An inquiry into how Inter Press Service Africa makes alternative news from the Global South

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By Elijah Chiwota

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Supervisor: Professor Anthea Garman

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Abstract

An inquiry into how Inter Press Service (IPS) Africa makes alternative news from the Global South, is a study of a news agency that seeks to reverse the flows of information which predominantly comes from the Global North and by doing so carries the interests of the Global North (Boyd-Barrett, 2003). IPS was founded in 1964 by an international co-operative of journalists in the aftermath of the Cuban Revolution. At the same time, struggles for decolonization were at their peak in Africa and Asia. IPS promotes journalism for South-South co-operation and horizontal communication -- ideas that coincidentally found resonance in the debates for the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) that took place under the auspices of the United Nations Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1980 (MacBride, 1980). As a regional centre of the IPS and a news agency of the Global South, IPS Africa is an alternative to international news agencies whose reports on Africa are characterised by representations of the *other* with a narrow focus on natural disasters, poverty, disease, and conflict. To counter this, IPS Africa developed alternative ways of news making from the Global South that focuses on highlighting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as one of the strategies to end poverty and promote sustainable development and to recognize the centrality of global partnerships for sustainable development. IPS African stories are written by local journalists who are familiar with the context under which they report. These stories can be described using the lenses of radical media content. IPS Africa is a not-for-profit news agency that makes news based on its organizational themes. Some of the stories emanate from reporters and editors who investigate development issues in their communities and link these to global events and developments. The study draws on Atton (2001) model of alternative and radical media to identify characteristics that include radical content and news values. A social realist approach is used in the study and the qualitative methods used are the analysis of documents, in-depth interviews, and textual analysis. The findings conclude that although a non-profit, IPS Africa can be described as a hybrid media organization in that it is a traditional news agency, with a management structure with board members, who contract freelance journalists to write copy. However, more meaning is found in the radical content of its stories. Despite being firmly rooted in its mission of "telling Africa's untold stories," the news agency has insufficient human and financial resources. Consequently, it faces sustainability and viability problems because of its over-reliance on external support through donor funds.

Key words: alternative and radical media; citizenship; counter hegemony; globalization; news agency

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background to the study

An inquiry into how Inter Press Service (IPS) Africa makes alternative news from the Global South is an institutional study that looks at the making of news through IPS Africa. As a news agency based in the Global South and formed solely to produce news through the alternative media practices that it adopted and developed, the study takes place within a specific social and historical context. This exploration brings to light the complex relationships between the agency's past, present, and future. It also attempts to understand what the institution was like in the past, and how it evolved into what it is today. This is followed by analysing the present and what the institution is like in its current form and how it can be characterised. Finally, the study delves into the future by taking into consideration how knowledge of the past and the present can help shape what the agency might or should become.

The study situates IPS Africa within its historical and social context as an agency that gives an alternative perspective of the Global South which is diametrically opposite and different from that of the news agencies based in the Global North. This is evident in its departure from a news agenda preoccupied with hunger, disease, and natural disasters towards an approach that seeks to find solutions to developmental problems. It sees African citizens as agents for development who are not necessarily always victims. It is because of this and other reasons that it became involved in the NWICO debates that were supported by UNESCO during the 1980s.

To understand IPS Africa's philosophy of news, I draw on the theorisations of alternative media. Multiple concepts can be used to describe what alternative media are, and it is because of this broadness that the use of the term "alternative media" is sometimes described as "oxymoronic" (Downing, 2001). IPS Africa does not fit the neat categories that are being used to describe alternative media. For example, that it is "deprofessionalized, deinstitutionalized and decapitalized" (Atton, 2001, p.122). The news agency is non-commercial and therefore would fit into the decapitalised category, but it is neither deprofessionalized nor deinstitutionalised. Neither is the news agency run by grassroots communities with its content produced by ordinary citizens. Freelance journalists and other expert writers produce its' content. So terms like Traber (1985) "grassroots" media and Rodriguez (2002) "citizens media" might not be applicable if used in the strictest sense. From this standpoint, I approached IPS Africa from the view that it is an alternative news agency by virtue of its radical content and news values. It can also be described as a hybrid media organization as it exhibits some traits which are consistent with mainstream media while others are typical of alternative media organizations. I also looked at IPS Africa more from how it is constituted and for what it does

rather than focusing on its challenges. To understand IPS Africa as an alternative news agency I used Atton (2002) model of radical and alternative media which is anchored, among other attributes, in radical media content and news values.

The findings confirm that IPS Africa has remained true to its mission of promoting the perspectives of the Global South on development through content that amplifies marginalised voices. However, this content is written by fewer freelance journalists, which limits the agency capacity to cover the continent.

The reporters are concentrated in Southern Africa, particularly in South Africa which has more reporters than the North and Central Africa combined. Increasing the number of its reporters and subsequently the volume of news articles, can be one of the ways to change the agency's fortunes. Its financing is also too reliant on donors from the Global North who contribute 70 per cent of its income. To transform the current model, there are elements that can be built into it. For example, traditional news agencies are being transformed into digital news organizations.

1.2 Problem statement and significance of the study

The problem statement is to analyse and evaluate how an alternative news agency makes news that represents the perspectives and interests of the people of the Global South, and to ascertain the value of the agency's reporting particularly on sustainable development in Africa. The problem statement has congruence with the problem analysis in the IPS International Association multi-annual plan (2009-2011). The multinational plan was a strategic plan for the news agency which also identified the challenges facing the organization. For instance, the plan identified poverty and inequality, as well as its effect on global communications especially the exclusion of poor communities' perspectives and the perpetuation of existing power relations and dominance. However, the plan proposed to improve on news and content provision, capacity building and dissemination and networking. Under news and content provision, the news agency aimed to promote "independent and professional journalism" and "special reporting" to ensure a "cutting edge reputation" that is in line with "the kind of reporting we say we do." "Producing stories and analyses to explore and examine how events and global processes affect the marginalised and voiceless, from the perspective of the Global South and with a focus on development and the role of civil society" (IPSIA, 2009, p. 13).

The capacity building objective is meant to develop skills for reporters, media organizations and civil society. The training model is different from that offered by the Global North's journalism training approaches. "Empowering journalists, media organizations and civil society to be better able to

communicate effectively, leveraging IPS's unique character as a Global South focused news agency to offer a different kind of training and follow up" (IPSIA, 2009, p.15).

The dissemination and networking goal is meant to promote connectedness and dialogue among key development actors in the Global South. This is meant to link key stakeholders in the development process to achieve common goals. "Building information bridges linking media, international institutions, policy makers, donors and individual readers across different cultures and languages, to promote an on-going dialogue about communication, development and creating a better world" (IPSIA, 2009, p. 16).

1.3 Coming to IPS Africa

I started working at IPS Africa in Johannesburg, South Africa, on 1 December 2008, as a media programme coordinator for the Mwananchi citizen engagement programme. I came by bus to Johannesburg from Harare. It was an 18-hour trip punctuated by long delays to have my passport stamped at the borders on either side.

It was life changing migration in that I left behind a precarious freelancing consultant working style consisting of writing and editing reports, and sometimes facilitating meetings. Freelancing was tough especially at the height of Zimbabwe's economic and political crisis and consulting jobs were becoming fewer and far between. Making ends meet then was becoming a nightmare. Therefore, starting work then brought a huge sigh of relief, and with it a big shift in personal fortunes in many respects.

IPS Africa offices were open offices with desks positioned in different places. This open plan allowed for discussions, exchange and sharing of ideas on many topics including on newswriting, podcasts, multimedia, radio, and photography with colleagues with whom I shared the office. For instance, the last camera that I had used in Harare was an analogue camera and one of my first acquisitions was a digital single-lens reflex camera so that I will be able to visually document the project. Of course, the latter camera came with immense advantages to the photographer such as professional image quality, storage, and other benefits of digital cameras.

There were also discussions with the IPS Africa director on development journalism in Africa, and the developmental challenges that the continent faced, and what should be prioritized by development journalism? I attended many meetings, and this meant travelling to the project countries to launch the activities and to carry out needs assessments. Some of the lessons learnt were that social, political, and economic contexts affected how the project work was done, and how the issues of concern were

raised by the stakeholders. This required taking copious notes and listening closely in meetings and asking for explanations where issues were not clear.

Literature reviews were important as well. When you went into meetings it was important to know what has been written about the media in a particular country by academics and experts. Local newspapers and websites were equally important sources of primary information and social media was another information tool. This information was read alongside the programme objectives as context that was key to achieving the goals.

The initial tasks included mapping the media contexts in the African countries that were part of the programme. This involved collecting baseline information through desk studies, survey questionnaires and in-depth interviews with media owners, experts, and journalists.

My key responsibilities included coordinating how the media could be used as a platform for good governance in Africa and as part of public spaces that promoted good governance. Amongst the roles that the media could play included to provide a platform for public discussions and dialogue, and to facilitate engagement with policymakers that included Members of Parliament and civil society organizations.

Capacity development of key stakeholders on how to engage the media is another key component. It was expected that the countries could learn from each other's experiences through information sharing by the targeted seven countries which were Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Uganda, and Zambia.

I also learnt that mentioning that I worked as a journalist and for a media institution made some governments apprehensive. For example, the Ethiopian government was suspicious of media activities and visa approvals to attend meetings in the country were subject to ministerial approval. Anything to do with the media needed approval. So, I was unable to travel for meetings at that time as I did not get the requisite clearance.

In Ghana we visited rural communities to find out how they used the media to put forward their demands for better livelihoods and for the protection of fishing communities from industrial trawlers that were stealing fish from coastal communities and causing food insecurity. For most in these communities, fishing was their only source of income. On the constitution, a meeting that included the Ghanaian electoral commissioners heard that journalists and the media welcomed some changes to the electoral laws especially provisions that allowed for counting of votes at polling stations thus

minimizing ballot stuffing which had plagued the country in some elections, and that this was a potential model that could be replicated in other African countries.

In Malawi, for instance concerns were raised on the vulnerabilities that came with the under resourcing of newspapers and radio stations. This often forced the media to rely more on sponsored programmes and "brown envelopes" in which you cannot see what is inside, commonly used in bribery, exchanged hands between journalists and politicians. We also heard that poorly paid journalists accepted bribes from politicians who wanted favourable media coverage. The lessons from Malawi were that you cannot talk about development journalism and good governance without explaining how the ideas and programmes will be funded and sustained.

It also came to our realization that the media prioritized different governance issues. For example, constitutionalism was very important in Zambia especially after decades of one-party rule. We observed that the way the media and journalists reported on development news was influenced by this context with emphasis on multiparty democracy. The constitution was viewed as a document that would carry the country forward and the media had a duty to defend the constitution.

I will describe this period as one of euphoria in the pursuance of new dreams as I engaged with diverse and unfamiliar media environments while concurrently trying to make sense of them. Trying to reach consensus in the countries on the role that can be played by the media in good governance proved to be a complex task. Nothing could be taken for granted. I remember a three-day workshop in Kampala, Uganda, where consensus could not be reached on the programme name: was it going to be in the Luganda language or Mwanainchi or Mwananchi in Swahili – the most spoken language on the continent. The debate was that of the 58 languages spoken in Uganda why settle for one language and what informed that decision and choice? While a localized name for the programme was important, the workshop also suggested that issues of ethnic and national identities should be considered. Hence the final choice of Mwananchi as Mwanainchi was seen as having originated in the military.

