sing – their lines in time to rhythms taken from records. And the content of these raps is similar, too. There are boast raps, insult raps, news raps, “message” raps, nonsense raps, party raps... Just as reggae is bound up with the idea of roots and culture, so rap is rooted in the experience of lower class blacks in America’s big northern cities... The culture that grew up round rap is sometimes called ‘hip hop’. Hip hop culture involves dance, dress, language and wild style graffiti. At its core it involves an attitude. (Dick Hebdige 1987: 136)

The version of hip-hop that is largely seen as a tool for critical and socially conscious engagement is often called ‘conscious’ hip-hop (Haupt 2008: 184). A significant amount of ‘conscious’ hip-hop continues to enjoy an ‘underground’ following and is often employed by networks of youth workers and community activists (Haupt 2008: 184).

Haupt explores how Cape Town-based hip-hop groups, especially Prophets of the City (POC) and Black Noise played a critical role in both the periods leading to South Africa’s first democratic elections in 1994 and post-elections:

Cape-based hip-hop during the 1990s issued challenges to neo-colonial discourses, such as apartheid, in its exploration of the politics of identity, history and location as well as its appropriation of *gamtaal* [a Cape Flats non-standard dialect of Afrikaans]. Many of these hip-hop texts challenged hegemonic representations of black subjects (for example, ‘Black Thing’ by POC or ‘*Kaap van Storms*’ by BVK) and effectively laid claim to space within the public sphere,

to which young black subjects did not have access under apartheid state. (2008: 184)

Haupt goes on to argue that well into the new democratic dispensation hip-hop continues to be employed as a tool for critical engagement despite the fact that many might argue that it has largely been co-opted (2008: 206). He seeks to demonstrate that it is possible for citizens to exploit affiliations to local and global levels in attempts to empower themselves (2008: 207). This is because “in situations of change, identity is dynamic, and people manipulate its symbols in order to define who they are, who they are not, who they wish to be” (Coplan 1985: 233). In that process there is a negotiation with both local and global cultural forms and the result can be what Tony Mitchell terms a local ‘resistance vernacular’ that contests national and global hegemonic discourses (cited in Haupt 2008: 157).

A few caveats are necessary in the study of popular culture. First, we should also acknowledge that the state and government can also mobilise cultural production in order to sustain dominance or hegemony. Willems cautions:

By focusing on agency, creativity and subversiveness of Africans, scholars have downplayed the constraints imposed by the state or capital on the emancipatory potential of popular culture as well as the role of the state or capital in the production and co-optation of popular culture. (2011: 50)

Writing in the introduction to their book, *Music, Performance and African Identities*, editors Toyin Falola and Tyler Fleming observe in relation to Zimbabwe:

[Farai] Bere demonstrates how music can be used to dissuade or hinder popular movements. He argues that Zimbabwe’s current regime led by Robert Mugabe routinely co-opts and uses hip-hop music, known locally as “urban grooves”, to further the state’s agendas and deter opposition movements... Bere demonstrates that the regime uses the urban grooves genre to spread their propaganda but also present a more amiable depiction of the state and politicians. He claims that the state succeeds in influencing urban grooves performers by offering them access to recording studios and airplay on the state-controlled radio and television stations. (2012: 22)

Second, there should be recognition of the ‘othering’ that comes with the idea of a pure folk in the foundational myths on Zimbabwe – whether this is produced and circulated by the ruling party or by oppositional forces:

Any study of memory, protocols of national remembrance, history and writing in Zimbabwe depends on how far back one is prepared to go into the past, on the

politics of inclusion and exclusion, on the identification of national myths, and on isolating and analyzing continuities and discontinuities. Race, ethnicity, and gender have always marked boundaries of memory and history in Zimbabwe... (Muchemwa 2005: 201)

Muchemwa (2005: 201) concludes poignantly that “the disrupted memories of groups that have recently migrated to Zimbabwe cannot go beyond their point of intersection with the group that claims privileged ancestral heritage.” As I discuss in both Chapter Two and Chapter Five, ZANU-PF has developed a very narrow definition in terms of race and indigeneity of what constitutes Zimbabwean identity and thus this othering assumes importance in the counter messaging by Magamba Network.

3.6 The Struggle over Language

Gramsci and the Russian linguist, Valentin Volosinov (1895-1936), introduced into the domain of ideology the centrality of language and its social role in the ‘struggle over meaning’ (Hall 1982: 78). The signification of events is part of what has to be struggled over, for it is “the means by which collective social understandings are created – and thus the means by which consent for particular outcomes can be effectively mobilized” (Hall 1982: 70). The notion here is that “the elaboration of ideology finds in language its proper and privileged sphere of articulation” (Hall 1982: 65). Articulation occurs when a social alliance forms around a social group and the signifying text, in a political act which makes the group a cohesive one for a time, as long as it goes on acting for a political purpose (Bobo 1994: 308). The term ‘signification’ requires elaboration and Hall, writing on the recovery of ideology in the critical paradigm, writes:

In the structuralist approach, the issue turned on the question of signification. This implies... that things and events in the real world do not contain or propose their own, integral, single and intrinsic meaning, which is then merely transferred through language. Meaning is a social production, a practice. The world has to be *made to mean*. Language and symbolisation is the means by which meaning is produced. (Hall 1982: 67)

As Thompson argues “if concern with ideology directs social-historical analysis towards the study of the relations of domination, then it focuses formal or discursive analysis on the *structural aspects of symbolic constructions which facilitate the mobilization of meaning*” (1988: 371, italics in the original). Though speech and individual speech-acts may be an individual matter,” the language-system (elements, rules of combination, classificatory sets) is a social

system: and therefore that speakers are as much ‘spoken’ by their language as speaking it” (Hall 1982: 72). This opens the possibility of the multiple referentiality of language to the real world, that is, “the polysemic nature of language which involves the marshalling of the same set of signifiers to give variously accented meanings” (Hall 1982: 77). Volosinov expounds on this character of language:

Existence reflected in the sign is not merely reflected but refracted. How is this refraction of existence in the ideological sign determined? By an intersecting of differently oriented social interests in every ideological sign. Sign becomes an arena of class struggle. This social multi-accentuality of the ideological sign is a very crucial aspect... (Volosinov cited in Hall 1982: 77)

Meaning is a result of struggle for mastery of discourse, and discourse has the effect of sustaining certain ‘closures’, of establishing certain systems of equivalence between what could be assumed about the world and what could be said to be true (Hall 1982: 75). Because meaning is not given but produced, it follows that different kinds of meaning could be attributed to the same events. Thus, in order for one meaning to be regularly produced, “it has to win credibility and legitimacy for itself and this involves marginalising, down-grading or de-legitimising alternative constructions” (Hall 1982: 67).

3.7 Media and Internet – spaces of engagement

To conclude this chapter it is important to examine briefly the two key ‘institutions’ for meaning-making in contemporary society. Hall’s claim that the ‘first great cultural function’ of the media is the “provision and selective construction of *social knowledge*” (cited in Strelitz 2000: 44, italics in original) comes to mind. As Thompson has also argued, “media have become a central and quite pervasive feature of social life” (cited in Strelitz 2000: 47). The media provide frames of ‘reality’ because journalists are inserted into a myriad of reinforcing discursive fields such as sport, school, business, the military and so forth from which they draw their social knowledge (Strelitz 2000: 44-45).

Access, or lack thereof, to the media or internet has consequences for both producers and readers:

But the ‘struggle over meaning’ is not exclusively played out in the discursive condensations to which different ideological elements are subject. There was also the struggle over access to the very means of signification: the difference between those accredited witnesses and spokesmen who had a privileged access, as of

right, to the world of public discourse and whose statements carried representativeness and authority which permitted them to establish the primary framework or terms of an argument; as contrasted with those who had to struggle to gain access to the world of public discourse at all; whose ‘definitions’ were always more partial, fragmentary and delegitimated; and who, when they did gain access, had to *perform with the established terms of the problematic in play*. (Hall 1982: 81, italics in the original)

Linked to the media in the broadest sense are the so-called new media technologies, that is, internet and mobile technologies which Dahlgren (2007) and Kellner (1995) see as offering contradictory possibilities – greater freedom and increased surveillance and control by both governments and big business. As Kellner puts it:

The new media and computer technologies, however, are ambiguous and can have contradictory effects. On one hand, novel media technologies provide more diversity of choice, more possibility of autonomy over culture and ideas. Yet the new computer technologies also provide new forms of surveillance and control... The new media technologies also provide powerful forms of social control through more efficient, subtly concealed techniques of indoctrination and manipulation. Indeed, their very existence might sap political energies and keep people safely ensconced within the confines of their home entertainment centers, far from the madding crowds and sites of mass political action. (1995: 16)

There is no simple technological solution for democracy’s dilemmas and the availability of communication technology is no guarantee that it will be used for civic purposes (Dahlgren, 2007: 1).

However, other scholars like Haupt (2012) and Willems (2011) see the internet as offering great potential for free expression by subordinated groups. Haupt (2012: 29) argues that citizen journalists, social activists and counter-hegemonic artists employ ‘new media’ technologies to establish social relationships that are not exclusively mediated by corporate media. The shift from mass-media’s one-to-many broadcast model to new media’s more lateral many-to-many model allows a wider range of actors to receive, rework, distribute and critique media texts (Haupt 2012: 30). Haupt elaborates:

The counter-hegemonic expressions by artists like Madinda, Jitsvinger, Jansen, Immortal Technique, Mos Def, Eminem, Enspektah, Pava Gunz, Hoody Hoodsta and the rappers who contributed to *Officially Offside* give us a sense of how the internet can be employed as an information commons that allows for wider means of participation and circulation of views... Publics can be constituted in multiple

spaces through debate and contestation about matters of common concern in cyberspace, regardless of geographical boundaries and of national boundaries. (2012: 65)

Willems sees new media in Africa (Zimbabwe specifically) being increasingly used to comment upon state media discourse thus enabling an expansion of the crucial role oral culture, rumours and jokes have played in enabling participatory media cultures (2011: 52). It is apparent then, that the idea that the internet is essentially an open space for controlling and enhancing one's own identity to fit modern-day society is not dead (Vinken 2007: 51).

Conclusion

In this chapter I have sought to set out the theories and perspectives that will be deployed in the study of the contestation of ideas and power between the ZANU-PF government on the one hand and civil society and opposition political parties, on the other. The theories are critical in situating the emergence and continued role of Magamba Network as a counter-hegemonic force in contemporary Zimbabwe. I have outlined the key aspects of Jurgen Habermas' normative concept of the Public Sphere and also examined the arguments by various critics such as Nancy Fraser who see the value in the concept but note the gender and class exclusionary nature of the bourgeois public sphere. Usefully for this study, Fraser indicates the contrarian nature of the Public Sphere and how hegemonic discourses are challenged by counter narratives generated by, among others, organic intellectuals operating in 'subaltern counterpublics'. I have examined Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony and its wider impact in evaluating concepts of ideology, organic intellectuals, popular culture, consent and crisis of authority. Moving logically from Gramsci to Valentin Volosinov's work on language, I have shown how the struggle for meaning plays out in discourse. Finally, I have looked at how the media and the internet are sites for struggle between dominant classes and groups and subordinated ones.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

4.1 Introduction

In order to generate the data necessary to explore my research interest, I relied on observation, in-depth semi-structured interviews, and examined the video and music production produced by the Magamba Network. These methods of data collection situated me within the qualitative research paradigm.

To situate qualitative research methods it is important to briefly examine the key tenets of this paradigm before defining each method and its key characteristics. I use the term ‘paradigm’ to refer to an organising framework for theory and research that includes basic assumptions and key issues pertaining to knowledge production, models of quality research, and methods for seeking answers to research questions (Neuman 2006: 81).

4.2 Qualitative research methodology

Mouton describes the qualitative research methodology as an approach whose departure point is “the insider perspective on social action” (2001: 270). This means that the researcher seeks to describe and analyse the culture and behavior of humans and their groups from the point of view of those being studied (Bryman 1988: 45). This attempt to view the world from the perspective of the actors has its roots in phenomenology:

The phenomenologist views human behavior as a product of how people interpret their world... In order to grasp the meanings of a person’s behavior, the phenomenologist attempts to see things from that person’s point of view. (Bodgan and Taylor 1975:13-14, cited in Mouton 2001: 271)

Phenomenology recognizes that our subjective experience of the world is filtered through an unquestioning acceptance of its form and content which means that any attempt to understand social reality must be grounded in people’s experience of that reality (Bryman 1988: 51). Thus the German term ‘Verstehen’ which means “empathetic understanding” captures the primary goal of qualitative research (Neuman 2006: 87). To achieve this insider perspective, qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials – case study; personal experience; introspection; life story; interview; artifacts; cultural texts and productions;

observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts – that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives (Denzin & Lincoln 2000: 3).