Working on a pan-African programme came with its own learning as I started to view the media in a broader sense and to see media as institutions that were contextual, and that their evolution was linked to the countries' histories (pre-and post-colonial) and national politics. Like most social institutions the media had its nuances that were shaped by local contexts, different political actors, and ideological persuasions. Then there was the state versus private media and the tensions associated with them. The state media defended government policies and interests while the private media was critical of government policies especially on violations of human rights including media freedoms. In some countries the media were polarised: state versus private media.

Migration can be described as a way of learning in that you leave behind a society in your country of origin that would have nurtured you and move to another country where you start to learn and begin developing new social networks. Therefore, migration is not the movement to different geographical spaces alone; it is also a shift in ways of understanding and an immersion into unfamiliar territories. In this instance, it is a movement into other media spaces and spheres.

On the work front, the consultancy was replaced by a full-time job, and this opened new opportunities and horizons. This was a job that gave one an opportunity to have wider lenses when looking at journalism and media issues from many African countries, and thus providing a broader continental view beyond concentrating on the peculiarities of a single country. Further, while national contexts allow for detailed analysis of local contexts, the continental view has the advantage of comparative analysis which allows one to understand why different media models thrive in certain contexts while failing in others, and the diverse spectrum of hybrid media models.

At a radio and development conference organized by the World Association of Community Radio (ARMAC) in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire, which I also attended, it was emphasized that the Anglophone and Francophone should work together beyond the colonial divisions to improve accessibility of radio for communities. I also learnt the importance of learning at least the French basics: how to order food and ask for other necessities. When they learnt I was based in Johannesburg, journalists from Cote d'Ivoire asked for explanations on the context of the xenophobic attacks that were widely reported in the news media.

In a sense, South Africa, being the country where the office was located, and the many conferences and training workshops that were organized at the time meant that a lot of media experiences and lessons could be learnt from the country as well. South Africa hosted many meetings. Afterall local meetings needed the least resources. I attended the Highway Africa Conference (2010), which was a hive of activities: plenary sessions, keynote addresses, training workshops, debates, dinners, and book launches. It was a buzz of a conference particularly relevant because digital technology and the information highway were accelerating exponentially on the Internet. I wrote two hats at the conference: as a journalism and media and post-graduate student and as media programme manager learning on how digital tools and social media can be used by journalists, the importance of blogging to development journalism, and why citizen journalism amplified media voices and spaces.

FIFA World Cup 2010 saw me travelling around South Africa as part of journalists from around the world to check on progress in the construction of stadia for the FIFA 2010 World Cup. The round trip started in Cape Town, then Port Elizabeth (now Gqeberha), Durban, Nelspruit and by road to

Polokwane via Phalaborwa and finally Johannesburg. Most of the stadia – Cape Town stadium, Nelson Mandela Bay, Moses Mabhida, Mbombela, and Soccer City were in various stages of completion. The trip was meant to allay fears of journalists from the Global North – mainly from Europe on whether Africa will be able to host the soccer extravaganza. At the time there were discussions on the possible impact of the successful hosting of the World Cup on tourism and infrastructure development. In retrospect it has been concluded that after the event tourist arrivals to the country increased. However, the major beneficiaries from the infrastructural development were construction companies and that some of the stadia have become white elephants that are expensive to maintain. Development journalism should always be alert not to fall for the hype from mega event organizers who are supported by multinational corporations but should instead look at sustainable benefits to society after the event.

Another reference country was my home country, Zimbabwe, where media freedoms were under attack, and state sanctioned. As a former treasurer of the Media Institute of Southern Africa (Zimbabwe Chapter) I followed the events closely. Issues of patrimonial regimes and media freedoms struck a chord with what was happening in Zimbabwe.

The above objectives and experiences can be problematised as follows:

- Why did IPS Africa set itself up to produce stories and analyses that promoted perspectives of the marginalised people from the Global South?
- What made IPS Africa situate itself as a news agency that focused on development in the Global South?
- What kind of alternative journalism training is offered to journalists, media organizations and civil society organizations?
- What is the significance of sharing information and promoting dialogue in this context?

The study is significant in that it focuses on a news agency formed to promote social change and development and thus contributes specifically to the body of work on alternative media institutions and broadly to media and democracy and media and sustainable development debates. IPS was set up as an alternative media institution whose role is to democratise the media, decolonise the media, challenge media oligopolies, and to promote development. On this thinking: media democratisation happens when the “one-way flow” is reversed and equitable balance of news between the Global North and Global South is achieved. The media is decolonised when its interpretations reflect the cultural identities and interests of developing nations and their citizens. It is de-monopolised when transnational corporations’ communications monopolies are ended. The media also promote

development when it calls for a just distribution of communication resources around the world (Carlsson, 2003, p. 13).

What is clear from these debates is the issue of democratisation at the global level. However, when decolonisation happened at the national and local levels, IPS Africa dealt with that as well in its reporting. Particular African situations which IPS Africa aimed to address included the basic human rights violations by governments who have seized control of public-funded media and turned them into state media. Ordinary citizens can only express themselves through private commercial or community media, that is assuming they are granted operating licences. Considering that privatised media benefits only those who already have power in society and therefore a voice, alternative media comes in to ensure that marginalised voices are heard as aptly explained by one of the founders: "IPS was created as a platform of values to make information more democratic and participatory, and to give voice to those who did not have one" (Savio, 2014, p. 5).

1.4 Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are to tease out how IPS Africa news stories investigated sustainable development, what the news agency's news values are, and how the reporters' produced news.

1.5 Statement of research questions

The following research problems arise from the statement:

- What historical factors shaped the structure and content of IPS Africa?
- What are alternative news agencies?
- Is there a need for alternative news agencies?
- Who are the reporters for alternative news agencies and how do they work?
- What are the challenges associated with alternative news agencies?
- What sustainable and viable models can be suggested for alternative news agencies?

1.6 Methods of the study

The methods I used to collect data were semi-structured interviews, analysis of documents and textual analysis.

1.7 Thesis outline

The thesis has seven chapters of which chapters' 1 and 7 are the introduction and the conclusion.

Chapter 2 is the historical and social contextualisation of the study.

Chapter 3 is the literature review: Alternative media theories as epistemic frameworks for understanding the IPS model.

Chapter 4 explains the methodology.

Chapter 5 is a presentation on the findings: Telling Africa's untold stories

Chapter 6 is a discussion and interpretation of the findings: Breaking out of the alternative ghetto.

Chapter 2: Historical and social contextualisation

2.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to locate IPS Africa within its historical context as a news agency created to provide alternative news from the Global South and as is the case with this study, from the African continent. In this study the terms Global North and Global South refer to more than geographic definitions. As a critical concept, the Global South is used to describe intergovernmental development organizations from the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) which emerged as an alternative to the post-cold war term of "Third World." Global South also describes the negative impact of globalization irrespective of geography – subjugated people who live in developed countries of Europe, the United States of America, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand but face poverty and inequality. However, most of the Global South is made up of African, Asian, and Latin American countries whose common characteristics are political, social, and economic upheavals but at the same time offering hopes for economic growth and opportunities for investment and sustainable development. According to the United Nations Human Development Report (2019) there are 151 developing countries (UNDP, 2020). Further, the Global South can be explained as a response to post-coloniality because the term refers to political collectivity, ideology, solidarity, and networking to confront global capitalism. This chapter integrates these concepts of the Global South which provide a rich context that is useful to understanding the genesis of IPS and its regional headquarters in Africa; the nuances in its philosophy of news; how it became embroiled in the NWICO debates; and its current news services.

2.2 The genesis of IPS Africa

Founded in 1964 as a non-profit international co-operative of journalists, then called IPS Third World (*Tercer Mundo*), by Roberto Savio, an Italian freelance journalist and Pablo Piacentini, an Argentine political scientist. It aimed to "fill the information gap" in Europe and the United States especially on reporting events such as the 1959 Cuban Revolution and Africa's struggles against colonial rule from the perspective of the citizens in those countries (IPSNewsdesk, 2008). While the Cuban revolution sparked social unrest and political awareness in Latin America, in Africa the nationalist struggles for independence through liberation armies and negotiated settlements, brought the colonial period to an end (IPSIA, 2009). In the 10 years following the end of the Second World War, the first wave of decolonisation took place in Asia. The second wave started with some North African countries attaining independence including Tunisia and Morocco (1956) and Algeria (1962). This inspired the struggle for independence that saw Ghana becoming the first Sub Saharan African country to attain independence in 1957, followed by 15 other countries the following year.

From its base in Rome, Italy, IPS later expanded into Asia and Africa, with the rationale of broadening the scope in covering international news from the Global South by giving voice to the marginalised groups and communities. This promoted news that gave the voice to "minorities and under-represented groups" (IPS, 2003, p. 6).

Up until 1997 IPS was run by a central management based in Rome, Italy (MDF, 1998). As part of its decentralisation and restructuring, independent IPS companies were created and one of them being IPS Africa. Launched in Harare, Zimbabwe in 1982, IPS Africa is an autonomous member of the IPS International Non-profit Association based in Rome and is registered as a not-for-profit Section 21 company in South Africa. It opened its office in Johannesburg in 2003 as one of the regional centres. However, the IPS Africa office closed in 2014 and according to the Companies and Intellectual Property Commission the regional news agency is undergoing a deregistration process. This does not mean that the making of development news from Africa has stopped but that the organization is now operating virtually. At the time of carrying out the research, IPS had regional centres in Bangkok, Thailand, New Delhi, India, Montevideo, Brazil, New York, London, and Berlin. IPS continues to publish African news in English, French, Portuguese, and Swahili. Additionally, during this research period, its revenue came from donors (70 per cent) and subscriptions (30 per cent) (Reddy & Izeboud, 2003, p.19). IPS Africa also established a pool of more than 150 journalists from 50 African countries (IPSAfrica, 2009). Some of the journalists continue to write for the news agency.

Like most non-profit organizations, dependency on donors makes it difficult for the agency to be financially viable considering the uncertainty associated with donor funding. For example, in 1996 some donors stopped funding IPS after an adverse report on the organization's finances. When a second opinion was sought the earlier observations were said to be unjustified (MDF, 1998, p. 7). However, this was not before severe repercussions which negatively impacted on the activities of the organization. The effects of the global financial meltdown from 2008 impacted on the organization's finances, as alluded to by IPS board chairperson at the time, Frederico Mayor, who argued that the proliferation of free websites on the Internet made it difficult to market or sell media products such as news thus adding to the woes and creating a financial crisis for media organizations.

> With the unprecedented coincidence of the global economic and financial crisis meeting the media crisis, IPS is putting an enormous effort to stay financially stable and continue to champion the local, original journalism and stay true to its historic mission to raise the voice of the voiceless (Lubetkin, 2010).

However, the media and financial crises should be treated as multi-dimensional. This concurrently happened with digitalization taking a foothold in most media organizations including IPS Africa. With the dawn of digitalization, conventional news agencies are not only facing new challenges but adopting digital technologies too. Among other things, digitalization blurs the roles between news producers and consumers and ushers in user-generated content, the sharing of news content and data journalism (Ahmad, 2017). Algorithmic streaming – where algorithms select news according to tastes and reading habits – also promotes "heavily business orientated" journalism. Fact-checking is also emerging on the scene to counter "fake news".