The choice of research practices depends upon the questions that are asked and the questions depend on their context (Nelson et al. 1992: 2 cited in Denzin & Lincoln 2000: 4). Qualitative research uses multiple methods or triangulation in an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question thus adding rigour and breadth to inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln 2000: 5).

The qualitative research approach stands in contradistinction to quantitative research methodology. Quantitative methods are associated with the positivist assumption that the things scientists are interested in can and should be measured as accurately as possible (Priest 1996: 6). Positivism developed in the mid-nineteenth century as practitioners of the emerging social sciences struggled to distance themselves from speculation and personal commentary and establish their credentials as 'scientists' on par with those working in the natural sciences (Deacon et al. 1999: 3). Positivists contend that there is a reality out there that can be captured, studied and understood (Denzin & Lincoln 2000: 8). Positivists begin by asserting that investigating the social and cultural world is no different in principle to investigating the natural world and that the same basic procedures apply to both (Deacon et al. 1999: 3). From this it follows that that, as in the natural sciences, the only admissible scientific evidence is 'facts' established by systematic observation (Deacon et al. 1999: 3). Thus the methods used by positivists include the discovery and verification of theories, traditional evaluation criteria, such as internal and external validity, are stressed, as is the use qualitative procedures that lend themselves to structured (sometimes statistical) analysis. Computer-assisted methods of analysis that permit frequency counts, tabulations, and low-level statistical analyses may also be employed (Denzin & Lincoln 2000:9). Their argument is that their work is value-free because it draws its strength from the long-standing assertion that a 'science' of anything, including social and cultural life, must be based on *empirical* data produced by direct observation (see Deacon et al. 1999; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Positivists see the overall aim of scientific inquiry as developing generalisations about relations between social 'facts' that establish basic connections of cause and effect. To achieve this, they insist that existing generalisations have to be continually tested against new evidence to see whether the specific predictions (hypotheses) they generate are supported (verified) or disproved (falsified) (Deacon et al. 1999: 3).

As Denzin and Lincoln (2000: 9) argue, the positivist tradition lingers like a long shadow over the qualitative research project because, historically, qualitative research was defined within the positivist paradigm, where qualitative researchers attempted to do good positivist research with less rigorous methods and procedures. The challenge to ‘objectivist science’ came from scholars who:

Looked outside the behaviorist tradition of American communication science for fresh inspiration: to sociology for its symbolic interactionist and phenomenological practice; to literary theory for new ideas about the relationship of readers and texts; to feminist and political theory for alternative explanations of power, agency, and social structure; to cultural studies for ways to integrate theory and method in the study of cultural communication. (Lindlof 1995: 7)

As we have noted above qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln 2000:8). These researchers seek alternative methods for evaluating their work, including “verisimilitude, emotionality, personal responsibility, an ethic of caring, political praxis, multivoiced texts, and dialogues with subjects” (Denzin & Lincoln 2000:8).

To reiterate then, this study has chosen to deploy qualitative content analysis, in-depth individual interviews, group interviews and observation as methods that would best explore how members of the Magamba Network understand their artistic work vis-a-vis the social and political context of Zimbabwe. To sum up, a qualitative research approach offers the possibility of intimate capturing of the individual’s point of view; a deeper appreciation of the constraints of the social world of subjects; and the generation of rich descriptions of the subjects’ social world (Denzin & Lincoln 2000: 9).

4.3 Qualitative Content Analysis

Due to the volume of text originated by my data collection and the fact that I sought to establish key themes in the work of the Magamba Network artists, a qualitative content analysis method was identified as ideal. Krippendorff (2013: 23) offers a useful overview of the key characteristics of qualitative content analysis:

Qualitative approaches to content analysis have their roots in literary theory, the social sciences (symbolic interactionism, ethnomethodology), and critical scholarship (Marxist approaches, British cultural studies, feminist theory).

Sometimes they are given the label *interpretive*. They share the following characteristics:

- They require a close reading of relatively small amounts of textual matter.
- They involve the rearticulation (interpretation) of given texts into new (analytical, deconstructive, emancipatory, or critical) narratives accepted within particular scholarly communities that are sometimes opposed to positivist traditions of inquiry.
- The analysts acknowledge working within hermeneutic circles in which their own socially or culturally conditioned understandings constitutively participate.

The approach then involves the researchers sampling text, in the sense of selecting what is relevant; unitizing text, in the sense of distinguishing words, propositions, or larger narrative units and using quotes or examples; contextualizing what they are reading in light of what they know about the circumstances surrounding the texts; and having specific research questions in mind (Krippendorff 2013: 88). Practically, in this study it meant me choosing four songs from each of the two artists, Comrade Fatso and Outspoken, for analysis as well as analyzing the transcripts of interviews with the two, watching and critiquing episodes of Zambezi News TV and also analyzing a video of a live concert of Comrade Fatso that I shot as part of observation stage of the study. As David Silverman (2010: 55) warns, because textual analysis depends upon very detailed data analysis to make such an analysis effective, it is imperative to have a limited body of data with which to work. These materials are treated as texts which Alan McKee (2003: 15) defines as “material traces that are left of the practice of sense-making – the only empirical evidence we have of how other people make sense of the world”. As Fairclough (1995: 5) observes on the qualities of a text – “a useful working assumption is that any part of any text (from the media or from elsewhere) will be simultaneously representing, setting up identities and setting up relations”. He further elaborates on how language is implicated in a text:

Language use – any text – is always simultaneously constitutive of (1) social identities (2) social relations and (3) systems of knowledge and belief... That is, any text makes its own small contribution to shaping these aspects of society and culture... Language use is, moreover, constitutive both in conventional ways which help to reproduce and maintain existing social identities, relations and systems of knowledge and belief, and in creative ways which help to transform them. (1995: 55)

Titscher et al (2000: 22) take a more technical approach to the definition of text. Invoking Robert de Beaugrande and Wolfgang Dressler (1981) they cite several criteria which constitute the taxonomy of texts: cohesion; recurrence; anaphora and cataphora; ellipsis; conjunctions; coherence; intentionality; acceptability; informativity; situationality; and intertextuality. Of these, intertextuality will suffice for the purposes of textual analysis.

Intertextuality has two types of meaning. On the one hand it suggests that a text always relates to preceding or simultaneously occurring discourse, and on the other hand it also implies that there are formal criteria that link texts to each other in particular genres or text varieties (Titscher et al. 2000:23). It is the first meaning that was deployed in the analysis of the songs, videos and literature generated by the Magamba Network as these were linked to other texts preceding or contemporary to their own work.

Having defined text it is important then to return to unpacking the key characteristics of qualitative content analysis. Priest (1996: 114) advises:

Good qualitative content analysis requires an open-minded researcher, a specific research question, and a systematic way of looking at whatever content is chosen – even if only a relatively small, selected set of messages is used in the analysis.

The systematic way of looking at chosen content is a process that involves a variety of steps, although it should be pointed out that qualitative content analysis is flexible in that it allows for “recontextualizing, reinterpreting, and redefining the research question...until some kind of satisfactory interpretation is reached” (Krippendorff, 2013: 88).

Bryman observes that qualitative content analysis is probably the most prevalent approach to the qualitative analysis of documents and comprises a searching-out of underlying themes in the materials being analysed (2001: 381). Deacon provides a most useful argument for the centrality of theme in text:

A thematic structure is a preoccupying conception or proposition which runs throughout a media text, usually around an initiating topic. It strategically ties together a number of more specific conceptions or statements on the basis of particular social forms of knowledge and social forms of perception and belief. A thematic structure helps to make a media text cohere – it orients a text around a central theme or strand of related themes running throughout a story. Without thematic structures, media texts would be fragmentary and narratively dissolute. Their function is to provide a sense of the overall organization, hierarchy and relations between different aspects or properties of the text, and between different units of the text, such as sentences and paragraphs. (1999: 169)

Carol Rivas has outlined three steps in thematic content analysis which were deployed in this study, namely, open coding, category formation and thematic coding. She argues that the original development of thematic coding was to help qualitative researchers legitimize their methods and thus effectively respond to critics who claimed that qualitative research is a softer option than quantitative research (2012: 367). Rivas adds: “By following the process and then describing it in their reports, researchers can enhance and demonstrate the quality, or validity and reliability of their findings” (2012: 367).

Thematic content analysis involves looking across the data set rather than one case and focuses on how phenomenon, event or social interaction ‘looks like’ to the individuals of interest (Rivas 2012: 367). This echoes the discussion on phenomenology at the opening of this chapter. Thematic coding borrows heavily from grounded theory which was developed by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss and involves the assigning of initial data to a few tentative categories, then continually add new data, asking at each stage whether the new data reasonably seem to fit the old categories or whether a new category needs to be constructed (Priest 1996: 191).

The first stage of coding is called open coding and open codes are labels for chunks of data that capture something of the literal essence of the data, that is, the codes are terms taken directly from the data, for example, slang and metaphors (Rivas 2012: 370-2). Bryman (2001: 398) advises that some of the considerations in developing codes, some of which are derived from Lofland and Lofland (1995), are as follows:

- Of what general category is item of data an instance?
- What does this item of data represent?
- What is this item of data about?
- Of what topic is this item of data an instance?
- What question about a topic does this item of data suggest?
- What sort of answer to a question about a topic does this item of data imply?
- What is happening here?
- What are people doing?
- What kind of event is going on?

This first stage of open coding generates a long list of codes which are too many to be used as they are and so need to be grouped into preliminary categories, then themes (Rivas 2012: 374). One of the caveats on using qualitative research is that it very rapidly generates a large, cumbersome database because of its reliance on prose in the form of such media as field notes,

interview transcripts, or documents. Thus the researcher must guard against being captivated by the richness of the data collected, so that there is a failure to identify analytic paths in that data (Bryman 2001: 388). At this open coding stage then one has to look for patterns in what is missing as well as what is not (Rivas 2012: 373).

The second stage of thematic content analysis is category formation which involves grouping similar codes together to form analytic categories (Rivas 2012: 375). The process of category formation requires constant comparison of all bits of data within a category with each other, and constant comparison of the data across categories. As Altheide observes, the researcher is constantly revising the themes or categories that are distilled from the examination of documentation:

ECA [ethnographic content analysis] follows a recursive and reflexive movement between concept development-sampling-data, collection-data, coding-data, and analysis-interpretation. The aim is to be systematic and analytic but not rigid. Categories and variables initially guide the study, but others are allowed and expected to emerge during the study, including an orientation to *constant discovery* and *constant comparison* of relevant situations, settings, styles, images, meanings and nuances. (Altheide 1996: 16 italics in original, cited in Bryman 2001: 381)

The goal is to use consistent categories but to allow them to emerge from the data rather than imposing your preconceived ideas that may misrepresent what's really going on (Priest, 1996: 191). This allows you to be true to the worldview of those being studied and at the same time to be consistent through the analysis of the entire set of data (Priest, 1996: 191). The function of category development is to systematically group multiple fragments of unconnected literal codes into something meaningful and more analytical and digestible (Rivas 2012: 376).

In the final stage of thematic content analysis the constant comparison outlined above should mean that themes developed from categories describe all the features and characteristics of each topic in the data as fully as possible and are conceptually as complete as the data allow (Rivas 2012: 376). At this stage a dominant category may be used as a theme and one should then check whether the themes provide good explanations of the data and also whether there are any gaps in the data (Rivas 2012: 376).

In summary then thematic content analysis stops one from being overwhelmed by data; provides a systematic way of working through the data; keeps analysis grounded in the data; helps one develop categories that are as complete as possible; and shapes distinct categories that can be clearly operationalized (Rivas 2012: 376).

Whilst, as Priest argues, this is a taxing and systematic exercise (1996: 191), one of the most commonly mentioned criticisms of the coding approach to qualitative data analysis is the possible problem of losing the context of what is said. By plucking chunks of text out of the context within which they appeared, such as a particular interview transcript, the social setting can be lost (Bryman 2001: 400). A second criticism of coding is that it results in a fragmentation of data, so that the narrative flow of what people say is lost (Coffey and Atkinson 1996, cited in Bryman 2001: 400). To obviate these problems of disconnection, Rivas (2012: 368) advises that before coding a researcher should immerse themselves in the data (data immersion) so that they develop a theoretical sensitivity to concepts, meanings and relationships within the data. In this way one is able to remember the context from which fragments are drawn as well as being sensitive to the meanings (Rivas 2012: 368).

In applying this method in my analysis, I started off by assembling all the data that I was going to sift through. This comprised of three transcripts of individual and group interviews with Farai Samm Monro (Comrade Fatso) and Tongai Leslie Makawa (Outspoken); notes from my viewing of Zambezi News Season 1 Episode 2 and Season 2 Episode 1; transcripts of lyrics of Comrade Fatso's songs, *House of Hunger*, *Identity*, *Bread and Roses* and *Ma-Streets*; transcripts of lyrics of Outspoken's songs, *Freedom Train*, *The Slave Master's Whip*, *Rise – Spirit of Nehanda* and *Hip-hop Is In Me*; observational notes from 2009 live music concert; and brochure of 2013 Shoko Festival. Looking across the data sets, I began with open coding which entailed grouping phrases and sentences that spoke to the same issues, for example, phrases such as “opening up democratic space” or “new Zimbabwe”. The result was copious notes from the analysis of the interview transcripts, Zambezi News video programme and the lyrics of the music. The second stage involved creating analytic categories and these initially were more than ten covering: call for democracy; intergenerational conflict; subversion; appropriation; hybridization; identity; free expression; anti-global capital; spiritual journey; optimism; the counter narrative; and new diction. Recognizing that these were clearly unwieldy to start my analysis, I moved to the third stage where I compared all data in the categories and began to move and consolidate data that spoke to a discernible theme. The key was to let the data itself provide the themes rather than imposing. As a result of this process I ended up with four themes, namely, free expression and creative spaces; hegemonic discourses - contesting narratives of patriotism and sovereignty; the politics of identity and critical appropriation of language, music

and symbols at local and global levels; and the role of organic intellectuals in the struggle for democracy and social justice. To mitigate the challenge of using data without proper contextualization I took Rivas' advice and immersed myself in the data so that I could bring coherence to the material even if it was coming from three or more different sources (interviews, videos or music).

4.4 The Qualitative Interview

The second method employed by this study is the in-depth semi-structured interview. This summary description by Deacon et al captures the essence of this method:

Semi-structured interviewing abandons concerns with standardization and control, and seeks to promote an active, open-ended dialogue. Although it bears some resemblance to everyday conversations, it does not conform to all of their conventions: the interviewer still retains control of the terms of the discussion, whereas in 'natural' conversation this would normally fluctuate between participants. The interviewer controls the discussion by referring to an interview guide that sets out the issues to be covered during the exchange. This is why Lindlof (1995) suggests that these sorts of interviews are better described as 'conversations *with a purpose*' (italics in original). (1999: 65)

Qualitative interviewing is particularly useful as a research method for accessing individuals' attitudes and values – things that cannot necessarily be observed or accommodated in a formal questionnaire (Byrne 2012: 209). The qualitative interview produces a particular representation or account of an individual's views and opinions (see Byrne 2012, Lindlof 1995, Priest 1996). The attraction of this research method lies in its flexibility as a medium. It allows interviewees to speak in their own voices and the process of the interview is equally flexible in the sense that the researcher uses an interview guide but questions may not follow on exactly as outlined in the schedule (Byrne 2012: 209, Bryman 2001: 314). At the same time the interviewee has a great deal of leeway in how to respond.

A deeper appreciation of the qualitative interview can be achieved by contrasting this method with the structured survey interview/questionnaire. As we have noted, the in-depth interview does not have a rigidly set structure because it is an open-ended conversational exploration of an individual's worldview (Priest 1996: 26). In a survey using structured interviews, the aim is to standardise the interviews in order to claim direct comparability between interviews with different people and to interview enough people so that the results could be held to be statistically representative of a particular population (Byrne 2012: 208).

4.5 The Interview Guide

As Deacon et al point out above, the qualitative interview employs an interview guide which contains a particular set of questions or concerns to be addressed and questions not included in the guide may be asked as the interviewer picks up on things said by the interviewee (see Priest 1996: 26, Bryman 2001:314). Bryman advises that the interview guide should create a certain amount of order of the topics so that questions flow and these same questions should be formulated in such a way as to answer the research questions (2001: 317). He adds that the researcher should try to use a language that is comprehensible and relevant to the informants and also that, for purposes of contextualization, a record should be done of ‘factsheet’ information, that is, name, age, position et cetera (Bryman 2001: 317).

In developing my interview guide (see Appendix A), I read a lot of background material on Magamba Network’s work including watching their videos on YouTube. My interview guide was structured into three parts: Part A comprised questions for Comrade Fatso; Part B being questions for Outspoken; and Part C were questions relating to Magamba Network and addressed to both informants. The logic of the interview guide was to start off questions to do with biographical information (full name, family, educational background, job title/position) and then move to probe the artists understanding of their own work and how their productions interfaced with the official public sphere. The questions covered specific songs and probed the themes, musical styles, language and audiences. In asking my questions I attempted to ensure there was no jargon and that there were follow up questions for clarity, in need be.

4.6 Sampling

Bryman points out that at times there is lack of transparency in ethnographic research on how, especially in the case of qualitative interviewing, interviewees were selected (2001: 323). He argues that the resort to convenience sampling is usually the product of such factors as the availability of certain individuals who are otherwise difficult to contact. In the Magamba Cultural Network case, I had first met one of the artists, Tongai Leslie Makawa aka Outspoken, at a literary event I had co-organised in 2007 in honour of the late Zimbabwe fiction writer, Dambudzo Marechera. I had subsequently invited Outspoken to perform at an annual journalism conference, Highway Africa, in Grahamstown, South Africa. Through Outspoken I was able to make connections with Comrade Fatso and a relationship of trust was formed. When my thesis

focus was narrowed down to one single collective of poets it was fairly easy to request and access the Magamba Network co-founders.

The study is based on materials comprising three transcripts of individual and group interviews with Farai Sarm Monro (Comrade Fatso) and Tongai Leslie Makawa (Outspoken); notes from my viewing of Zambezi News Season 1 Episode 2 and Season 2 Episode 1; transcripts of lyrics of Comrade Fatso's songs, *House of Hunger*, *Identity*, *Bread and Roses* and *Ma-Streets*; transcripts of lyrics of Outspoken's songs, *Freedom Train*, *The Slave Master's Whip*, *Rise – Spirit of Nehanda* and *Hip-hop Is In Me*; observational notes from 2009 live music concert; and brochure of 2013 Shoko Festival. In selecting these materials I felt they most represented the counter-hegemonic work of Magamba Network. The process of selecting the final materials to study involved watching all episodes of the three seasons of Zambezi News, listening and transcribing all the songs on Comrade Fatso's *House of Hunger* and Outspoken's *Cool and Overrated* and *God Before Everything* and immersing myself in the transcripts of the interviews.

4.7 Ethical Concerns

Fontana and Frey (2000: 662) state that, traditionally, ethical concerns have revolved around the issues of informed consent, that is, receiving consent by the informant or subject after having informed them truthfully about the research. The other two matters of concern are around the right to privacy (protecting the identity of the subject) and the protection from harm whether this be physical, emotional or any other kind (Fontana & Frey 2000: 662). With regard to Magamba Network, I specifically informed members that I wished to undertake a Master of Arts thesis that would focus on their work. I shared with them my proposal and also e-mailed them my interview guide in advance for their perusal and input. Borrowing from frameworks proposed by feminist researchers (Bryman 2001: 325-6), I sought to establish a high level of rapport with the interviewees and also sought to have a non-hierarchical relationship with them (in practice this meant I endeavoured to connect with them as colleagues and fellow civil society activists).

This last point takes us into the domain of power relations. Janet Holland and Caroline Ramazanoglu argue that “differences such as age, class, gender, ethnicity and religion impinge on the possibilities of interaction and interpretation and so on how the social world is known” (cited in Byrne 2012: 213). Byrne advises the need for reflexivity, that is, critical self-scrutiny by the researcher and an acknowledgement that s/he approaches the research from a specific

position and this affects the approach taken, the questions asked and the analysis produced (2012: 213). In doing my research I was aware that there a gap of about twenty years in age between the artists under study and me and that this would have implications in my understanding of their lived experiences, outlook, language (urban slang) and their cultural tastes (music et cetera). As I have indicated above I sought to relate to the informants as colleagues in civil society and thus established a rapport that allowed me to go back to them via electronic mail or telephone calls for clarification. For example, there were some lyrics of their songs that I did not fully comprehend and they were generous enough to clarify.

4.8 Recording the Interview

Heritage (cited in Bryman 2001: 321) argues that the procedure of recording and transcribing interviews helps to correct the natural limitations of human memories whilst allowing more thorough examination of informants say and also allows the data to be reused in other ways from those intended by the original researcher. Bryman also warns that qualitative interviewing requires flexibility in areas such as ‘coping with audio-recording equipment breakdown and refusals by interviewees to allow a recording to take place’ (2001: 323). My first recorded interviews with the two Zimbabwean artists took place in Harare in December 2013. I used a digital recorder on which I discovered, on my return to South Africa, that I had recorded three parts of the interviews on top of each other. As a result only the last interview had survived. A subsequent telephonic interview in 2014 could hardly be heard on the digital recorder. A Skype interview was arranged in 2015 and this also did not work because of the instability of the internet on the Zimbabwean side. As a result of the artists’ busy schedule (touring and organizing their numerous events), it was only possible to do the interviews via telephone using a speakerphone on 12th November 2015. The interviews with Comrade Fatso and Outspoken, respectively, were successfully recorded this time and immediately transcribed. It is possible that something was lost between the initial face to face interviews and the telephone ones. Byrne cautions that in a long-distance encounter ‘non-verbal cues and body language will be absent and you are less able to ensure that your respondent is not distracted’ (2012: 218).

Having transcribed the interview material a qualitative thematic analysis was employed to make sense of the data generated.

Conclusion on qualitative interviewing

Bridget Byrne neatly sums up the value of the qualitative interview as a research method:

Perhaps the most compelling advantage of qualitative interviewing is that, when done well, it is able to achieve a level of depth and complexity that is not available to other, particularly survey-based, approaches. The non-standardised interview enables the researcher to become attuned to subtle differences in people's positions and to respond accordingly, both at the time of interviewing and in the subsequent analysis. (2012: 210)

Lindlof echoes this view by stating that, "at its best, the qualitative interview creates an event in which one person (the interviewer) encourages another person to articulate interests or experiences freely" (1995: 163). The in-depth semi-structured interview is best placed to access subjective realities. The basic objectives of qualitative interviewing then encompass learning about things that cannot be observed directly by other means; understanding a social actor's perspective; verifying, validating or commenting on data obtained from other sources and eliciting the distinctive language used by social actors in their natural settings (Lindlof 1995: 166).

4.9 Observation

The third and final research method employed by this study is observation. Mason (cited in Deacon et al. 1999: 249) argues that the reasons why researchers turn to observational methods includes "the ontological belief that interactions and behaviours, and the way people interpret them, are central to social life". The researcher may also have an epistemological concern that 'real-life' settings can reveal social reality, and that it has to be experienced and shared by the researcher for research accounts to have any validity and adequacy (Deacon et al. 1999: 249). Thus in conducting observational methods we can observe behaviour and assess what the subjects understand by what they are doing (Deacon et al. 1999: 256).

At the heart of observation is the human investigator who "tacks between the unique, phenomenal, situated character of an object and its comparative and contrastive relationships to other objects" (Lindlof 1995: 134). Observation is defined then as "sustained, explicit, methodical observing and paraphrasing of social situations in relation to their naturally occurring contexts" (Weick 1985: 569 cited in Lindlof 1995: 134).