2.4 Philosophy of news

IPS's founding mission is "to contribute to development by promoting free communication and a professional flow of information to reinforce technical and economic co-operation among developing countries" and it is from this mission that the organization's concept of giving "a voice to the voiceless" is derived (IPSIA, 2009, p. 4). Giving the marginalised poor from the Global South a voice is perceived as creating accountability and participation which are important ingredients for the development process. In the mission one also sees IPS "very distinctive philosophy of news […] dedicated principally to serving the interests of the developing world" (Boyd-Barrett & Rantanen, 1999, p. 171). This is confirmed by other studies.

> The IPS news service aims to provide an alternative to the event-based and disaster-driven reporting that frequently characterises media coverage of the developing world. Instead, the agency specialises in providing in-depth, contextualised stories about events and processes with the aim of strengthening "free flows of communication" between South and South-North (Giffard & Clark, p. 18).

This philosophy of news can also be viewed to have resonance with the concept of development news (Banda, 2009). According to studies, the purpose of development news is to provide information and knowledge that motivate audiences to become active participants in development and in so doing bridge the gap between governments and citizens and between news organizations and audiences.

> Development news should examine critically, evaluate, and interpret the relevancy of development plans, projects, policies, and challenges. It should indicate the disparities between plans and actual accomplishments and include comparisons on how development is progressing in other countries and regions. It should also provide contextual background information about the development process, discuss the impact of plans, projects, policies, and issues on people, and speculate about the future of development. And development news should refer to the needs of the people, which may vary from country to country or from region to region, but generally include primary needs, such as food, housing, and employment.

> It should also address secondary needs such as transportation, energy sources, electricity, and tertiary needs such as cultural diversity, recognition, and dignity (Wimmer & Wolf, 2005, p. 3).

Development news can be said to be the outcome of development journalism from which premise the stories are written. However, when the concept of development journalism was adopted by the postcolonial governments in the 1960s and 1970s it assumed new meanings and thus became "possessed by demons of all sorts of confusion […] it is important that we exorcise the demons it has come to be associated with, not least the demon of the postcolonial state's blatant interference in the process of journalism" (Banda, 2006, p. 1). These "demons" had homes in the tradition of dependency-dissociation and assumed different names. Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, and Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia – first Presidents of their newly independent countries -- espoused a "revolutionary theory" of the press. According to Nkrumah a revolutionary press existed to "present and carry forward our revolutionary purpose […] to establish a progressive political and economic system upon our continent." (Banda, 2006, p.3). What this theory meant on the ground was state control and ownership of the media and persecution of journalists whose criticism was considered not to be "constructive".

A gender perspective is embedded in IPS Africa stories. In simpler terms gender can be explained as the roles and relations that men and women play in society as determined by the social contexts. According to the news agency, gender, is not the same as sex which refers to the biological characteristics that define humans as male and female. Gender is viewed by IPS Africa as a social construct and thus gender roles should not be static but be continuously changing. The agency avoids portraying women as victims in its news stories and discourages the practice of "tagging" where a politically charged label such as "feminist" is used with negative connotations in news stories to signal that a woman is being deviant by not acting in accordance with the traditional gender roles. Other forms of tagging involve foregrounding a woman politician's family life and physical appearance at the expense of issues that she represented.

> Descriptions of actors can enrich a story depending on the context, but care must be taken not to perpetuate stereotypes by "tagging" characters. For example, noting that a woman is a mother of three may be important in the context of the story or that information may be tagging her in a stereotypical characteristic that would not be ascribed to a man in the same role (IPS, 2008, p. 9).

To curb tagging and gender stereotypes, IPS promotes gender-awareness reporting that focuses on confronting gender inequalities in society; social, economic, and political violations of women's

rights, challenges gender stereotypes, seeks to redress power imbalances in the public and private spheres and is against violence against women (Made P. A., 2008, p. 12).

The philosophy of news is also evident in the organization's prioritisation of human rights and democracy; the environment, natural resources and energy, sustainable development, health and education, food, and agriculture, international finance and trade flows, international politics and conflict resolution, culture, science, and technology (Reddy & Izeboud, 2003, p. 12).

As a global news agency, IPS facilitated Global South to Global South and Global South to Global North information flows on critical issues and events from a "Southern perspective" (Giffard, 1999, p. 171). This is done through inclusion of historically marginalised voices especially of ordinary citizens in developing countries that are often ignored by the mainstream media as not newsworthy. The global themes that are typical of IPS news features include poverty and the Millennium Development Goals; civil society; globalization and the Global South; and human rights and gender (IPS, 2009, p. 5). Other communication work that the organization does aims to contribute to capacity development of CSOs through training and other activities that promote adherence to values of pluralism and participatory democracy (IPS, 2009, p. 15).

Since its inception IPS continues to see global events as interconnected. The organization argues, for example, that what takes place at a remote location in the Global South can be made meaningful to readers outside of the immediate vicinity if the events are put within their socio-economic and political context.

> The agency seems to succeed in producing discourse that offers a meaningful alternative view on globalization, in both style and substance with a much more balanced geographic focus, better analysis of development processes, and greater use of critical sources.
>
> In other words, IPS is not an anachronism and it appears to be conceiving itself in terms of globalization, complex connectivity and multiplicity. Or perhaps the more accurate proposition is that the global landscape has shifted so much as to give the impression that IPS has moved, when in fact it was ahead of the interdepedence game all along (Rauch, 2001).

This understanding is closer to Giddens (1984) definition of globalization as "the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring miles away or vice versa," (Smiers, 2003, p. 15).

> People around the world can see and hear news of global events simultaneously. But commercial demands of the news industry have often meant that such information is brief, and disjointed, and often not relevant to the people. Broadcast networks and major newspapers have closed many of their foreign bureaus. Yet many of society's major issues today – especially those relevant to the Global South cannot be approached without addressing their global dimensions and context (IPSWorldDesk, 2008, p. 13).

As IPS operates as a network of journalists and communicators, the notion of participation is applicable to its approach to journalism and the media. Its type of journalism can be distinguished from others by its explicit commitment to participatory democracy. The concept of participation can be drawn from classical democracy political theory especially "the notion that democracy is predicated upon an informed, participating citizenry and that a political culture typified by an active and informal citizenry can only be generated in the final analysis by a health and vibrant media system" (McChesney, 1998, p. 8). In this sense participation is seen as reinventing democracy at the grassroots by empowering marginalised and disenfranchised people, to address each other as equals, and to form identities through dialogue. One form of participation is "co-management" in which power over an organization is shared by a collective (Sparks, 2007, p. 71). However, questions do arise on the issue of control.

> Alternative media oblige us to ask serious political questions such as "who is to control them"? Autonomous collectives? If so, responsible to whom? Political organizations? If so, how can they avoid being mere propaganda sheets? The issue of media control is a microcosm of the issue of democracy in social life generally and poses the same difficult questions. Are alternative media to produce the sender-receiver communication model of the mass media, or will it be two way means of communications? How are they to be sustained? These questions have not yet been resolved and are too rarely asked by alternative media activists (Rodriguez, 2001, p. 9).

2.4 News agencies as wholesalers of news

The word news is derived from new things and agency comes from the Spanish word *agencia* and denotes "the imposition of order, classifications, arrangements" (Palmer, 1999, p. 177). News agencies, who are closely monitored by their clients, sources and end-users use their "professional judgement and sense of news values" to report not only on international affairs, but also to generally contribute to public knowledge (Palmer, 1999, p. 177).

Structuration theory, which defines agency as the human ability to act, can be used to describe news agencies. As structures, news agencies can be said to be constituted by rules and resources involved in the production of social systems (Giddens, 1984, p. 6). As a media organization, IPS Africa had both institutional and symbolic powers imbedded in journalistic practices.

News agencies are amongst the first organizations to set up global operations for the production and distribution of "consciousness" through the commodification of news (Boyd-Barrett, 1999, p. 5). In that sense they represent a "journalism of information" in that they are wholesalers of news reports packaged for a diverse readership and retail clients (Boyd-Barrett, 1999, p. 6)**.**

There are four models that can be used to categorise news agencies: the traditional; the flag-bearing; the self-financing; and the IPS model (Reddy & Izeboud, 2003). The traditional category is made up of commercial news agencies such as AP and the now defunct UPI who sourced their funds from the market. By contrast the flag-bearing agencies are partly supported by their governments. For example, AFP gets about 40 per cent from the French government (Allsop, 2018). Other agencies under this model are Agenzia Stampa Associata, Italy; and Deustche Press Agentur, Germany (Reddy & Izeboud, 2003).

Under the self-financing model, Reuters which was initially funded by the British foreign and colonial office but has since become self-financing through its financial services generate 92 per cent of its income and the remaining 8 per cent comes from its journalism work (Lubetkin, 2010). The IPS model can be considered the fourth kind, and its characteristics are non-profit in nature and a distinct news agenda dedicated to development in the Global South.

Gemini news service

Other notable news services included the Gemini News Service, an independent news agency based in London which specialised in international and development journalism through a news feature service. Gemini ceased operations in 1982.

Pan African News Agency

Another interesting news agency is the Pan African News Agency (PANA) which aims to be an information portal on Africa that will provide a "communication and information tool for policymakers" (Pan African News Agency, 2020). PANA was established in 1979 by the Organization of African Unity which preceded the African Union. It began operations in 1983 and its formation was a response to the problems that newly independent countries faced in the post-colonial period and "the realisation that political independence had not brought independence from the global economic system" (Forbes, 1999, p.156). PANA aims are to "rectify the distorted image of Africa created by the international news agencies and let the voices of Africa be heard on the international news scene" (Banda, 2009, p. 3). It involves the co-operation of 42 African news agencies with the

support of UNESCO's International Programme for Development of Communication. PANA operates as a newspool and also as a news agency whose main goal is to provide information.

National news agencies

National news agencies were those formed by newly formed independent countries of Africa, Asia, and the Middle East as part of the decolonisation process. In Mozambique there is the *Agencia de Informacao de Mocambique* and in Zimbabwe the New Zimbabwe Inter-Africa News Agency. Under colonial rule the countries relied on international news agencies such as Reuters and AFP. The agencies were supported by UNESCO which was sympathetic to their aspirations for equitable news flows and to reverse the empire-colony relationship (Boyd-Barett, 2003). The reasoning was that democratising communication would lead to economic development.

IPS supported the setting up of national news agencies. "We decided to support the creation of national news agencies and radio and television stations in the countries of the Global South because we saw these as steps towards the pluralism of information" (Savio, 2014).

Bilateral and multilateral news agencies

These were supported by UNESCO and formed to engage in Global South-Global South co-operation through the exchange of news. They include the Non-Aligned News Agencies Pool, PANA, and the Caribbean News Agency. These agencies provided technical support to national news agencies (Boyd-Barett, 2003).