In 2009 Comrade Fatso and his band Chabvondoka had a live music concert at the annual Harare International Festival of the Arts (HIFA). I asked Comrade Fatso if I could record the whole hour-long concert for purposes of my study and he readily agreed as he also wanted access

to the video material for his own promotional purposes. I was granted access and permission into HIFA as an accredited journalist (having covered the festival in previous years). The advantages of the observational methods lie in that direct observation gives the researcher the opportunity to produce an independent assessment of claims and the same time, the researcher is able to witness the events or processes being researched, rather than being dependent on 'second-hand indicators such as a survey questionnaire, a recording or the frailties of memory' (Deacon et al. 1999: 256-9). Seeing Comrade Fatso and Outspoken in concert assisted me in obtaining insights into their rapport with their audiences, their dress, the political statements they made in-between songs, the symbolism in their dress, their energy and stage presentation.

Conclusion

I have outlined the research methodology that I used in this study. Qualitative research methodology is an approach which takes an insider's point of view and this was necessary as I sought to describe and analyse the cultural production and personal ideologies of the Magamba Network from their point of view. I have indicated the three research methods I employed, namely, qualitative content analysis, semi-structured in-depth interview and participant observation. I have also illustrated how I deployed each method and my experiences in that process.

CHAPTER 5

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

The focus of this study is on the emergence of a collective of cultural activists/protest poets at a very specific point in history and in a specific location (Book Café, Harare). Informed by Gramsci's observation that every revolution is preceded by an "intense labour of criticism", I wish to suggest that the Magamba Network co-founders, Comrade Fatso and Outspoken, are organic intellectuals who seek to challenge the hegemony of the ZANU-PF government. Using alternative media, specifically the genres of music, poetry and comedy, Comrade Fatso (Farai Samm Monro) and Outspoken (Tongai Leslie Makawa) contest the highly selective cultural nationalism narrative of the 'Third Chimurenga' which permeates the state-controlled mass media and government and ruling party functions. In the elitist and undemocratic public sphere of Zimbabwe, where public radio and television are spaces only reserved for partisan voices, rational dialogue is redundant (see Moyo 2012, Willems 2011 and Tendi 2010). In this situation the 'subaltern counterpublics', or 'parallel discursive arenas', emerge with subordinated groups circulating their own messages using alternative media and popular art forms. The contestation manifests itself in the struggles over memory, space, language and the sign.

An arts news website summarised the achievements of Magamba Network thus:

Highlights of some of the achievements and impact of Magamba include establishing Southern Africa's first creative hub, Moto Republik, winning the World Summit Youth Award in association with the UN (2013) and spreading the word globally about social justice issues in Zimbabwe, featuring reports and screenings of its satirical TV show, Zambezi News which received coverage on CNN (US), BBC, Channel 4, The Guardian (UK), ENCA (SA) and Deutsche Welle (GER), hosting the Shoko Festival and Hub Unconferences since 2011, providing employment during the event for an average of 250 individuals per event and pioneering a culture of youth engagement with policy makers through the Open Parliament project whereby youths attend sessions and engage online with the country's decision makers. (<http://www.3-mob.com/?p=27612#.WE6sRbJ973h>, accessed 12 December 2016)

Commenting on the 2016 Shoko Festival a leading Zimbabwean daily newspaper, *NewsDay*, wrote in its 26 September 2016 edition:

Organisers of the three-day urban arts fete, Shoko Festival have established pole position in the showbiz sector after successfully hosting the sixth edition of the festival that ended yesterday... Some of the artistes who performed at the festival include; high-flying contemporary musician Jah Prayzah, songbird Ammara Brown, South African hip-hop music icon AKA, King of dancehall Winky D, South African comedian Donovan Goliath who headlined the comedy night alongside local comedians Doc Vikela, Bustop TV's Gonyeti and Long John, Norwegian jazz act Mooyh and Bryan Kadengu... Shoko Festival is an annual event which has managed to develop into a better fete as each year passes, as the organisers have managed to promote urban culture by offering local artistes of different art forms to carve their niche and express talents in front of wide audiences. (<https://www.newsday.co.zw/2016/09/26/shoko-fest-surpasses-expectations/>, accessed 12 December 2016)

This chapter serves to analyse the artists-activists' intentions and agency as manifested in various texts, namely, Comrade Fatso's 2008 music album, *House of Hunger*; Outspoken's two music albums *Uncool and Overrated* and *God Before Everything*; the satirical Zambezi News (Season 2 Part 1); the transcripts of the semi-structured in-depth individual and group interviews with Comrade Fatso and Outspoken; and the notes from the observation of Comrade Fatso playing live music at the 2009 Harare International Festival of the Arts. Outspoken was a featured artist at this concert. In Chapter 4 (section 4.6) I outlined the reasons for the selection of these texts. I also wish to probe the cultural influences including the existence of a few open creative spaces, global and local youth music forms and personal ideologies.

To examine the counter discourses of the Magamba Network a qualitative content analysis approach has been used (see Chapter 4). Having analysed the data comprising the transcripts of interviews with the Magamba artists, the lyrics and musical arrangements of their songs, notes from observing Comrade Fatso performing in a live music concert and notes from analysis of the satirical Zambezi News video series, I have identified four thematic categories. These thematic categories will inform the structuring of the sections of this chapter and they are:

- v) Free expression and creative spaces;
- vi) Hegemonic discourses - contesting narratives of patriotism and sovereignty;
- vii) The politics of identity and critical appropriation of language, music and symbols at local and global levels;
- viii) The role of organic intellectuals in the struggle for democracy and social justice.

The data for the above thematic categories are overlapping but for purposes of analysis have been separated with the understanding that, collectively considered, they support the central

thesis of this study which is the emergence of particular protest arts as a result of the closure of media and democratic space.

In this study I am, therefore, interested in the confluence of social and political factors that informed the genesis of Magamba. Using a variety of theoretical frameworks, I have thus far sought to examine the Zimbabwean macro environment (media restrictions, political and economic factors). By using such an approach I hope to make sense of a particular form of cultural production – protest arts - at a specific moment in history. I have given a detailed background to the formation and vision of Magamba Network in Chapter 3 (section

The four thematic categories below arising out of the qualitative content analysis method deployed will expound on the dimensions of the contestation.

5.2 Freedom of expression and creative spaces

The first theme relates to freedom of expression and creative spaces – that is the enabling or limitation of free expression informs the form and content of the cultural production of the artists in Zimbabweans. Given the constraints of the official public sphere in Zimbabwe, physical and virtual spaces play a key role in aiding people voice their hopes and fears and also allows them to create art forms that carry messages which are a counterpoint to the state. As discussed in Chapter 3, Fraser (1992) usefully points out the dual character of the subaltern counterpublics as spaces for withdrawal and regrouping or as sites for training, support and strategizing on agitational activities.

As Jonathan Zilberg observes on Zimbabwe:

The health of civil society is clearly not only revealed in the freedom of the press but in the freedom of people to engage in popular culture as they will... In this case, the state has sought to shackle popular culture in order to control the natural tendency of the youth to seek out and participate in the power and pleasure of the new. (2012: 271)

Despite the determination of the Zimbabwean state to restrict expression, a few physical and digital spaces emerged from the late 1990s onward that would have a profound impact on expression and engagement. These included the Book Café, the Harare International Festival of the Arts (HIFA), messaging and social media platforms (especially SMS, WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter) and the Shoko Festival. These spaces have served to contest the official public sphere and in the process created a multiplicity of public spheres. With the ‘intellectual noise’ from these spaces, Willems’ (2011: 46) argument of democracy as dissensus seems to be supported.

Willems means that a more radical concept of democracy would see conflict and lack of consensus as a given in contrast to Habermas' liberal concept of democracy (2011: 46).

The Book Café was established in Harare in 1997 by Paul Brickhill as an arts and culture venue and it morphed into a critical space for free cultural expression. A YouTube video featuring a range of artists and Brickhill offers insight into the significance of the venue (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zwUs4OroPZg>, accessed 22 November 2016). Arts manager, Victor Mavedzenge, states that “the Book Café is providing an impetus into a new popular culture” but together with a musician called Mashasha, they lament that the concept of such a place is confined to Harare. This observation is important because the genesis of the Magamba Network is in the Book Café and it is debatable whether the network would have come into existence if this venue did not exist:

Interviewer: ...how do you see a dedicated venue as critical towards giving space to free expression?

Comrade Fatso: Very important. Book Cafe was a great space for us to start performing just as individual artists and then networking. And then we formed Magamba. When we launched in November 2007, we did that at Book Cafe and then in December we did our first show as Mashoko.

Outspoken: And, yeah, looking at the venue scope in Zimbabwe, it's either a corporate event that's happening but never the arts... I think what's unique about the Book Cafe is that they allow you to try out new ideas...to go ahead and conceptualise your art and stuff... allow you to grow and just think and go crazy. There is always need for those kinds of spaces where you can be one with the expression and just see where it takes you.

Interviewer: If the Book Cafe as a space had not existed do you think Magamba would have emerged somehow or it would have been a different entity or what?

Outspoken: I don't know. Because how I met Fatso, how I ended up going to the Book Cafe - I had a friend who attended one of the House of Hunger poetry slams but I wasn't into poetry like that. But when I was in Mazowe - at the farm - buying milk in my overalls I saw a TV programme - a youth programme and he was on it, standing in front of the National Art Gallery and he was talking about the House of Hunger poetry slam and then he mentioned the Ghetto Projekts [*sic*] which he said was the tightest hip hop outfit in Zimbabwe. And since it is a competitive sport I was like "What? There are things happening, there's hip hop and stuff." And that's how I ended up going to the Book Cafe, meeting up with the guys and we just bonded and grew from that experience.

Prior to the formation of Magamba, Comrade Fatso was running ‘open mic’ sessions at the Book Café where a variety of artists ranging from mbira groups, poets to hip-hop artists would take turns to perform. Comrade Fatso adds, “...it was a cool place to try out spoken word and we started meeting like the emerging young spoken word movements.” The poets also performed at the Poetry Café that was set up annually during the Harare International Festival (HIFA) and it was here that they met French poet Pilot le Hot and he gave them the idea of starting ‘poetry slams’. Comrade Fatso together with two other arts managers, Victor Mavedzenge and Victor Moyo, then launched the House of Hunger Poetry Slam at the Book Café which they saw as “an important way of the building of that emerging, nascent spoken word movement”.

As Outspoken explains it was from the House of Hunger Poetry Slam experience and appreciation of the importance of physical spaces for expression that the Magamba Network was formed:

Outspoken: ...as I progressed I realised that there were very few platforms where people could actually express themselves or have mentorship in those areas. So together with Comrade Fatso we established Magamba Network after having done the poetry and hiphop circuit in Zimbabwe and, regionally, in South Africa as well as a couple of tours abroad. We realised there was need for more organisation[s] that did the mentorship and the availing of platforms for people to express themselves.

In the establishment of Magamba the two artists recognized that the contestation in Zimbabwe revolved largely around the ‘mastery of meaning’ (Hall, 1982) and thus they strategized with the sensibility of the subaltern – create spaces and organise artists. The extracts below show a clear understanding that, in the context of Zimbabwe, meaning is in the service of power (Thompson 1990) and that the artists needed to respond to the political elite’s attempts to impose a single narrative that closes out any other interpretation of history and events:

Outspoken: When we talk media in Zimbabwe we are talking the propaganda machine because it has always been the voice of the ruling party and it has stood for so long unchallenged that people have accepted it as the norm which then became the truth, unofficially. So it is trying to chip away at that belief by providing an alternative means of access to media. This can be through art, even social media or citizen journalism.

Interviewer to Comrade Fatso: ...On the sleeve of House of Hunger [2008 music album] you say "When we struggle for justice our words are our weapons. Our poetry is insurrection." Do you see words as having the potential to change the Zimbabwean reality?

Comrade Fatso: ... I think they play a really important role - words, spoken art, music. Sometimes there needs to be a mirror to society. Other times it needs to be a window to the future and what we aim to create - the society we want to create. So I think words, art and music are very important tools to communicate dreams, visions and our aspirations and to motivate people to struggle for a new country.

Interviewer: Does this then inform the name Shoko for your festival?

Comrade Fatso: Yeah, that's one of the reasons that we chose the name Shoko for our festival because it means 'Word' and there is great power in the 'Word' to communicate to people and to unite them.

The Magamba Network co-founders established the Shoko Festival in 2011, initially as a hip-hop festival. Over the years the event has expanded to include, inter alia, comedy, digital media training, and discussions on youth, technology and activism. The Shoko Festival also includes concerts and workshops called 'Peace in the Hood' that take place in the townships of Harare. Comrade Fatso sees the objectives of Shoko as being "the celebration of what's urban, what's cutting edge, what's happening on the ground right now while at the same time forces that can be forces for social changes. So it's a celebration of progressive urban culture that can be part of opening up democratic space and promoting social justice but very importantly space for new ideas." The 2013 Shoko Festival programme, of which I took part as a speaker, had the theme 'We the People' and had following range of topics as well as publicity notes which indicated the ideological slant of the event (I have written these down verbatim):

<p>Shoko Festival 2013 programme: The Hub programme: Hashtags and Freedom, Women in New Media</p> <p>Mobile Phones and Activism</p> <p>Citizen Journalism: Blogging the Future</p> <p>Opening up Space: The Social, Economic and Political Relevance of Apps, Mobile and Tech</p> <p>Writing Wrongs: Citizen Journalism, Technology and Free Speech</p>	<p>'We the People' shows how despite the many challenges that the city and the country have gone through, the festival can bring people together in an inspiring space of culture, alternative media and positive activism, moving the city and the country forward.</p> <p>The Hub will be a vibrant daylong gathering to debate new media, citizen journalism, technology and freedom of expression. The Hub will create a powerful space to empower, share, analyse and map ways forward to open up our societies. The Hub UnConference will bring together a cross-section of young people, citizen journalists, journalism students, social media activists,</p>
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To conclude the discussion on spaces for expression, I will look at how the Magamba artists use the internet. In Chapter 3 (section 3.7) I presented the contradictory views around the meaning of the internet in terms of civic engagement and contestation of local, national and global discourses (Kellner 1995, Dahlgren 2007, Haupt 2008 & 2012, Willems 2011). Whilst one view celebrated the internet as offering spaces for marginalised and dominated groups to construct and circulate their own messages as part of the ‘information commons’, there was also the warning that the mere availability of technology did not translate into use and engagement. In the Zimbabwean context Comrade Fatso and Outspoken appreciate the social media dividend:

Interviewer: ...What do you these social media platforms for and why do you think they are important?

Comrade Fatso: These social media platforms are important to reaching young people considering that Zimbabwe has such a high penetration of mobile phones and they are mobile intimate. So the platforms represent an important means for reaching young people - an uncensored way of reaching them without going through state controlled TV or radio.

Interviewer: Why do you use social media platforms in your own work?

Outspoken: I use it personally to try and engage to a greater degree with individuals that are online to just see what ideas we can share. If viewpoints [...] vary, why so? I think it is a space where you can get to tackle pertinent issues in a way that is safer. It is a space where you get to explore and implore more than you would walking down the streets just because of the paranoia of the environment that we live in.

The shift from mass-media’s one-to-many broadcast model to new media’s more lateral many-to-many model allows a wider range of actors to receive, rework, distribute and critique media texts (Haupt 2012: 30). Publics can be constituted in multiple spaces through debate and contestation about matters of common concern in cyberspace, regardless of geographical boundaries and of national boundaries (Haupt 2012: 65). As Outspoken’s comments demonstrate, the relative safety of the internet as opposed to activism on the streets means that many Zimbabweans that have access to social media prefer to express and engage online. The Magamba artists have also been part of what is termed ‘hashtag activism’. They have participated in different campaigns such as #ThisFlag which was started via Twitter by a pastor who questioned the Mugabe regime’s mismanagement of resources, corruption, intimidation and

restriction of basic rights. However, it is arguable if Zimbabweans have managed to bridge the gap between vibrant virtual activism and putting ‘boots on the ground’ to demonstrate against perceived injustices.

5.3 Hegemonic discourses - contesting narratives of patriotism and sovereignty

As illustrated in Chapter 2, ZANU PF introduced ‘patriotic history’ as the fulcrum of party and government propaganda and mobilized state-controlled media and other institutions to disseminate a highly partial narrative. The government and state also actively ensured via legislation, policy and practice that the media landscape (especially radio and television) was heavily tilted in favour of the incumbent government and the ruling party. Miles Tendi has usefully summarized the four key themes of ‘patriotic history’ that underpinned the dominant discourse - land; race; a dichotomy between ‘sell-outs’ and ‘patriots’; and the rejection of Western interference based on what were perceived as ‘Western ideals’ such as human rights (2010:1). As part of the ‘Third Chimurenga’ (see Chapter 2) these themes played themselves out in a wide variety of formats including news bulletins, television and radio programmes, music, jingles, Independence Day celebrations, political speeches, histories and memories of the liberation war and history textbooks (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009, Moyo 2012, Ranger 2004 & 2005).

However, in an environment where the media are constrained it is through the alternative, popular forms of media that citizens in Africa either receive information on political affairs or contest political elites (Mano 2011, Willems 2011, and Moyo 2012). The Magamba Network artists responded to ZANU-PF and government’s propaganda with their poetry, music and comedy but, arguably, it was through their satirical faux-news video programme, *Zambezi News*, that the artists offered a sustained trenchant criticism of the ZANU-PF narratives of patriotism and sovereignty. Willems has written on how Zimbabweans have established a culture of creating and circulating political jokes via digital media and the import of such practice:

The practice of joking defied government’s efforts to monopolise the public sphere. The technologically mediated practice of joking through email and SMS, reverberating in countless retellings on the street and in homes, contributed to the dissemination of alternative imaginaries to those of the state. Hence, jokes and rumours should not strictly be seen as ‘counter-texts’ but as interventions that constituted alternative media in their own right. (2011: 411)

For a fuller appreciation of *Zambezi News*’ currency as ‘counter-text’ and alternative media, it is important to outline the genesis of the programme and the intentions of the artists. In the extract

below, Outspoken and Comrade Fatso give the background to Zambezi News which commenced with Season 1 in 2011:

Outspoken: In our performance styles we have always...in-jokes. I would feature on Chabvondoka's set with Fatso and there were always those stage jokes and stage gimmicks... It became that kind of natural merging of the lighter side of the political situation, messaging the political situation in a more comical way. Fatso had always expressed wanting to have comedy nights and then when we were approached to do the first Zambezi News at ZIFF [Zimbabwe International Film Festival] we banged it out in this very office like 30 minutes before the film crew came and it just grew. The potential of it was made more known when we were looking at the comments under the You Tube views ... and we were like "Yeah. This is actually pretty powerful."

Season 1 of Zambezi News was distributed on DVD, online (YouTube), and some clips were shared via WhatsApp and also broadcast on the now defunct First TV which broadcast from South Africa. The three seasons of the show have also been broadcast on the satellite channel, Zambezi Magic, which is available on the DStv bouquet in six Southern African countries Botswana, Malawi, Namibia, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe. From Comrade Fatso's statements it seems the distribution of the comedy series has achieved the purposes of being both alternative media (see definition in Chapter 1, section 1.3) and a 'counter-text':

Comrade Fatso: The reach and response has been interesting. Zambezi News is something that crosses a lot of boundaries. Race and class-wise it gets to the whites, the blacks, the coloured, the Indians. We distributed 12 000 DVDs of Season 1 across the country with an estimated audience of 120 000. We distributed 5,000 through the Kubatana [Network] [a not-for-profit organization]. They received requests from over 120 towns, villages and growth points all the way from Sadza to Checheche. With broadcasting with First TV their viewership was in the millions considering they took over the SABC channels. You would go to MDC rallies and you would have comrades coming up: "Ballots in the box! Ballots in the box!" [a parody song on election rigging played on Zambezi News].

Zambezi News mocks a range of aspects of Zimbabwe Television news including content, the low production values, dressing, demeanour and speech mannerisms of the reporters and anchors to the 'public service announcements' between the breaks. A thematic analysis of Season Two Episode One which focuses on patriotism and sovereignty will serve to illustrate how Magamba Network undermine and subvert the 'patriotic history' narrative. In an article in the *Mail and*

Guardian, a South African weekly newspaper, Comrade Fatso summarized the format of the show as follows:

We shot the first season in 2011 as a faux-news show with three comic newscasters. The show cut between the newsroom and satirical reports from the field, and featured a string of outrageous characters. We even did a special episode for the 2013 elections in which our newscaster, Mandape Mandape, showed how easy it was to vote – unless you were young, urban and likely to vote for the opposition. (<http://mg.co.za/article/2015-06-17-speaking-truth-to-power-in-zim-and-laughing-about-it>, accessed 11 July 2016)

Patriotism is the overriding theme for Episode 1 of Season 2. The Zimbabwean flag is ubiquitous on coffee mugs, bowties, hats and other paraphernalia. The episode opens with the three newscasters for Zambezi News, Mandape Mandape, Jerome Weathers and Kudzayi Mushayahembe, seated in a lounge area preparing for their news bulletin. The new head of the TV station, Henrietta, walks in wearing a Zimbabwe flag skirt. She is upset and lectures them that “this news organisation is descending into a reckless, foreign-sponsored gobbledygook. The people don’t need facts. They need our stories. Last week you even covered a member of the other party even though he was dead. Does it matter that it was his funeral? You know we don’t cover them – dead or alive.” Pointing to a bold notice on the board, Henrietta informs the three newscasters that there is a directive “right from the top” which instructs them that “PATRIOTISM is the NEWS. The NEWS is PATRIOTISM.” Having now been re-educated as to what constitutes the news and also threatened with dismissal, the anchors try to outdo each other in terms of delivering ‘patriotic news’. One newscaster defines Patriotism 101 as “don’t read between the lines. Just read the lines.”

The ubiquity of the Zimbabwean flag connotes patriotism but in the country’s context, ZANU-PF has gone further to conflate the ruling party, government and the country. Thus ‘patriotic news’ would be understood to be favourable coverage of the ruling party and the dismissal of critical voices from civil society, intellectuals and the political opposition. As discussed in Chapter 2, having commandeered public radio and television, the government ensured the introduction of programmes like *Nhaka Yedu* (Our Heritage), ‘National Ethos’ or ‘New Farmer’ as critical platforms for ‘narrating the nation’ from an exclusively ZANU-PF perspective (Moyo: 2012: 189). The Zambezi News segment below satirizes the use of patriotism to privilege the voice of power and as shorthand to mask the truth:

Voice of newscaster Mandape Mandape: "And now moving on to a special report with the Minister of Impending Projects on how to view life through patriotic sunglasses."

Image of sunglasses emblazoned with the Zimbabwean flag and text which reads: Patriotic Sunglasses.

Black screen. Voice of Minister of Impending Projects: "Unpatriotic elements have termed these power cuts, blackouts. Some have even gone as far as labelling this load shedding." A match is lit and hand moves to light up candle, revealing a couple in conversation seated at dinner table.

The Minister of Impending Projects, belly bulging, appears in his suit, a hunter's hat and sunglasses.

Voice of Minister: "We in the Party see this as an optimum time to facilitate romance in the nation. It is part of our family planning vision for 2015 to facilitate such romantic interludes on a rather regular basis. Some detractors have alleged that these romantic interludes occur between 6 and 9pm due to the fact that this is prime time electricity usage. However, our gallant scientists and chemists of the soil have proven that 6 to 9pm is prime time to instigate romance."

The satire serves to point out the absurdity of rationalizing the lack of basic services by thinking that renaming a crisis alleviates it. As a way of interpellation, the language mimics the usual binary oppositional rhetoric of the ZANU-PF government as seen in 'gallant scientists and chemists of the soil' versus "unpatriotic elements" or "our detractors". Henrietta and her three newscasters are what Hall calls the "accredited witnesses and spokesmen [sic] who had a privileged access, as of right, to the world of public discourse and whose statements carried representativeness and authority which permitted them to establish the primary framework or terms of an argument (1982: 81). At the end of the bulletin the head of Zambezi News congratulates the newscasters: "That's what I call real patriotic, anti-colonial news reporting. That's good guys. Don't flesh out the facts. Play on the emotions. Dubious sources of information..." The discourse markers have been set, taught and learnt dutifully: 'patriotism is the news, the news is patriotism'. This parody of the ruling elite and their functionaries serves several purposes:

Outspoken: ... [the people] get the message in a more refreshing way because when you start your day and end it you the same suffering of the people and it affects you. The same situation is not changing and you end up switching off. You get detached from the political situation. But opening up these conversations in a fresher light says take time to laugh at yourself, let's laugh at each other but it is

still critiquing very key issues. I think it is an important step in getting people involved again in the conversation about the nation.