2.5 Campaigns for NWICO

IPS's early history found resonance in the 1970s and 1980s campaign for a NWICO under the banner of UNESCO and one of its founders, Savio was deeply involved in the campaign. NWICO was an offshoot of the New International Economic Order (NIECO) declared by the UN in 1974. The declaration was an initiative to "transform the governance of the global economy to redirect more benefits of transnational integration towards the developed nations" (Gilman, 2015, p. 1).

NWICO demands can be summed up as a call for democratisation of communication, decolonisation of the flow of information, ending the monopoly on international news by a few media corporations, promotion of information and communication that supported development in the Global South (Carlsson, 2003, p. 12). UNESCO's *Many voices one world* 1980 report identified the need for further democratisation in the Global North and the Global South as some of the ways to deal with inequalities inherent in global communications (Raboy, 1991, p. 161).

The NWICO debates were premised on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as stated in Article 19: “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression, and this right includes freedom of opinion and expression. This includes the freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”

The debates were also rich in concepts such as “freedom of information,” “free flow of information” as well as “free access to the media”. According to the MacBride report the concepts were a “natural outgrowth of the basic principle of freedom of speech and information.” However, advertising was perceived as a threat to these freedoms. “News content may be diluted when the media, in order to maintain the mass readership or the broadcast ratings necessary to attract advertising, appeal to the lowest common denominator of public taste” (MacBride, 1980, pp. 137-140).

The MacBride report also noted the impediments to free flow of information when those in power saw criticism as interfering with the sovereignty of nations. On the other hand, commercial interests also sought to curtail media freedom under the guise of protecting private business and economic growth. The report called for political will that led to the removal of the impediments. Furthermore, “free flow” was beneficial only to the rich countries and media conglomerates who had the means of communication when compared to poor countries.

> In order to be really free, information flows had to be two-way not simply in one direction. The concentration of news agencies, telecommunication facilities, mass media, data resources, and manufacturers of communication equipment in a small number of highly developed countries does in fact preclude any chance of a free flow between equals and a democratic exchange among free partners. (MacBride, 1980, p. 142.).

The information dependency of the poor countries on the rich had to be transformed into independence by stopping the one-way flow of news from the centre to the periphery – from London to Harare or from Paris to Yaoundé. The one-way flow is described as visible through news content, choice of subjects and value judgements in news selection. However, the imbalance in news circulation is in both the Global North and the Global South and this implies that a solution could be sort from both regions. It was also noted that the News Agency Pool of Non-Aligned Movement countries and IPS were providing a rather limited response. “Ideally communication is a continued exchange between equals or at least between reciprocally responsive partners [...] the flow is vertical instead of horizontal and is mostly in one direction – from the top downwards” (MacBride, 1980, p. 149).

There were arguments for containing the downward flow of information and to democratise the media through more inclusive horizontal exchanges that used dialogic participatory approaches and diverse news sources. There were also calls for promoting non-commercial media and for countries from the Global South to formulate information policies. The report also preferred ethical journalistic freedom and encouraged the reporting of events from diverse perspectives.

> Conventional standards of news selection and reporting [...] many accepted news values, the need to be reassessed if readers and listeners around the world are to receive a more faithful and comprehensive account of events, movements, and trends in both developing and developed countries. The inescapable need to interpret unfamiliar situations in terms of what will be understood by a distant audience should not set up a blind spot for reporters and editors to the hazards of narrow ethnocentric thinking. (MacBride, 1980, p. 263.).

The report also introduced the notion of the right to communicate which included rights to be informed, to inform, to have privacy and to participate in public communication (MacBride, 1980, p. 265). However, supporters of NWICO were newly independent countries from Africa and Asia who did not want to side with the belligerents of the Cold War. This is summed up by Ghana's first president Dr Kwame Nkrumah who said: "We neither face East nor West. We face forward" (Ogunseitan, 2009). It is from this reasoning that the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), which became a powerful platform for Global South relations, was formed in Bandung, Indonesia in 1957.

However, NAM had the support of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR) and the socialist camp. "This camp had the almost automatic implication that NWICO would be opposed by the "free world" under the leadership of the USA. It also ensured that the debate would be caught up in the conflicts of the Cold War" (Sparks, 2007, p. 109).

> Thus, NWICO was caught up in the ideological struggles of the time as various factors threatened US hegemony in the 1970s including its sour relations with the USSR following the Cuban crisis; defeat in Vietnam; recession inducing Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries price increases; antagonism to US support for despots and covert usurpations of democracies in support of US businesses and interests. Therefore, it was vulnerable ideologically, in the UN, NAM and elsewhere (Boyd-Barrett, 2006, p. 23).

In the decades after the Second World War the media debates consisted of a clash between the West's free flow of information doctrine and state control of the media favoured by the Eastern bloc. There was also polarisation on capitalism versus communism, and development versus underdevelopment. Based on the ideological pressures of the time, the world was divided into four blocs: the First World (the West); the Second World (the East) the Third and Fourth Worlds (the developing countries) which had low levels of industrialisation, low per capita income, high infant mortality, and poor

standards of public health, illiteracy and extreme inequality (Carlsson, 2003, p. 2). By the 1970s the dispute had developed into a Global North-Global South dimension.

As NWICO debates were caught up in the web of Cold War politics, the United Kingdom, United States and Singapore, backed by corporate media from their countries, withdrew from UNESCO, labelling it pro-Soviet, undemocratic, and accusing the UN body of promoting media control by governments (Roach, 1994, p. 41). This deprived UNESCO of 30 per cent of its revenue (Sparks, 2007, p. 110). Although the UK and US later re-joined in 1997 and 2003 respectively, the NWICO debate was thoroughly discredited by the World Press Freedom Committee, the International Federation of Newspaper Publishers, the American Press Institute, and the International Press Institute (Roach, 1994, p. 41). One of the main criticisms of the NWICO debates was the uncritical stance towards the totalitarian Socialist bloc by developing countries hence criticism of "collusion with tyranny" became a powerful argument (Sparks, 2007, p. 114).

In a sense, IPS's formation was a response to developing countries' disillusionment with political independence that did not challenge the continued hegemony of the global economic and communication systems (Forbes, 1999, p. 156). When reporting on the Global South, global news agencies, including the Associated Press (AP) and United Press International (UPI) from the US, Reuters, and Agence France Press (AFP) and TASS from the former Soviet Union, dominated world news with content emphasising "backwardness, wildness and poverty" and "an array of images of violence, poverty and natural disasters" characterising the developing countries and Africa in particular (Rodriguez, 2001, p. 5). International news agencies from the Global North were perceived as reproducing the inequalities and imperialist systems of their home countries instead of taking advantage of media technology's potential to promote development (Sparks, 2007, p. 92).

IPS can be said to have been founded as a counter-hegemonic news agency in that it resisted one-way communication from the Global North to the Global South by providing a non-commercial model. The agency is innovative in coming up with a genre of alternative news not modelled on the priorities of commerce. "With the global information flow dominated by fewer and fewer media giants, the increasing commercialisation of news and the neglect of journalism truly serving the public interest, the need for an agency like IPS is greater than ever" (Reddy & Izeboud, 2003, p. 5).

2.6 Contemporary activities

The choice of the study period (2009-2010) is influenced by multiple factors that include IPS Africa efforts to produce more alternative news content that better represented the continent, the digital turn

in the making and distribution of news, and the impact of the 2008 global economic depression on media organizations and discussions on the sustainability of the news agency. The period is a strategic period in the history of IPS: the debate shifts from free flow of information to critical analysis of development in the Global South and buttresses the news agency's philosophy of news. It is not only about information flow but what type of information and the relevancy of the stories to the developmental process. IPS Africa's efforts to produce more content is visible in the training programme that it developed at the time in which it partnered with various organizations to train journalists.

During the period of the research IPS Africa grappled with the digitalization of news in its strategic plans and explored ways on how the agency can adopt these technologies in its news making. Studies have confirmed earlier fears that the Internet could lead to the demise of news agencies. For example, the real-time distribution of online news and social media, and technological disruptions, also negatively impacted on news agencies. Print newspapers, the main sources of income for news agencies through subscriptions declined, digital news consumption increased, and traditional advertising is being replaced by digital advertising and marketing.

The large diverse content that is available on the Internet on news, entertainment, and sports, has also challenged the role of news agencies as providers of exclusive news. It can be argued that development news does not solely depend on news agencies anymore as anyone with digital devices like a smartphone can produce news. This is leading to more websites publishing development news stories.

The significance of the period of study is also that it happened after the 2008 economic depression which adversely affected media organizations. With less money available or advertisers and international NGOs alike, it meant news agencies had limited financial resources. During this time, there were discussions on transforming the news agency and making it sustainable through restructuring but at the same time remaining true to its vision and news values. There were tensions in these strategies especially when trying to avoid compromising the IPS model as earlier explained.

The period of study is also a time that can be described as coincidentally seeing the rise of social media which also disrupted news agencies. The availability of "free news" meant that users did not see the need for paid subscriptions to wire services. Social media also led to the disintegration of news and advertising. Technological behemoths like Google formed in 1998 and Facebook in 2004 became huge monopolies involved in the making and distribution of news. Google News, which aggregates news from different news websites was launched in 2006 and the microblogging site,

Twitter, was formed in 2006. These platforms are accessed for information and stories by the users of IPS Africa content. At the time of the study IPS Africa engaged in discussions on how they could produce radio and video content and to make the stories read by more people. This meant exploring ways for search engine optimisation by writing news that attracted the Google search engine's algorithms. It was also a time when the readership of news would also be measured using the number of people who read the story online.

During the research period the IPS news network had more than 409 journalists, editors and trainers including correspondents, freelance writers, columnists, specialist reporters and academics (Lubetkin, 2010, p.5). What unites this unrelated group is the desire to explore ways of reporting development in ways that articulate and identify with the development aspirations of the citizens of the Global South.

As mentioned earlier, a gender-responsive editorial policy prioritises integration of women's voices and perspectives into the news agenda. This is in addition to news that is written and edited from the perspective of the developing world where most of the editors are located although some work remotely from places like Europe, North America, and Japan.

IPS trains journalists on how to do in-depth research on topics before writing an article. As part of the training strategy, it works closely with other organizations. Some of the networks fund specialist reporting and are instrumental in strengthening links with civil society especially non-governmental organizations. The organizations also offer training in resource mobilisation and advice on diverse issues including how to reach users of IPS content through multiple media platforms.

2.7 Digital news

IPS uses the Internet as a platform for its services together with mobile phone platforms. Technological convergence which can be described as the meeting of broadcasting, telecommunications, and computer technologies into a spectrum with a common digital language has also affected how news is made (Dahlgren, 2009). Digital technology has replaced analogue with multimedia systems that have immense capacity for interactivity. Digitalization has also strengthened the communication between IPS Africa and its key audiences in civil society and other international organizations. The news agency has also been able to reach marginalised communities.

> Thanks to the greater ease of communications brought about by the ICT revolution, civil society and social movements have increased their role and relevance, sought new ways of cooperating, and created synergies and opportunities for participation in international, regional, and national levels, NGOs and other civil society actors have

> important perspectives to contribute on development. Such organs are access points to a committed and important group of citizens with influence and can also be an entry point to reaching the poor (IPS, 2009).

In the case of IPS Africa, its news features, traditionally produced as stories for the print media, are being supported by additional services such as audio, photography, and video formats. IPS Africa focuses on generating content for use by community radio stations.