Zimbabwean political analyst, Takura Zhangazha, quoted in the *Mail and Guardian* newspaper, seems to concur with Outspoken's take on the value of comedy:

Political satire has provided comic relief to many Zimbabweans but, above all, it has been an innovative way of speaking truth to power. *Zambezi News* is key in carrying on this tradition, especially across various media spectrums and between generations. (<http://mg.co.za/article/2015-06-17-speaking-truth-to-power-in-zim-and-laughing-about-it>, accessed 11 July 2016)

Comrade Fatso and Outspoken have also used their poetry and music to contest the rewriting of the nation's history and the abuse of the official public sphere to impose a single narrative. On 18 April 2008 the government-controlled daily newspaper, *The Herald*, led with the headline "Zimbabwe will never be a colony again", which was a quote from President Mugabe's speech on the eve of the country's independence. That same year Comrade Fatso and his band Chabvondoka released their debut album titled *House of Hunger*. Through songs such as the title track and *Bread and Roses*, the album contradicted the government and ruling party's message of independence and sovereignty by chronicling the impoverishment of people, the violence of the 'green bombers' (militia), the continued global structural dependency on the Bretton Woods institutions (International Monetary Fund and the World Bank), the corruption, the hate speech and the violation of women's rights. The song *House of Hunger* opens with an ironic 'welcome' to a different kind of house:

Welcome welcome to the House of Hunger
 Welcome to walls of fear and anger
 Listen to the cries of children raped
 Hear the blood of hopes scraped
 Hear activists' wrists get twisted
 While life dreams get left blistered
 Here those with hope in head
 Are beaten, battered, left for dead

The house is a country – a place of violence where people live in fear and anger and where dissent is silenced with assault and murder. The very title, *House of Hunger*, speaks intertextually (see Chapter 4 section 4.3) to the 1978 novella by Dambudzo Marechera which was set in Rhodesia and which details the violence (at family and national levels) and deprivation that the protagonist endures. The irony is that 1980 – the year of Zimbabwe's

independence – does not assuage the ‘hunger’ because the new regime that comes in inherits the house and does not radically transform it. ‘House’ is a play on the meaning of Zimbabwe which means literally ‘the house of stone’. As Barber has observed the process of the creation of popular cultures starts with the naming of people’s suffering (1997: 5):

A house built by chefs white now black
 They build on the fast track
 Left alone by western chefs who built towers of hunger with the IMF
 Now they must build alone
 Without the possibility of a World Bank loan
 The western chefs have left the kitchen
 Now they alone must cook the famine
 So they place brick upon brick of fear and corruption
 Brick upon brick of indoctrination
 Brick upon brick of green bomber
 Brick upon brick of hunger, hunger

Comrade Fatso captures some of the responses of the regime – the corruption, the indoctrination of the ‘Third Chimurenga’, the violence of the ZANU-PF allied militia (‘green bombers’) and the worsening poverty of the majority of the people. In Chapter 2 Sam Moyo et al described the nature of the economic situation Zimbabwe found itself in by the late 1990s as an “Economic Structural Adjustment Programme-related macro-economic crisis that resulted in a contraction of the economy and rampant inflation” (2008: 13). With the failure to pay back loans owed to the Bretton Woods institutions, Zimbabwe found itself without international financial support. On the political front government faced what it perceived to be the most dangerous threats to its survival: “a vibrant civil society which had just given birth to a massively popular political opposition – and an increasingly effective private media.” (Moyse 2009: 43-44). After naming and communing suffering there is an aspiration for a better life (Barber 1997: 6) but there is recognition that there is need for a transformation of consciousness:

But the writing’s on the wall and it says *Zvakwana*
 The writing’s on the durawall and it says *Woza*
 Because the cement is our apathy
 The cement is ‘we’
 We’re the cement and they know it
 The house only stands because we support it
 It’s time to build a house without chefs
 Without World Banks
 Without IMFs
 Time to build a house for all
 And it all starts if we stand tall!

Kwaramba observes that popular music is a reservoir of “the untold experiences of the dominated people especially in relationships where these experiences are deliberately not represented or understated to maintain hegemonic structures of power and dominance” (1997: 6). Writing along similar lines Mano suggests that “musical texts authored in upheavals and crises are invested with meanings that offer an important avenue to mediate key political topics (2011: 91). For Comrade Fatso the time has come to build a different kind of house that is inclusive and delinked from global capital. He references the graffiti of an underground activist group called Zvakwana and also points to the activism of a civil society group, Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA). Zvakwana/Sokwanele (Shona and Ndebele for ‘enough is enough’) emerged in 2004 and circulated anti-Mugabe government messages using various alternative media including SMS, posters, graffiti, music compact discs, branded condoms and online messages (Wikipedia, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zvakwana>, accessed 24 November 2016).

This section has attempted to explore and discuss the form and content of the counter discourses that the Magamba Network has produced in response to the hegemonic ‘patriotic history’ discourse of ZANU-PF and government. Their video comedy show, *Zambezi News*, parodies Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation’s television news and Comrade Fatso’s *House of Hunger* song critiques the meaning of independence. The next section probes the politics of identity and how Comrade Fatso and Outspoken critically appropriate local and global symbols, styles and artistic forms to create music that subverts and undermines the ideologies of the ‘Third Chimurenga’.

5.4 The politics of identity and critical appropriation (music, language and symbols) at both global and local levels

Gramsci suggests that “creating a new culture does not only mean one’s own individual discoveries” but rather the “socialisation” of other cultures’ “truths”, progressive ideas and forms and making them the basis for social action (cited in Mayo 1999: 51). Haupt’s study of South African hip-hop culture points to how youths have indigenised an American music form and used it to contest, inter alia, politics and hegemonic notions of citizenship (2008: 144). Hebdige defines hip-hop as a “culture [that] involves dance, dress, language and wild style graffiti” with the music part of being defined by ‘rap’ – where the artists “speak and in some cases half-sing – their lines in time to rhythms” (1987: 136).

A sub-genre of hip-hop called ‘conscious’ hip-hop is most critical of social relations in society (Haupt, 2008: 183) and it is what informs the cosmopolitan music of Comrade Fatso and Outspoken which fuses hip-hop, *chimurenga*, spoken word, reggae, rock and *mbaqanga*. Chimurenga music refers to “songs of the struggle” but is mostly linked to the mbira-inflected music of Zimbabwe’s Thomas Mapfumo (Turino 2000). Mbaqanga is a style of South African music with rural roots (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mbaqanga>, accessed 25 November 2016).

The significance and relevance of discussing the musical styles of Comrade Fatso and Outspoken is that the lyrics, delivery, instrumentation, language choice, symbolism, performance and presentation speak to a response and contestation of the restriction on free expression, the ‘patriotic history’ narrative and the general social and economic malaise in Zimbabwe. In their music the artists assert identities which are not imagined within the binary formulation of ‘patriot’ and ‘sell-out’ and ‘indigenous’ and ‘foreigner’. This section will analyse the use and meaning of hip-hop; the language used in the music; and finally, the symbols that inform both the lyrics and performance. Below is an extract from the interview with Outspoken:

Interviewer: Why do you use hip hop as a genre in your music and poetry...?

Outspoken: ...I would say that I derive inspiration from the likes of *chimurenga* and other traditional music that's common in Zimbabwe. I grew up in that urban setting where hip-hop represented a rebellion that young people related to. It's a music I related to and a music I felt communicated my message well with the target recipients [who are] also like my peers. But I felt like infusing it with some *chimurenga* as well because as much as the Mos Defs and the Talib Kwelis were my influences so were the James Chimombes and the Thomas Mapfumos. So it's been an artistic journey of seeking growth and more understanding within the arts but having my firm foundation in hip hop and poetry.

Comrade Fatso also explains the conscious appropriation of hip-hop and the resultant fusion:

Comrade Fatso: In creating our music as Chabvondoka we synthesized hip hop and *chimurenga*. And my lyrics are very much hip-hop based with a spoken word type of lyrics. We have chosen this genre because it's popular with young people in Zimbabwe and on the continent and so forth. As a music, it is part of the struggle itself.

Interviewer: Were there any artists from the UK or the US who influenced the current genres you have used?

Comrade Fatso: I think in terms of influence I got it from various quarters. So on the hip-hop side you got artists like Mos Def. On the reggae and dub side artists

like Linton Kwesi Johnson. And then on the *chimurenga* side influences like Thomas Mapfumo.

The common strands in the responses from the two artists are that the music style they have forged is part of their struggle; they also claim the style helps in communicating messages to a young audience because it is their music of choice; and in fusing hip-hop with other music styles, they have looked to the key exponents of conscious hip-hop (American rappers Mos Def and Talib Kweli), reggae and dub poetry (Jamaican-British poet Linton Kwesi Johnson) and *chimurenga* (Zimbabwean musician Thomas Mapfumo). Outspoken asserts his identification with hip-hop in a song titled *Hip-Hop Is in Me*:

Hip-hop was medication
From the day that I start

The chorus is repeated with gusto:

Hip-hop is in my heart
Hip-hop is my heart

The indigenization of hip-hop takes place through subject matter, language, metaphors/symbols and in that context there is contestation with the patriotic history narrative of ZANU-PF. At the heart of the Third Chimurenga's mythology is what Stuart Hall calls the 'foundational myth':

... a story which locates the origin of the nation, the people and their character so early that they are lost in the mists of, not 'real' but 'mythic' time. New nations are founded on these myths though what preceded colonization was not 'one nation, one people', but many different tribal cultures and societies. (1992: 274)

Given this 'narration of the nation' in terms of race, ethnicity, geography and language, in the Zimbabwean context the contradictions emerge precisely around how far the memory of nation should stretch back. Muchemwa writes:

... With the destruction of the white racist political order, it became possible to envision memory as common and multi-faceted. Yet the enforced recourse to an ancestral memory marks the continuity of an ethnocentric Shona ancestral imagination that has threatened to subsume the memory of other ethnic groups in the country. Whites, 'coloureds', Asians, and black immigrants cannot occupy the space opened up by myths of indigeneity. (2005: 201)

Claiming "privileged ancestral heritage" (Muchemwa, 2005: 201), ZANU PF called city residents people "without totems" and "the state press from time to time carries bewildered articles about why urban populations are unpatriotic" (Ranger, 2005: 241). Being without a

totem is a metaphor for being rootless and lacking belonging. The Magamba Network artists contest the essentialist nature of identity in 'patriotic history':

Interviewer: If we look at another song that you have on the same CD album which is *Identity*, I want to zero in on just one line which is "*Toyi toyi chimurenga ndiwo mutupo*" (the struggle is my totem). Did you feel at the point that you were writing that this was the feeling of your generation - of an identity rooted in a democratic Zimbabwe?

Comrade Fatso: Definitely. I used that saying because on the one hand ZANU PF has disenfranchised young people in the urban areas and saying they have no totem. So in this song I am saying who cares what the totem is, what unites us is our struggle and belief for a new Zimbabwe and that's what defines our generation.

The song itself, *Identity*, is defiant and starts off with a series of questions around what the identity of the artist (Comrade Fatso) should be constructed as:

What's my identity?
 What's my identity meant to be?
 Is my identity meant to be a white boy from Zimbabwe?
 Is my identity veldskoens [*type of shoe*] and rugby?
 Or is my identity meant to be an English boy drinking tea
 Watching Arsenal on TV
 Shopping on Oxford Street
 Listening to rock and break beats?
 Or should my identity defy expectation
 Defy nation
 Defy time and place
 Defy class and race?

As the above are clearly rhetorical questions, Comrade Fatso moves to define his identity on his own terms and not within the narrow imaginary of ZANU PF's ethnic and race-based definition:

You want to put me in a box
 Cut off my tongue
 Chop off my locks
 Fit your stereotype
 You want me to fit into your stereotype
 Of being white
 But I don't fit into your nation of stereotypes
 My name is Farai handiti [*isn't it?*]
 And yes ndiri mu-vet [*I am white*]
 Two, I ain't no agent to the imperialists

I am very indigenous
 My roots run from Shamva to Bikita
 So you can just choke on your hate propaganda
 Because I am descended from Nehanda
 I am descended from every freedom fighter
 Without regard for tribe or skin colour
 Because my ideals are what define me
 Not my P-I-G-M-E-N-T-A-T-I-O-N

Mandaza (1999), Raftopoulos (2004) and Muzondidya and Gatsheni-Ndlovu (2007) have written extensively on the construction of racial and ethnic identities in Zimbabwe framing this within the ‘national question’ vis-à-vis European imperialism and settler colonialism.

Raftopoulos observes:

In Zimbabwe the crises over the legacy of colonial rule and post-colonial legitimacy have hardened state politics around the race question. The result has been an extraordinarily prohibitive conception of national belonging and a severe closing down of spaces for a more open discussion of citizenship, economic transformation and democratization. (2004: 13)

In claiming ancestral links with Nehanda (a guardian spirit medium as Vambe explains below), Comrade Fatso turns the nation’s foundational narrative on its head because being white he is excluded from the ‘myths of indigeneity’ (Muchemwa, 2005: 201). Vambe (2004: 6) provides a useful explanation on the role and significance of the spirit mediums:

...The Shona people of Zimbabwe distinguish *Vadzimu* – ancestors who protect the clan, from *Mhondoro* – national guardian spirits... These spiritual distinctions suggest that in Shona mediumistic religion, certain ancestors are preferred and more regularly invoked in situations of national crisis. The cultural symbols associated with them are politically privileged as representative of the ‘soul’ of the nation.

In numerous songs Nehanda’s name is invoked and this was particularly so during the liberation war (1972-9) because as Pongweni puts it “the songs also emphasize that for the war to be won, the nation must engage the support of the ancestral spirits such as Kaguvi and Nehanda, the spirit mediums who were hanged by the settlers in 898; Chaminuka, the prophet and rainmaker of 1880s...”(1997: 66). In his song *Rise: Spirit of Nehanda*, Outspoken goes against the grain of the single narrative on the guardian spirit mediums of Nehanda and Chaminuka invoking them to rise and speak but in a contemporary context where “people are confused and do not know what lies ahead”:

Chorus:
 Rise spirit of Nehanda

Rise
 Let her speak (alternates with spirit speak)
 Rise
 The land's possessed with the rhythm the drummer beats

Background vocals: Chaminuka aripiko [*Where is Chaminuka?*]

Let them see the mighty prophet of Chitungwiza
 What your people need

Significantly the incantation to the spirit of Nehanda is not done in Shona or using the *mbira* which is a “specific type of lamellophone associated with the Zezuru people of the central region and to the south of Harare” (Turino, 2000: 73). The *mbira* has strong associations with spirit possession and ceremonial activities (Turino, 2000: 73). Instead Outspoken’s song is largely rapped in English with an energetic and intense rock guitar riff. This ‘sacrilege’ is significant in the context of counter discourse given how ZANU PF’s songs operate in narrating the nation:

The First Chimurenga is linked to the Second, giving the nation time depth; the nation is concretely linked to family, and ZANU is portrayed as synonymous with nation; contemporary leaders are made iconically equivalent to ancestral spirits and culture heroes through paradigmatic substitution. (Turino, 2000: 217; cf Pongweni, 1997)

Williams has called this “*selective tradition*: that which, within the terms of an effective dominant culture, is always passed off as ‘*the tradition*’, ‘*the significant past*’ (1980: 38).

Having appropriated at the spiritual level, the Magamba Network artists go further to take the language of ZANU-PF. As discussed in Chapter 2, the battle in Zimbabwe is exemplified via the diction which is used to signify who is a ‘patriot’ and who is a ‘sell-out’ and thus words such as ‘comrade’, ‘gamba’ (hero) and ‘chimurenga’ (insurrection) are used by government-controlled mass media as discourse markers (see Moyo 2010). The artists who are the focus of this study have deliberately re-appropriated these same terms and thus call their network Magamba (heroes) and one of them uses the moniker Comrade. In the same vein the Magamba artists refer to their quest for a democratic Zimbabwe as a ‘chimurenga’ and that this is also their totem.

Comrade Fatso elaborates:

Comrade Fatso: ZANU PF has tried to monopolise the term "magamba", as if they are the only freedom fighters. So this is about taking back the power and language has got a lot of power. We are also the *magamba* - we are the freedom fighters of today and we call each other comrade in a democratic struggle.

Interviewer: And Chabvondoka [name of Comrade Fatso's band] itself as a name - what does it mean and what informs the name?

Comrade Fatso: It came, of course, because our message and music was political and revolutionary. So we also went with a name that's explosive because Chabvondoka is riot - and we wanted bring to the stage that kind of gravitas.

In their fusion of hip-hop, *chimurenga* and other musical forms and the appropriation of myths and terminologies, the Magamba artists deliver their music and comedy in a language that speaks to their intended audiences:

Comrade Fatso: I think it is important that music reflects the language that is popular in Zimbabwe which is a combination of English and Shona, that is Shonglish. I think it is important for authentic art to speak an authentic language so I try to use the language that is spoken on the streets so that I can speak to young people.

Claire Kramsch expounds on the value language plays in identity construction:

It is widely believed that there is a natural connection between the language spoken by members of a social group and that group's identity. By their accent, their vocabulary, their discourse patterns, speakers identify themselves and are identified as members of this or that speech and discourse community. From this membership, they draw personal strength and pride, as well as a sense of social importance and historical continuity from using the same language as the group they belong to. (1998: 65)

In the last section I will examine the dimensions of the Magamba Network artists' 'organic intellectualism', that is, what ideologies do they profess and how is this borne out in their work.

5.5 Organic intellectuals and the quest for democracy and social justice

On the sleeve of his 2008 music album, *House of Hunger*, Comrade Fatso writes:

When we struggle for justice our words are our weapons. Our poetry is insurrection. Mashoko ekusunungura [*words to liberate*]. These words are part of the rage of voices shouting down the many houses of hunger. These words are dedicated to the freedom fighters and social movements struggling for another world.

In the above words the artist expresses his ideology which is a struggle for 'justice', 'liberation' and 'another world' using music and poetry as weapons. He identifies with the 'voices' of rage and expresses solidarity with global social movements and 'freedom fighters'. Outspoken expresses his intentions and agency thus:

Interviewer: And if we were to bring all this work within the Zimbabwean context what could you say you are responding to?

Outspoken: I think it is responding to the narrative that exists. The narrative that the people that are responsible for our freedom are either dead or the ones that are currently enslaving us. I think it is allowing individuals to realise that the struggle to achieve freedom is a constant one. It's ever evolving needs people to be continually motivated into getting up to the task. It is almost like wanting to ignite minds that can then free the enslaved populace.

As discussed in Chapter 3 “the terrain on which this hegemony is won or lost is the terrain of the superstructures; the institutions of civil society and the state” (Clarke et al 1981: 59). In the face of the restrictions to participating in the public sphere, Comrade Fatso and Outspoken made certain strategic political choices. Amilcar Cabral’s (1972) seminal essay *Identity and Dignity in the National Liberation Struggle* is useful in making sense of why middle-class youths with a range of options choose arts and culture to identify with the social, economic and political struggles of the marginalized. Speaking of the African petit bourgeoisie in a colonial context and their ambiguities in joining the masses of the people in their struggle for independence, Cabral argues that “when the return to the sources goes beyond the individual and is expressed in groups or movements, the contradiction is transformed into struggle, secret or overt...” (1972: 46) . At this point there is then complete and absolute identification with the hopes of the ordinary people but, he warns:

...identification with the masses and reassertion of identity can be temporary or definitive, apparent or real, in the light of the daily effort and sacrifice demanded by the struggle itself - a struggle which, while being an organized political expression of a culture is also of necessity proof not only of identity but also of dignity. (Cabral, 1972: 46)

Comrade Fatso and Outspoken identify themselves in their music with the female vegetable street seller who is brutalized by the municipal police (*Bread and Roses*), the unemployed youth (*Ma-Streets [To the Streets]*), the exploited worker (*Mahara [For nothing]*) and the indigent (*Freedom Train*). As Hall reminds us, it is via language that the struggle for meaning is produced and in the Zimbabwean context there has been close to four decades (and more virulently so since 2000) of constructing ZANU-PF and Robert Mugabe as synonymous with the country and its fortunes.

Outspoken's song *Freedom Train* is a reflection of a counter discourse that stands in stark contrast to the narrative at Zimbabwe's independence in 1980. A comparative analysis with Thomas Mapfumo's *Chitima CheRusununguko* [*Freedom Train*] bears this out. Pongweni writes about "one song called *Chitima cherusununguko* (*The freedom train*), in which Mapfumo sings the praises of the new Prime Minister and warns malcontents to beware" (1997: 72):

<i>Ndezvenhando kugunun'una</i>	It's empty talk to complain,
<i>Zimbabwe yakauya</i>	Zimbabwe finally arrived.
<i>Ndezvenhando kuchemachema</i>	It's churlishness to ask for more,
<i>Zimbabwe takaitora...</i>	We took Zimbabwe.
<i>Satani ibva musure</i>	'Get thee behind me Satan!'
<i>Hurumende imbotonga</i>	Allow the government to rule
<i>Shamwari kwira chitima</i>	Friend, jump on the train
<i>Ufambe nevamwe</i>	And travel with your fellows
<i>Chitima cherusununguko...</i>	The freedom train.
<i>Muchairi wacho ndianiko?</i>	And just who is its driver?
<i>Ndivo vaMugabe...</i>	None other than Mr Mugabe!
<i>Gandanga uchariziva here</i>	Would you recognize the
<i>ukariwona?</i>	'terrorist' if you saw him?
<i>Riri kutonga Zimbabwe yaro.</i>	He is now ruling his
	[country] Zimbabwe.

Pongweni observes that "Mapfumo thus urges all patriots to board the freedom train driven by Mr Mugabe into a future..." (1997: 72). The above celebration in the euphoria of independence contrasts with the sentiments expressed three decades later by Outspoken:

Still inside the station
 Waiting on the Freedom Train
 Its Inspector came to check on our tickets
 If we had paid
 Finally my people shall be home
 Amongst their relatives and peers
 They could hardly wait to see
 The cities arise and slowly disappear
 Into the distance

It was one train with many classes
 The luxurious was, of course, the First
 Then came the Second Class, middle class citizens
 Then the Economy – that is the worst
 But not because of its occupants
 But mainly their conditions – they were packed like animals
 Sweating like the steam engines

Voice: All aboard!

That was Freedom's last call
 The destination was Democracy
 Equality for all but a few
 The few being the masses in the last
 That were disposable to benefit the upper class

To Outspoken the 'Freedom Train' that ferries Zimbabweans in 1980 is a socially stratified one and, on this journey to 'Democracy', the poor do not receive any economic benefits. One woman is verbally harassed by the train inspector for not having a ticket and another gives birth to a child who dies on the train. The conclusion is self-explanatory:

18 April 1980
 Was the day we left the station
 Aboard the Freedom Train
 But we still haven't reached our destination
 Freedom

As Kwaramba (1997) and Turino (2000) have shown, from the late 1980s onward Thomas Mapfumo was to become one of the most critical artists of the ZANU-PF regime. The challenge for ZANU-PF is that "consent must be constantly won and re-won, for people's material social experience constantly reminds them of the disadvantages of subordination and thus poses a constant threat to the dominant" (Fiske 1987: 259). However, the ruling party of the year 2000 onward had lost hegemony and now ruled by dominance:

...[ZANU-PF] does not have the hegemony that it would want. Nor does it appear too keen on working on a key component of a democratic hegemony which is that of persuasion being greater than coercion. (<http://takura-zhangazha.blogspot.co.za>, accessed 25 November 2016)

Gramsci reminds us that if the ruling class has lost consensus "this means precisely that the great masses have become detached from their traditional ideologies, and no longer believe what they used to believe previously..." (cited in Bennett: 1981: 199). It is in this context that in the song *MaStreets* Comrade Fatso goes beyond the "intense labour of criticism" and urges the people to do much more:

The rot can never stop the truth
 Because you wanna chain me
 You wanna contain me
 You wanna chop off my head
 And debrain me
 You want me to develop your "Yes comrade" mentality

All in the name of supposed unity
 Well listen, shamwari [*friend*], my one desire is to be free
 So though you control the police, the army, the media, the TV
 And all society
 You can't control the heart of humanity
 You can't control desire for equality

The song goes on to urge people to rise up and Comrade Fatso explains further the context of the production of the militancy in the lyrics and the beat:

Comrade Fatso: *MaStreets* is a good example of the kind of music we were trying to create – to synthesize hip hop, chimurenga and African and Western styles. And the chorus in that "*Hapana chakanaka / Toonana kumastreets [There is havoc ahead / Let's meet in the streets]*" is actually a popular song in the struggle for democracy - you hear it at demonstrations and I heard it at a gathering of women activists - WOZA - Women of Zimbabwe Arise. And it is encouraging that nothing good will come - we should meet up in the streets. So the chorus is very much a call for protest. And the angle I take is very much the Shona tradition of becoming the subject you talk of - I take on the persona of a young person living in the streets struggling on a day to day basis.