Like other news agencies, IPS Africa, has adopted digital media technologies to cut costs and diversify its services. IPS Africa also has presence on the popular social networking site Facebook and has a Twitter handle. These platforms are used for exchanging information on the organization's activities and its journalists take part in the discussions that are generated by posts on the sites.

Although radio was around when the organization came into existence, it was then a stand-alone medium. In Africa radio continues to be the most popular media vehicle, offers immediacy and ideal medium in terms of access and affordability, and transcends literacy and geographic boundaries.

Critical theory suggests that the minimum requirement for speaking of alternative media is radical content that "advances societal transformations and contribute to the realisation of a truly participatory society, because critical content expresses progressive political interests and tries to give attention to the realisation of suppressed possibilities of societal development" (Sandoval, 2010, p. 146). This is the approach that I will take in this study because IPS Africa aims to be an alternative media source at the level of the radical media content it produces.

As its strength lies in the radical media content, IPS has not been strong in other areas as alluded to by its founder and former director-general, Savio who argued:

> IPS is much more than a company or an international do-gooder; it is a political body, with substantial responsibilities in the field of communication and information. Its performance, just like any political body, must be measured primarily in these terms [...] Many times we have had to hear, in the past few years from several quarters, the fashionable jargon of self-sufficiency, marketing, sales, total quality, hi-tech, efficiency and efficacy. As if a project like IPS could be dealt in the same fashion as a supermarket chain (MDF, 1998, Annex V-4).

IPS also seems to straddle the identities of a news agency and a development communication NGO. This dual role is seen differently by key players. Some see it as strengthening the organization's mission while others see it as presenting conflicting purposes (Joye, 2010, p. 3). IPS's current work includes providing news and content; capacity building of journalists; disseminating of information; and networking with civil society organizations (IPS, 2020).

2.9 Conclusion

What I attempted to do in this chapter is to historicise IPS and to explore the evolution of its approach to development news from the Global South. I did this to set up the scene for the study and to explore the discourses and ideologies of the news agency from its history and social context. In doing so this chapter included NWICO debates which were important to the organization's early history and how this laid the foundation for contemporary activities. The chapter also provided a context for alternative media theorisation as it relates to the study of the news agency. IPS has also been faced with pressures to transform that came from the digitalization of news and the global economic crisis of 2008.

Chapter 3: Literature review: Alternative media theories as epistemic frameworks for understanding the IPS model

3.1 Introduction

The founders of IPS conceptualised a news agency that focused on "development journalism" as an alternative to correct the "imbalances in world news coverage and a general scarcity of analytical news stories" as well as in-depth reporting on the Global South (Deen, 2020). The founders saw a gap in some of the ways that the Global South was being reported upon by the global news agencies.

This chapter analyses the IPS model within the philosophical underpinnings of approaches that have been used to study alternative media including the liberal-pluralist tradition; the Marxist *comunicacion alternative;* and the radical alternative media tradition (Downing, 2001; Hadl, 2007; and Rodriguez, 2001). These theories are viewed in this study as epistemic frameworks for understanding the IPS model. The notion of the episteme is derived from Foucault who explains it as: "The total set of relations that unite, at a given period, the discursive practices that give rise to epistemological figures, sciences and possibly formalised systems […]" (Foucault, 1972, p. 191).

From these approaches I will explore how the making of news by IPS Africa from the Global South can be conceptualised as radical alternative media. I will further explain the various definitions of alternative media including alternative public spheres, autonomous; citizens' media; counter-hegemonic, counter-information, participatory media, community media, grassroots media, independent, minority, NGO media, migrant, public access, radical media, resistance media, rhizomatic media, social movement media; tactical and third sector media among a plethora of definitions (Atton, 2002; Bailey, 2008; Downing, 2008; Hadl, 2004; Rodriguez, 2003; and Servaes, 1999). Alternative media are also conceptualised as: "Agents of developmental power, not simply as counter-information institutions, and certainly not as a vapid cluster of passing gnats" (Downing, 2001, p. 98).

The analysis will also be informed by a synthesis of these approaches by Atton (2002) who developed a model of radical and alternative media that looked at "content, form, reprographic innovations/adaptation, distributive use, transformed social relations, roles and responsibilities and transformed communication processes" (Atton, 2002, p. 27). In this literature review, I will tease out how this model can be appropriated for the study of a news agency by looking at those elements that are applicable to IPS Africa.

3.2 Conceptualising alternative media

> IPS is a global leader and an independent news agency focused on development and globalization from the perspectives of the Global South and of civil society. IPS provides a unique contribution on a global scale to the understanding of the multidimensional challenges' humanity faces in relation to our shared global agenda. IPS has focused on issues of development, global change processes and rising global interdependences by providing a special perspective of the Global South and of non-state partners in global governance, giving voice to the voiceless thus creating the needed capacity and understanding of citizens, governments, and intergovernmental actors for our common future; essential to rebalancing global communications flows. (IPS, 2010.).

In a sense, IPS was formed to challenge the mainstream media which is characterised by the conglomeration of media institutions. Studies have identified that mainstream agencies were "[...] increasing ownership concentration and centralisation, market deregulation, re-regulation by market forces and new authoritarianism, homogenisation, commodification, and the further marginalisation of an already marginalised voice (Hadl, 2007, p. 3).

However, in alternative media theorisation it is argued that democracy is functional in contexts with minimum social inequality and where the well-being of the individual is inseparable from the welfare of its community (McChesney, 1998). Furthermore, alternative media is anti-capitalist in the sense that it condemns capitalism's tendency to promote strong class inequality and possessive individualism which by its nature is undemocratic and in direct contradiction to the ideals of social change. Radical social change is the primary aim of alternative media. "They avowedly reject, or challenge established and institutionalised politics, in the sense that they all advocate for social change in society or at least a critical assessment of traditional values" (O'Sullivan 1994, p.10). Therefore, alternative media can be identified by the content it promotes for social change and development. It is also organised as non-profits and typically explores collective ways of managing the projects.

> Much of the work of alternative media is concerned with representing the interests, views and needs of under-represented groups in society. Alternative media also seek to redress what their producers consider an imbalance of media power in mainstream media, which results in the marginalization (at worst, the demonization) of certain social and cultural groups and movements. As well as being homes for radical content, alternative media projects also tend to be organised in non-mainstream ways, often non-hierarchical or collectively, and almost always on a non-commercial basis. In these ways they hope to be independent of the market and immune to institutionalization (Atton, 2007, p. 2).

From its founding values IPS is an alternative media news agency that produces radical content that not only opposes oppression and domination but also promotes transformation through social struggles. "Editorial production through the professional, independent IPS news agency remains the

central and primary activity, reflecting and anticipating the changing global scenario and taking advantage of the ICT revolution" (IPS, 2010). Radical content comes from the notion of critique which consists of "the negation of repressive societal conditions and aims at a society without domination and oppression in which all human beings can live a self-determined life" (Sandoval, 2009, p. 12). In this sense alternative media can be commercial and non-participatory but will produce critical media content. However, if this content negates social progress, then that media ceases to be alternative media. Besides radical content, alternative media have other attributes such as what form or channel they appear in, and the sources and voices that speak.

> Alternative media can describe the content media provides (devotion to oppositional issues, events and opinions not regularly advocated elsewhere, the channel to which the content is provided (such as photocopied flyers, pod casts or handmade buttons), the sources featured in that content (including unofficial, poor, minority and dissident voices), or the models and voices they espouse (citizen participation, direct action, collective decision making) etc. (Rauch, 2010, p. 996.).

By addressing the issues that fill the gaps left by the mainstream media, alternative media challenges the "standardised and limited repertoire of news across the range of media platforms" (Atton, 2008, p.5). Furthermore, they question the journalistic values, especially their supposedly professional nature, where gathering and assessment become routines to an extent that the news that is produced is formulaic. In this scenario, sourcing routines give prominence to elite groups in society and events are privileged over explanations (Atton, 2008, p.5). In discussing alternative media, it is also important to focus on their news values.

Alternative media have also been conceptualised as citizens' media that empower, conscientize, and fragment power when communities become media producers as described by a theorist's experiences with alternative media in Latin America.

> I could see how producing alternative media messages with *campesino* [peasant] correspondents as new communication and information sources. It implies having the opportunity to create one's own images of self and environment; it implies being able to recodify one's own identity with the signs and codes one chooses, thereby disrupting the traditional acceptance of those imposed by outside sources; it implies becoming one's own storyteller, regaining one's own voice; it implies reconstructing the self portrait of one's community and one's own culture. (Rodriguez, 2001, p. 3.).

By seeing alternative media as citizens' media, one opens infinite possibilities that allow citizens to explore their bodies and facial expressions as well as non-verbal languages. Gender roles are also transformed in the process. The citizens' media approach departs from the "traditional, static and essentialist definitions of democracy, citizenship and democratic communicative action that inform

alternative media theorising" and "captures the richness of the lived experience" (Rodriguez, 2001, p. 4).

Therefore, the re-constitution of the concept of citizenship is important to alternative media studies. According to Murdock (1992) people can better enjoy their full rights if they have access to information, must be able to interpret public debates and be able to criticise proposed courses of action. They must also identify their interests and aspirations in the information that is made available to them through the media.

The concept of citizenship used in citizens media is derived from radical democracy which sees citizenship "not as a legal status but as a form of identification, a type of political identity; something to be constructed, not empirically given" (Mouffe, 1992b, p.231). Citizenship is also seen as participation and emphasis put on its "capacity to generate power, for that is the only way that things get established in the world. And it is about that capacity to share in power, to cooperate in it, for that is how institutions and practices are sustained" (Wolin, 1992, p. 250).

Citizens' media implies:

> That a collective is enacting its citizenship by actively intervening and transforming the established mediascape; these media are contesting social codes, legitimised identities, and institutionalised social relations (the symbolic) and communication practices which are empowering the community to be involved to the point of transformation. (Rodriguez, 2001, p. 20.).

Citizens' media also acknowledges quotidian efforts. Alternative media also promotes broader issues of democracy such as good governance by being a platform for the poor and marginalised communities to express their views on how they are governed.

3.3 Defining alternative media

The concept of alternative media has multiple meanings depending on one's subjective perspective. The root meaning of the adjective "alternative" is "other" and its objective is to mark the noun it is qualifying as "different" from the usual. It can also mean "another" or "additional" therefore giving the noun the meaning of "an additional option, supplement or replacement" (Hadl, 2007, p. 11). Alternative media therefore implies a binary in that they are the "other media" in contrast to the "mainstream media". Some usages of the concept emphasise the negative – not mainstream – whilst others prefer a positive approach, in that to be alternative means to offer other media options (Hadl, 2007, p.11). The term alternative is almost "oxymoronic" because "everything at some point is

alternative to something" (Downing, 2001, p. ix). In this respect "alternative" can be approached as an analytical term (Atton, 2002).

"By radical media, I refer to media, generally small scale and in many different forms, that express an alternative vision to hegemonic policies, priorities and perspectives" (Downing J. , 2001, p. v). Alternative media is "politically dissident media that offers a radical alternative to mainstream debates" (Downing, 1990, p. 181). Its characteristics include a close relationship with social movements, self-management, and independence from what it describes as capital, state, the church and other agencies of oppressive power (Downing, 1984, p. 10). Alternative media attempts to transcend the top-down vertical communication model in favour of horizontal democratic methods that are participatory and in support of social movements. Its common characteristics are non-commercial sites for distribution; transformed social relations, roles, and responsibilities; and transformed communication processes (Pickard, 2007, p. 2).