In the live performance of this song at the 2009 Harare International Festival of the Arts (HIFA), the militancy of the lyrics was matched by the khaki military fatigues of Comrade Fatso and Outspoken, the drumming by a guest group, the 'toyitoyi' (militant dance) and the ululation. Comrade Fatso had prefaced the concert with a tongue-in-cheek welcome message which took a dig at the repressive regime:

This is not a rally, comrades. Those of you expecting political slogans – I don't do politics. I just sing about it... I wanted to hold rallies but couldn't get permission so I became a singer instead.

As I have pointed out in Chapter 2 (section 2.5) the Zimbabwean courts constantly overturn bans illegally imposed on public meetings and demonstrations by the police. When demonstrators proceed with their legal protests they are met with violence from the police. Whilst it is relatively easier to stage a music show in Harare and Bulawayo, the rural areas and small towns are usually 'no-go' areas unless you are a ZANU PF supporter (see Raftopoulos 2009).

Interviewer: Do you think that if you and Chabvondoka played at Mupandawana Growth Point [a small town in southeast Zimbabwe] there would be an issue?

Comrade Fatso: That's the thing. we have always wanted to get our music out and we made sure the CDs went but because of the volatile political situation it is difficult to find venues that are willing to host such political content... Of course

one always wants to get the message out further and now there is somewhat more space than there was in 2008.

Conclusion

Through their music and comedy and the provision of physical and virtual spaces for creative expression and training, organic intellectuals Comrade Fatso and Outspoken engage in what Gramsci has term an “intense labour of criticism” – they produce art that is grounded in the specific realities of ordinary people. As Fraser reminds us “in the absence of an elimination of social inequalities there is marginalization of the contributions of members of subordinated groups both in everyday contexts and in official public spheres” (1992: 121). The spaces Magamba Network creates at the Shoko Festival and Moto Republik speak to the character of the subaltern publics – regrouping, strategizing, training and production of counter discourses (Fraser 1992). In contesting the narrow narrative of the nation they have appropriated the symbols and language that underpin the chauvinistic discourse of ZANU-PF, that is, the guardian spirits of Nehanda, Kaguvi and Chaminuka and the *chimurenga* diction of ‘comrade’, ‘magamba’ (heroes) etcetera and used these for cultural productions based on freedom and social justice. Borrowing from Haupt, one could argue that hip-hop is a significant vehicle through which subjects are able to position themselves as citizens in post-independence Zimbabwe. Comrade Fatso and Outspoken consciously explore the possibilities latent in the use of hip-hop as an expression of dissent and affirmation of their human rights as Zimbabweans (Haupt 2008: 183).

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

This chapter sums up the salient points arising out of the study. The study has sought to explore the emergence of youth protest arts at a very specific historical juncture and in response to the closure of media and democratic spaces. The study sought to unpack the confluence of factors – political, economic and social – that created the context for Magamba Network to emerge and for this group to produce alternative media and particular cultural productions that contested the ‘patriotic history’ narrative of the ZANU-PF regime. The study also sought to understand Comrade Fatso and Outspoken’ artistic intentions and agency in order to obtain a fuller picture.

The study employed a qualitative research methodology in order to obtain an “insider perspective on social action”, that is, the artists’ views, activities and performance. In order to make sense of the data (interview transcripts, music and video programmes) emanating from the research (a result of in-depth semi-structured individual interviews and observation), this study employed a qualitative content analysis method. Thematic coding assisted in narrowing down thematic categories to four: free expression and creative spaces; hegemonic discourses - contesting narratives of patriotism and sovereignty; the politics of identity and critical appropriation of language, music and symbols at local and global levels; and the role of organic intellectuals in the struggle for democracy and social justice. Rich information was obtained that supported the central thesis of a counter hegemonic group of artists emerging in response to the closure of media and democratic space and coherently fashioning their messages in contesting the state.

The study has established that Comrade Fatso and Outspoken are organic intellectuals who, denied access to the official public sphere, have sought to create and circulate alternative media and cultural productions. The study has demonstrated that the artists have consciously developed their work cognisant of the historical moment, the intended audience and the vision of a ‘new Zimbabwe’. The artists have identified their struggle with ordinary people and in their music have adopted the personae of the street vegetable seller, the unemployed youth and the exploited worker. Contrasting themselves with the ethnic identity embedded in the ZANU-PF narrative of the nation, the artists have sought to find their identity in the search for social justice.

To this end the artists have appropriated the language, symbols and music from both the local and global contexts. Their intentions and agency are revealed in their fusion of ‘conscious’ hip-hop with Afro-beats in songs delivered in a language (‘Shonglish’) that resonates with the youth.

The study has also shown that, aware that their productions would not be given airplay on radio or television (I don’t think you discuss this – it is important), the artists have established alternative creative spaces for young people to express themselves in poetry, music and a range of other art forms. As has been demonstrated the desire for free expression and creative spaces are at the heart of the emergence of Magamba Network. They have utilized these spaces to “chip away” at the myths of ZANU-PF. The study has also detailed the creation of Zambezi News as a satirical response to the propagandistic Zimbabwe Television and shown how the content and format of the former serves to unmask the ruling party and government’s moral and ideological bankruptcy. Zambezi News uses parody to speak truth to power.

Finally, the study has clearly shown that the intentions of the Magamba Network are to create ‘subaltern counterpublics’, that is, parallel ‘discursive arenas’ that contest the dominant ZANU-PF discourses. The Network’s artists go further to mobilise ordinary people to take action to transform their situation. This is the gist of one of their songs, *Ma-Streets*, which urges people to protest against an unresponsive ruling class.

6.2 Summary

In summary, this study has sought to use a Gramscian lens to show how youths in Zimbabwe have formed an artist collective in response to the limitations on free expression and democratic space and, as organic intellectuals, begun the “intense labour of criticism”. Appropriating hip-hop as a musical form and branching out into festival organization and comedy, these organic intellectuals have developed a coherent programme of action underpinned by a pro-poor and anti-global capital ideology. The hope is that this study’s focus on youth culture in relation to hegemony will spur further studies focused on Zimbabwe’s millennials and how they respond culturally to global imperialism and local repression.

6.3 Scope for further research

As pointed out above there needs to be more dedicated studies on youth cultures in Zimbabwe but more importantly rural and peri-urban ones. A comparative study of rural and urban public spheres and media production and consumption patterns could offer significant insights that could be tested against theories such as global imperialism. Perhaps using Mahmood Mamdani's 'bifurcated state' (1996: 15) approach in the Zimbabwean context could reveal the impact or efficacy of ZANU-PF's constraining of alternative public spheres in the rural areas where it still commands support by force and persuasion and the cooptation of traditional leaders.

Whilst the music and poetry of Comrade Fatso and Outspoken represents 'conscious' hip-hop there is need to study the other forms of youth music some of which imitates gangsta rap and is misogynistic and sexist. Such studies could point to certain sociological and psychological issues in a society that is struggling to cope with day to day living. Coupled to this could be a link to how Zimbabwean public radio shapes the content and form of music created given the mandatory 75 per cent local content policy.

Finally, in studying the youth cultures as counter cultures we have to be cognizant of the danger of valorization of resistance even in instances where it does not exist. Willems (2011), Barber (1997), Falola (2012) and others have discussed how the 'discovery' of popular as a valid area of intellectual study has resulted in some uncritical celebrations of 'resistance'. Elsewhere John Fiske's work (1987) has been critiqued for celebration of the autonomy of the reader on the basis of the polysemic nature of texts which allows for open meanings of texts (Strelitz 2000). As we have noted from Hall and Volosinov, texts do not propose their own meanings but rather through language and symbolization things are "made to mean". Strelitz (2000) has argued for a more nuanced approach in attempting to decipher the 'meaning' of a text that would "acknowledge both the moments of production/text/distribution and audience/consumption/lived culture".

I hope that this study will be a useful resource for those seeking to study various aspects of Zimbabwean youth cultures and subcultures.

APPENDIX A

Interview Guideline

Part A: Comrade Fatso (Samm Farai Monro)

1. What is your full name?
2. Can you give some background to yourself – family and schooling?
3. What do you do?
4. How do you understand your cultural production?
5. Are the media exposing this?
6. How have you responded to the situation?
7. You use social media a lot in your personal and artistic communication, especially Twitter and YouTube. What do you use these social media platforms for? Why is social media important to you especially in the context of Zimbabwe?
8. Why do you use hip-hop as a genre in your music as opposed to, for example, Chimurenga or any other Zimbabwean form of music? Do you identify yourself with any American artists or music genres?
9. What other genres do you deploy in your music? Are there any the artists that have influenced your music?
10. Let's us discuss some specific songs you have done. *MaStreets* hails the people to go on the streets and do something. What exactly are you calling your audience to do and why?
11. In the song *Identity* you state that 'Toyi-toyi chimurenga ndiwo mutupo' (the struggle is my totem). Do you think this is the feeling of your generation – that their identity is rooted in a struggle for a democratic Zimbabwe?
12. On the sleeve of your album, *House of Hunger*, you write: "When we struggle for justice our words are our weapons. Our poetry is insurrection... These words are dedicated to the freedom fighters and social movements struggling for another world". In what way do you see "words" changing the Zimbabwean reality?
13. I note you have taken the language of those in power and made it your own e.g. "Magamba" (heroes), "freedom fighters", "Comrade". Why is this so?
14. How do you produce and distribute your music? What I would like to know more are the creative, production and distribution processes you undertake.
15. Who do you view as the audience for your music?
16. How important is the issue of language in your music?

PART B: Outspoken (Tongai Leslie Makawa)

1. What is your full name?
2. Can you give some background to yourself – family and schooling?
3. What do you do?
4. How do you understand your cultural production?
5. Are the media exposing this?
6. How have you responded to the situation?
7. You use social media a lot in your personal and artistic communication, especially Twitter and YouTube. What do you use these social media platforms for? Why is social media important to you especially in the context of Zimbabwe?

8. Why do you use hip-hop as a genre in your music as opposed to, for example, Chimurenga or any other Zimbabwean form of music? Do you identify yourself with any American artists or music genres?
9. What other genres do you deploy in your music? Are there any the artists that have influenced your music?
10. Let's discuss your new album, *Uncool and Overrated: God Before Everything*. Could you explain the title for me?
11. One song here, *The Slavemaster's Whip*, seems to be a narrative of your own personal journey and the narrative of Zimbabwe/Africa and it seems you are pessimistic. You talk of "myself becoming a nightmare in this African dream" what do you mean?
12. In all your work you imply that words have power to change reality. Could you elaborate?

PART C: Joint interview with Outspoken and Comrade Fatso

1. Can you describe to me what Magamba Cultural Activists Network is?
2. Why was it formed? When and by whom?
3. You started your poetry and music at the Book Café and continue to use that venue for the monthly poetry sessions. What impact has that space made on the growth of spoken word poetry in Harare?
4. Do you ever hold any performances outside Harare and, if so, where?
5. Can you take me through the genesis of Zambezi News? Where did it all begin and why?
6. In what formats and on what platforms have you distributed Zambezi News?
7. What do you see as the contribution of a video programme that parodies the political leadership of the country and the government-controlled mass media (ZBC Radio, ZTV and The Herald)?
8. What was the idea behind Shoko Festival?
9. Was Shoko Festival a natural progression from the Mashoko Session (Open Mic Poetry Sessions)?
10. What do you see as the value of the festival?
11. Can you describe to me the outreach programmes you conduct in the townships via the Mashoko Youth Clubs? What are these clubs and what do you seek to achieve via them.
12. If there was an opening of the airwaves resulting in more radio and television stations that are not affiliated with the government, how would that impact your music and other artistic activities?

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