Alternative media is also considered to be a Foucauldian insurrection of subjugated knowledges in that they bring innovation to production processes and news voices (Atton, 2002, p. 9). Governmental management of the state and populations produces governmentalisation or art of governing which promotes types of knowledges and policies over others (Bertrand and Hughes, 2005). In this discussion we can locate the mainstream media's allignment to government and the market, and therefore to particular knowledge and voices. "Knowledge linked to power, not only assumed the authority of "the truth" but has the power to *make itself true.* All knowledge one applies in the real world, has real effects, and in that sense at least becomes true" (Hall, 1997, p. 49 Emphasis in the original).

Thus, truth in this sense deployed techniques that comprised of general rules such as particular forms of knowledge and methods of examinations. It is from these that subjugated knowledge is derived, subsequently making the truth impotent. In a similar vein, the mainstream media followed suit by reporting and through the formulas it deployed. This way of reporting is linked to governmentalization, which subjugates not only objects, children, families, and armies but also different fields of study such as pedagogy, politics, and economics and even the individual's body and mind. So, de-subjugation through alternative media challenges governmentalization and allows society to question how it is governed. How not to be governed like that, by that, in the name of those principles, with such and such an objective in mind and by means of such procedures, not like that, not for that, not by them (Foucault, 2007).

This is not to reject governmentalization wholesale, but to strategically position oneself as both a participant and adversary to the way one is governed. Being able to speak on its own has been identified as not being enough hence the need to make governments accountable. This means that normative roles that have been suggested for the news media also apply to alternative news agencies. These roles include enhancing not only citizen voices but also making governments accountable.

> The core responsibilities of the news media should be understood to involve, at a minimum, their individual and collective roles as watchdogs, agenda setters, and gatekeepers. Through fulfilling any of these roles, as an institution the news media maximises opportunities for critical reflection and rational deliberation in the public sphere, for inclusive participation in communication processes and ultimately for informed choices and human development in society (Norris & Odugbemi, 2008, p. 7).

As watchdogs the media guards the public interest to ensure accountability by powerful decision-makers by highlighting "cases of malfeasance, maladministration, and corruption, thereby strengthening the transparency of governance." As agenda-setters they raise awareness of pervasive social problems, inform policymakers on social needs and the international community on development needs. Being the gatekeepers, they become a platform for plurality of viewpoints and diverse perspectives that they bring to public debates (Norris & Odugbemi, p. 8).

Alternative media is unique because of its innovative approaches and collective production processes that experiments with media forms and content (O'Sullivan, 1994, p. 205). The voices able to speak directly about "subjugated knowledges" moves closer to a situation where "the other" is able to represent itself, where "analogues of Spivak's (1988) "native informants" can speak with their own "irreducibly heterogeneous" voices (Atton, 2002, p. 9). Alternative and radical media can therefore be considered as producers of stories that represent multiple voices.

> In a media culture that appears less and less interested with in-depth investigative reporting, alternative media provides information about and interpretations of the world which we might not otherwise see and information about the world that we simply will not find anywhere else. Alternative publications are at both interested in the free flow of ideas than profit. (Atton, 2002, p. 11.).

McQuail's democratic participant model concludes that alternative media are important for interaction and communication in small-scale settings of community, interest group and subculture that favour "horizontal patterns of interaction where participation and interaction are key concepts" (Atton, 2008, p.8). According to research carried out on the media of small and marginalised communities from countries that included Zimbabwe, alternative media were small media that belonged to and represented the interests of grassroots communities (Traber, 1985).

Further, the definitions and conceptualisation of alternative media can be said to be relational as they focus on countering the dominant mainstream media news by creating alternative news content that is published by alternative media organizations (K, Figenschon, & Frischlin, 2019, p. 862).

3.3.1. Serving communities

Alternative media has been established for a variety of reasons and one of the ways to define it is by looking at what it does. From this reasoning alternative media can been seen as serving the community, counter-hegemonic to mainstream media, and as media of civil society and as "rhizomatic" media – media that serves and is rooted in the community. A rhizome is a root-like plant like ginger that shows a few leaves at the top above the ground level, yet the plant has a large elaborate structure underground.

The metaphor of the rhizome applies to this study. Throughout its history IPS has worked with civil society organizations and development workers through networks and continues to do so today. The networks coalesce around strategic moments and dissipate when the activities of common interest come to an end, but they can be resuscitated again when the need arises. The same applies to some reporters who seem to have bursts of knowledge at moments as evidenced by the number of stories they write but only to fizzle out with time. Donors also do the same – giving support at some moments and withdrawing it at others. Although, IPS Africa exude most of these characteristics it is important to mention that there are overlaps and changes that have taken place gradually.

Alternative media is viewed as serving the community which is defined by "the presence of close and concrete human ties and by a collective identity" (Bailey, Cammaerts, & Carpentier, 2008, p. 7). Community also refers to the notion of a "big family" while society "represents a colder, unattached, and more fragmented way of living devoid of cooperation and social cohesion. Instead of a sense of neighbourliness the people are isolated (Bailey, Cammaerts, & Carpentier, 2008, p. 7). Community also consists of interaction within geographical spaces and referred to ethnicity. Other definitions of community broaden the concept to include community of interests where the membrane that joined the community together are common interests. To this one can also add the notion of community of practice where groups of people sharing common concerns, problems or passions on a particular issue came together to share knowledge and experiences. Examples on this can be drawn from social media groups, Facebook Groups, WhatsApp groups and online and virtual communities.

As a network of journalists, IPS Africa is an online community of interest that is involved in development journalism and concurrently also a community of practice especially when the online

training it offers is considered. As mentioned in the previous chapter providing content to community newspapers and radio stations improves access to development information which is necessary for community participation. This also promotes dialogue that challenges traditional knowledge systems that are paternalistic and non-participative; and *conscientisation* which can be described as a process whereby audiences unveiled realities for themselves (Bailey, Cammaerts, & Carpentier, 2008, p. 12).

3.3.2 Counter-hegemonic to mainstream media

> Hegemony is used to refer to a condition in a process in which a dominant class(es) does not merely rule but *leads* a society through the exertion of moral and intellectual leadership. In this sense it suggests a society in which there is a high degree of consensus, a large measure of social stability, in which subordinate classes appear to *actively* support and subscribe to values, ideals, objectives, cultural meanings, which bind them to, incorporate them into, the prevailing power structure. (Stokey, 1993, p. 119.). (*Emphasis in the original).*

The concept of hegemony is a leitmotif in Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*. Hegemony can be described as a ruling class and or its alliances domination of subordinate classes and groups through ideology which the latter adopts "into their common sense and everyday practice" (Gitlin, 1980, p. 253). Hegemony shapes popular consent by uniting persuasion from above with consent from below and is secured when the ruling elites impress their meanings on the ruled and assumes authority through force and consent. According to Gramsci:

> The "normal" exercise of hegemony […] is characterised by the combination of force and consensus which vary in their balance with each other, without force exceeding consensus too much. Thus, it tries to achieve that force should appear to be supported by the agreement of the majority, expressed by the so-called organs of public opinion – newspapers and associations. (Richardson, 2007, p. 35.).

"No hard and fast line can be drawn between the mechanisms of hegemony and the mechanism of coercion, just as the force of coercion over the dominated presupposes and reinforces elements of hegemony" (Gitlin, 1980, p. 253).

Dominated classes participate in their domination as hegemony enters everything people do and think as natural, or the product of common sense including what is news. Hegemony also channels and contains conflict into "ideologically safe harbours" (Stokey, 1993, p. 119). "Both rulers and ruled derive psychological and material reward in the course of confirming and reconfirming their inequality. The hegemonic sense of the world seeps into popular 'common sense' and get reproduced there. It may even appear to be generated by common sense" (Hall, 1982, p. 332).

Counter-hegemony is a strategy to create an alternative society "one that assaults bourgeoisie hegemony in a war of position" and "turns the notion of social integration on its head and escapes pluralism's fetishism of the individual and observable, allowing us to acknowledge the roles of latent conflict and obscure social actors in power exercised as social control" (Good, 1989, p. 63). It is also a strategy that sees dominance operating at the conscious and unconscious levels and one that centralises power as a problem for analysis.

Alternative media can be linked to the Gramscian notion of hegemony in the sense that they were established to challenge, replace, or resist the dominance of the mainstream media. Their counter-hegemonic approach aimed to end domination by transforming meanings of what was considered common-sensical and therefore taken-for-granted.

> We might consider the entire range of alternative and radical media as representing challenges to hegemony, whether on an explicitly political platform or implying the kinds of indirect challenges though experimentation and transformation of existing roles, routines, emblems, and signs [...] at the heart of the counter-hegemonic sub-cultural style. (Atton, 2002, p. 15.).

Mainstream media is seen as ideological because it presents "preferred views" of reality (Hall, 1982). In addition to this, mainstream media, like most media organizations, also have the power to define and select what issues to publish or broadcast. In most instances, they favour the views of the main actors from the state, politicians, or the private sector over those of the marginalised citizens and civil society. In other words, they show an alignment to the centres of power.

The counter-hegemonic position is adopted in the IPS philosophy is aptly captured by former Brazilian president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva who said: "IPS is more necessary than ever, at a time in which South-South cooperation dialogue opens alternatives to traditional alignments of the past" (IPS, 2010). Co-operation of countries in the Global South, is therefore understood to be counter-hegemonic and as having the potential to check the power of the Global North. By being counter-hegemonic alternative media like IPS offer other interpretations which can also be considered as alternate representations. The concept of representation, which is described as a struggle for meaning and an important source in knowledge production, is relevant to the study of alternative media

IPS is counter-hegemonic in that it challenges the power and dominance of news agencies from the Global North. It is in this context that an analysis of the concept of power is fundamental. Power "can refer to everything from the sadistic secret police of a dictatorial regime to the diffused networks of micro-power addressed in Foucault's work" (Downing, 2001, p. 12). Foucault (1981) located power in discourse and knowledge production and unlike Marxist approaches, his concept of power referred

to multiplicity of force relations, which were a dynamic process rather than a system where one group dominated the other. Foucault also identified the immanence of power.

> Power is everywhere not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere. And "power," insofar as it is permanent, repetitious, inert, and self-reproducing, is simply the over-all effect that emerges from all these mobilities, the concatenation that rests on each of them and seeks in turn to arrest their movement …power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society. (Foucault, 1981, p. 91.).

Foucault 1981's concept of bio-power comes from his analysis of discourse and knowledge production and refers to a multiplicity of force relations rather than domination of one group by another.

> Power is transmitted through discourse which constitutes knowledge techniques and power strategies. [...] discourse is a group of statements in so far as they belong to the same discursive formation; it does not form a rhetorical or formal unity, endlessly repeatable, whose appearance or use in history might be indicated [...] is made up of statements for which a group of conditions of existence can be defined. (Foucault, 1972, p. 116.).

Instead of the total control theories of Marxism, Foucault identified the human body as the object of control and focused on how hegemony worked and not on who generated it. The human body was the object to be controlled and manipulated by power.

Within the Marxist framework, power refers to a fusion between economic and political dominance for the good of society in a socialist regime or even long term for ill in a capitalist state. In socialist anarchism power often carries a dual negative, namely capital and the centralised state. In right wing anarchist power is defined as the state. There is popular power, power to resist and competitive power. There is also power to achieve something. Additionally, anarchism sees multiple realities of oppression beyond the economic.

However, the notion of hegemony is criticised for failing to deal in detail with resistance to power. "It overlooks the middle ground in which conformity is often a self-conscious strategy and resistance is a carefully balanced affair that avoid all-or nothing confrontations" and therefore misses "the immense political terrain that lies between quiescence and revolt." Hegemony is said to focus on "the visible coastline, rather than the continent that lies beyond" (Scott, 1999, p.199).

3.3.3 Media of civil society

> Identifying itself as a news agency of civil society, IPS places special emphasis on its relationship and engagement with this sector. By meeting NGO information needs, reporting

> their campaigns, facilitating networking and being a communication channel for change, IPS contributes directly to building capacities for this sector. (IPSIA, 2009, p.7.).

This description by IPS alludes to the links between alternative media and civil society. Furthermore, alternative media shares some similarities with civil society one of which is that both are not directly controlled or influenced by the state and the market. However, this element is not an easy one to maintain.

Civil society is made up of citizen organizations like voluntary associations, clubs, self-help or interest groups, religious bodies, non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations, trade unions, foundations and social movements that are not part of government or political parties and are not established to make a profit. They can also be defined by using the minimalist model and generalist model. With the minimalist approach, there is limited contact between civil society, state, and market.

According to Gramsci, "civil society was a site where domination by consent was produced and reproduced [...] where hegemony could be contested and challenged and where alternative conceptualisations thrived". This approach located alternative media within civil society and allowed for the analysis of contradictions and conflict. Additionally, it related to both demands for social change by organised citizens as well as reactionary forces that were resistant to those demands. Thus, civil society oscillated between "convergence and contention" of interests (Bailey, Cammaerts, & Carpentier, 2008, pp. 21-22).

In the generalist approach civil society integrated the market and the state and is part of the legal framework that balances between public and private interests. According to Marx, civil society is where dominance is organised by the state using legal instruments to control society. In this approach self- interest of the bourgeois elite determine the public interest.

IPS sees itself as a news agency for civil society as evidenced by its documents. Civil society plays multiple roles in the life of the news agency because of a shared developmental agenda. Civil society actors are sources of information for IPS Africa stories and part of the readers of the content produced by the news agency.

3.3.5 Table 1: Characteristics of alternative media

Motive or purpose	- Rejection of commercial motives or *non-profit in nature*
	- Assertion of human, cultural, educational, ethnic rights to *Global South* ends
	- Oppose power structure and its behaviour
	- Build support, solidarity, and networking
Sources of funding	- Rejection of state or municipal grants and advertising revenue
Regulatory dispensation	- Supervised by distinct institutions
	- Independent/ 'free'
	- Breaking somebody's rules though rarely all of them in every respect
Organization structure	- Horizontal organization
	- *Collective structures*
	- Allowing full participation
	- Democratisation of communication
Criticising professional practice	- Encouraging voluntary engagement - *Developing alternative professional practices*
	- Access and participation for non-professionals
Message content	- Supplementing or contracting dominant discourses or presentations - Expressing alternative vision to hegemonic policies, priorities, perspectives - *relevant to developmental needs of the Global South*
Relationship with audience and or consumer	- Degree of user or consumer control - Allowing the needs or goals to be articulated by audiences/consumers themselves - democratisation of communication
Composition of audience	- Young people, women, rural populations - *Marginalised citizens from the Global South* - diversity and multiplicity
Range of diffusion	- Local rather than regional or national
	- *Linking local and regional to global*

Adapted from Bailey et al (2008), p. 19 with my additions in italics.

3. 4 Theoretical approaches to the study of alternative media

Theoretical approaches that can be used to describe IPS as an alternative media include the broadly Marxist Latin American *communicacion alternativa* tradition, and the radical alternative media studies tradition (Downing 1984; Rodriguez, 2001). IPS documents and the interviews that I carried out confirm this.

3.4.2.1 *Comunicacion alternativa* tradition

In this tradition, which developed in Latin America and where IPS roots can be traced, alternative media can be identified in their opposition to transnational corporations and to state-based media. This is visible in the participatory production processes and structures that the media have developed. Alternative media are self-managed versus having centralised management. They are horizontal, and not vertical, and democratic instead of being elite-based and are defined by their content and goals which are tied to social movements and *conscientizacao*/conscientisation (Hadl, 2007, p. 12). Furthermore, they promote dialogue over monologues that are synonymous with top-down structures.

The IPS model is positioned as an alternative to media oligopolies as explained in its plans.

> The trend of media concentration, and corporatisation continues rapidly, contradicting the perceived blossoming of information opportunities. Western media monopolies, which dominate international news flows, offer an increasingly dumbed down product, less space to foreign news, and rely on fewer sources to provide it. Corporate media rely on personality, celebrity, and localism to attract readers to their news and ubiquitous advertising to finance it. (IPSIA, 2009, p. 6.).

In *comunicacion alternativa* alternative media provides additional options beyond the conglomerates and state-owned media. These arguments emerged from the *dependista* critique of the 1970s which featured strongly in the NWICO debates as alluded to in Chapter 2. The critique aimed to develop theoretical approaches, and policies that could analyse, challenge, and replace the neo-colonial communications system. Alternative media sought to challenge the status quo through social movements that used video and radio in popular education, feminist communication, mine workers radio stations, indigenous video activism, participatory journalism, and alternative news sources (Hadl, 2007; Rodriguez 2001). However, the approach suffered a major setback with the defeat in the NWICO debates and was criticised for binarism.

However, the *communicacion alternativa* approach has a big-small media binarism that creates "unrealistic David versus Goliath scenarios" coupled with "traditional, static and essentialist definitions of democracy, citizenship, and democratic communicative action, concepts that necessarily inform our theorising alternative media" (Rodriguez, 2001, p. 4). Practitioners and

researchers should accept and embrace the disconnected localism and cultural "ghettoization" of the practices and the "fuzziness" of their theories (Rodriguez, 2001, p. 161).

3.4.3 Radical alternative media tradition

The IPS model can be explained by using the radical and alternative media approach. According to IPS, one of the objectives of its "news and content provision" is to "produce stories and analyses to find out and explain how events and global processes affect the marginalised and the voiceless, from the perspectives of the Global South and with a focus on development and the role of civil society" (IPSIA, 2009, p.13). Radical alternative media discourse which developed in Europe and the Unites States had its foundation in the 1960s and 1970s social movements. However, there is little research on alternative media and some of its publishing such as punk, ecology and feminism (Downing, 2001).

This tradition saw radical alternative media as "politically dissident media that offer radical alternatives to mainstream debates" (Downing, 1995, p. 181). Their characteristics included a close relationship with social movements as well as being self-managed and independent from capital, state, the church and other agencies of oppressive power (Downing, 1984, p. 10). Radical alternative media used anarchism, feminism, and an analysis of the false binaries of the Cold War to come up with a third media that was neither capitalist nor communist. As can be seen from the literature, radical alternative media research, although unaware of Latin American research, drew many parallels with *comunicacion alternativa*. Alternative media were not only alternative in terms of their content or goals, but also in their attempts to transcend top-down communication models and to develop internally democratic organising methods that supported social movements. Alternative media practices offered a way beyond Cold War politics and saw themselves as a bigger movement towards media democratisation and a better world.

However, limitations have been identified with both approaches: Is media of repressive social movements' alternative media? Is media that uses propaganda in a one-way sender-receiver system alternative media? Is being different or additional an end in itself? There is also criticism of alternative media approaches being fuzzy and ghettoised – too open for wide interpretation. How does alternative media promote social change and activism? How does alternative media contribute to the framing of political alternatives? These are some of the questions that researchers should answer.

3.4.2 The Marxist tradition

The *commucacion alternativa* and the radical alternative media traditions draw some influences from the Marxist approaches to the study of the media. In this sense, it can be inferred that the IPS model has a Marxist ideological leaning.

> Marxists view capitalist society as being one of class domination; the media are seen as part of an ideological arena in which various class views are fought out, although within the context of the dominance of certain classes; ultimate control is increasingly concentrated in monopoly capital; media professionals while enjoying the illusions of autonomy, are socialised and internalised into the norms of the dominant cultures; the media taken as a whole, relay interpretive frameworks consonant with the interest of the dominant classes, and media audiences while sometimes negotiating and contesting these frameworks, lack ready access to alternative meaning systems that would enable them to reject the definitions offered by the media in favour of consistently oppositional definitions (Gurevitch, 1982, p. 1).

In Marxist analysis, alternative media may be "offering radical, anti-capitalist relations of productions often coupled to projects of ideological disturbance and rupture. The Gramscian notion of counter-hegemony is discernible within a range of media projects" (Atton, 2002, p.7). This is evident in the critique of the media by the Frankfurt school where the origins of alternative media can be traced.

"The primary freedom of the press lies in not being a trade," wrote Karl Marx (Sandoval, 2009, p. 12). Furthermore, according to Marx the media were:

> the public watchdog, the tireless denouncer of those in power, the omnipresent eye, the omnipresent mouthpiece of the people's spirit that jealously guards its freedom" with a responsibility to "come forward on behalf of the oppressed in its immediate neighbourhood [...] to undermine all the foundations of the existing political state of affairs" (Sandoval, 2009, p. 12).

However, the Marxist approaches have been criticised for being another ideology although there have been arguments on whether historical materialism is an objective science. Other criticisms include being too doctrinaire, deterministic and reductionist. The notion of false consciousness is seen as misleading as it suggests a reality that is not influenced by mediation and ignores the possibility of oppositional readings (Berger, 2005).

3.4.1 The liberal-pluralist tradition

It can be concluded that the least influence on the IPS model comes from the liberal-pluralist approach to alternative media studies.

> Pluralists see society as a complex of competing groups and interests, none of them predominant all of the time. Media organizations are seen as bounded organizational systems, enjoying an important degree of autonomy from the state, political parties, and institutionalised pressure groups. Control of the media is said to be in the hands of an

> autonomous managerial elite who allows a considerable degree of flexibility to media professionals (Gurevitch, 1982, p. 1).

The liberal-pluralist view sees society as being composed of small groups of people that are networked and whose relationships are mediated by the media - generally seen as the Fourth Estate after the executive, parliament, and the judiciary. In this line of argument liberal democracy becomes the basis for bringing social cohesion, and that the free market promotes economic independence. Individual pluralism is expressed as social consciousness and the assumptions are that individuals are free and equal within society. This means that people exercised their right of choice and where there is conflict, this is solved by pluralistic consensus based on the norms, values and structural functioning of the social order that included regular elections. Liberal pluralism is summarised by Lipset (1963):

> The fundamental political problems of the industrial revolution have been solved: the workers have achieved industrial and political citizenship; the conservatives have accepted the welfare state; and the democratic left has recognised that an increase in overall state power carried with it more dangers to freedom than solution for economic problems (Hall, 1982, p. 60).

However, this approach is often criticised for failing to consider social, economic, and political contexts. The approach has also been described as atheoretical as its logic is not grounded in theory but on general assumptions thus painting a scene that is blind to some realities.

> Larger historical shifts, questions of political process and formation before and after the ballot box, issues of social and political power and economic relations were simply absent, not by chance, but because they were *theoretically outside the frame of reference.*
>
> This picture of prophecy and hope, with a brutal hard-headed, behaviouristic positivism provided a heady theoretical concoction, which for a long time passed itself as pure science [...]. (Hall, 1982, p.59.). *(Emphasis in the original)*.

Issues of class and power are also not dealt with by liberal pluralism. The liberal pluralist approach tends to give more credit to market forces. This brings into question whether market forces can resolve social problems that include the underdevelopment of the Global South.

> Class formations, economic processes, and sets of institutional power relations were largely unacknowledged. What held society together, it was agreed, were its norms. In pluralist society, a fundamental broadly-based consensus on norms was assumed to prevail throughout the population. The connection between the media and this normative consensus then could only be established at the level of values (Hall, 1982, p. 59).

3.5 Atton's model and applicability to IPS Africa

Atton (2001) typology of alternative and radical media has six components as presented below. Of these, three will be tested against IPS Africa because as a news agency the organization produces content; transforms social relations, roles, and responsibilities during its operations especially of its journalists; and transforms communication processes through horizontal linkages and networks. Form, reprographic innovations, and distributive use are more applicable to the organizations that are users of IPS Africa's content.

3.5.1 Table 2: Atton's typology of alternative media

1. Content (politically radical, socially/culturally radical; news values
2. Form – graphics, visual language, varieties of presentation and binding; aesthetics
3. Reprographic innovations/adaptations – use of mimeographs, IBM typesetting, offset litho, photocopiers
4. 'Distributive use'– alternative sites for distribution, clandestine/invisible distribution networks, anti-copyright
5. Transformed social relations, roles, and responsibilities – reader-writers, collective organization, de-professionalisation of e.g., journalism, printing, publishing
6. Transformed communication processes – horizontal linkages and networks

(Atton, 2001, p.27)

3.5.2 Radical content

IPS Africa's content fits into the criteria of being politically, socially, and culturally radical. The same can be said of its news values. The objectives of IPS Africa's journalism, as listed below, reflect an inclination towards radical media content. The objectives are to:

- Bring relevant angles, voices, and perspectives of the affected to the global news and information market.
- Report the story behind the story, by seeking the truth behind appearances and contextualising significant events.
- Help readers worldwide grasp the political, social, cultural, and economic implications of a constantly changing global environment, the impact of globalization and international policy.
- Train journalists and share expertise especially in the developing world (IPS, 2008, p. 7).

In a heading titled *No strings attached* in its editorial policy, the news agency explains its role as a non-commercial organization that was neither linked to the state nor to multinational corporations. "IPS does not belong to any government, state, or private company, does not depend on advertising

to survive, and zealously maintains its editorial independence when considering grants or contracting projects" (IPS, 2008, p. 7).

3.5.3 News values

> "News values" are one of the most opaque structures of meaning in modern society. All "true journalists" are supposed to possess it; few can or are willing to identify and define it. Journalists speak of "the news" as if events select themselves. Further, they speak as if the "most significant" news story, and which "news angles" are most salient, are divinely inspired. Yet, of the million events which occur every day in the world, only a tiny portion ever become visible as "potential news stories" and of this proportion, only a small faction is actually produced as the day's news in the news media. We appear to be dealing then with a "deep structure" whose function as a selective device is untransparent even to those who professionally know how to operate (Hall, 1973, p.181).

Although IPS Africa has not documented its news values, these can be inferred from most of its documents. These include news that is developmental, contextual, and thoroughly investigated, including representation of the voices and interests of communities in the Global South. On development news, IPS states:

> Lack of a voice is both a major cause and effect of poverty. Poverty and inequality bare major obstacles to realising the universal right to be heard. These obstacles exist at the global level between rich and poor regions and nations, and at the local level between genders, classes, ethnicities, language groups and generations. Within this overarching framework of imbalance, specific global trends and communications trends, further obstacles to the ability of individuals and communities to be heard are created. (IPSIA, 2009, p.5).

Additionally, IPS, which has reported extensively on sustainable development from the Millennium Development Goals to the Sustainable Development Goals states that: "Sustainable development demands that people participate in the debates and decisions that affect their lives. Exclusion happens because people are too poor, too remote, or too culturally, socially or educationally marginalised to get their voices heard." (IPSIA, 2009, p.5.).

> The journalistic standards applied by IPS are, and will remain, among the highest in the world, because an IPS story is based on historical memory, facts, hard data, context, investigation, and analysis from diverse relevant sources. In a world leading to greater unilateralism, frequent wars and growing inequalities, the public's right to reliable information is greater than ever. (IPS, 2008, p. 7.).

A distinguishing characteristic of the IPS approach to journalism is to treat all news events as part of a process rather than to see them as isolated marvels.

> Reporting events without seeking to understand cause and effect means that readers will not be provided with enough context to develop an educated opinion. We go beyond the surface

> of isolated pieces of information or dramatic incidents, – to find out and explain how events and global processes affect individuals and communities alike (IPS, 2008, p. 7.).

Therefore, it can be concluded that IPS news values are an alternative to those used mainly in mainstream news agencies. It is important to revisit Galtunge and Ruge (1965)'s conceptualisation of how the mainstream media arrives at news values. How then did IPS Africa attempt to build an alternative to these values? For example, countries of the Global South are perceived as not influential nations, and IPS Africa covers community issues that include access to water, agriculture, trade, and climate change whose relevance is beyond events. The agency publishes features whose aim is to explain events.

Table 3: Galtung and Ruge's news values

1. **Frequency** – Events that unfold conveniently within the production cycle of a news outlet are more likely to be reported.
2. **Threshold** – The larger the event, the more people it affects, the more likely it is to be reported. Events can meet the threshold criterion either by being large in absolute terms, or by marking an increase in the intensity of an ongoing issue.
3. **Unambiguity** – The fewer ways there are of interpreting an event, the more likely it is to be reported.
4. **Meaningfulness** – the more culturally proximate and/or relevant an event is, the more likely it is to be reported.
5. **Consonance** – If a journalist has a mental pre-image of an event, it is expected to happen, then it is more likely to be reported. This is even more true if the event is something the journalist desires to happen.
6. **Unexpectedness** – If an event is unexpected, it is more likely to be considered newsworthy and to be reported.
7. **Continuity** – Once an issue has made the news once, future events related to it are more likely to be reported.
8. **Compositional balance** – News editors will attempt to present their audience with a "balanced diet" of news. An event that contributes to the diversity of topics reported is more likely to be covered than one that adds to a pile of similar news items.
9. **Elite nations** – Events that involve elite nations are likely to be reported than those that do not.
10. **Elite people** – Events that involve elite people are likely to be reported than those that do not.
11. **Personification** - Events that can be discussed in terms of the actions of individual actors are more likely to be reported than those that are the outcome of abstract social forces. By the same token, social forces are more likely to be discussed in the news if they can be illustrated by way of reference to individuals.
12. **Negativity** – An event with a negative outcome is more likely to be reported than one with a positive outcome.

(Galtung and Ruge, 1965)

3.5.4 Native reporting

The concept of native reporting is centred on the reporting which is done by "natives" of the place from which one writes from – a practice that IPS Africa uses instead of engaging "parachute journalists" from other parts of the world. Native journalism defined the activities of journalists who work from within communities "to represent news that is relevant to these communities of interest, presented in a manner that is meaningful to them and with their collaboration and support" and this approach can be described as learning "the native idiom". The journalists were not only message creators but members of a community that analysed historical situations with the aim of bringing about changes to the local situation (Atton & Hamilton, 2008, p.127-128).

Native reporting resonates well with IPS Africa's editorial policy.

> The best features are the ones told through the lives and experiences of people. Recitation of data and statistical pile ups about gender inequality, for example, cannot compare with real life stories. The good story weaves in the data without losing the human touch. (IPS, 2008, p. 13.).

During colonization, African communities as subjects were excluded from participating in media that reported on their lives. They were excluded from both production methods and the practices of reporting. The colonial journalist mediated their interests. In contrast to this, the native journalist reports on the "others," "the deviants" and "the voiceless."

> Social actors instead of being subjects to the news, become their own correspondents, reporting on their experiences, struggles and ideas […] the native reporter gains self-respect, and moral and political strength, through self-representation, thereby drawing power from the mainstream back to disenfranchised and marginalised groups that are the reporter's immediate community. (Atton & Hamilton, 2008, p.129.).

However, this on its own is never enough as will be shown in this study. In some instances, the native journalist can report using the same formulas as those of the mainstream media because of the journalism training they received.

The main features of the IPS editorial policy can be described as focussing on news analysis that is contextual, timely and in-depth coverage of global events. A news geography that reaches the excluded and marginalised in the Global South and the truth or *reality* that is not compromised using a variety of sources to provide unique angles and diverse perspectives from civil society and grassroots organizations. It also aims to highlight mainstream gender perspectives. The genre of IPS

news can be summarised as news stories, analyses, features, interviews, in-depth reports, and investigative stories.

IPS Africa follows a thematic approach to news by covering news related to the arts and culture, civil society, corruption, development and poverty, economy, trade and finance, climate change, environment, freedom of the media, globalization, health, human rights, indigenous people, labour, migration, and refugees. Although the themes are the staple for alternative media organizations, the mainstream media is covering them as well.

> We do not want to disregard the experts. We have correspondents in the places that we report from, our assumptions are that the correspondents have a relationship with the people in communities where they live, and they speak to the people and write about the people. That the people do get to speak and that they listen to what the people say when they speak. This way they can get an African perspective. African stories for Africa and African solutions for African problems. We are passionate about this. There is always a skewed perspective about someone who comes in for a few minutes and sees what happened and makes sweeping conclusions. (IPS, Staff 3.).

IPS Africa advises its journalists to develop their own sources. These should include alternative sources whose views are not normally reported in the traditional media such as environmental, grassroots and women's groups

> The sources are fundamental to a journalist – the better the sources, the better the reporting in the stories. Correspondents must always judge and check the quality of the information they receive from the sources. Sources have their own agendas and reasons for providing information, and correspondents should always be on guard against manipulation, unjustified accusations, and distortions. Copy must never reflect a correspondence agreement or disagreement with a source. (IPSWorldDesk, 2008.).

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I explored the theoretical underpinnings of alternative media as some of the ways in which to understand the IPS model. The definitions of alternative media that emerge from this analysis are multiple and form a "long tail" (Downing, 2008). However, in this study I will restrict myself to the definition of alternative media as those that produce radical media content. The production of radical media content is stronger in IPS Africa than other characteritics such as participatory approaches or grassroots media. However, some of IPS's editorial practices such as a centralised editorial are similar to those of the mainstream media.

IPS Africa's radical content is found in the organization's mission to make alternative development news from the Global South. This is set as a challenge to global media monopolies from the Global North, and by challenging these monopolies IPS Africa promotes radical social change and equality. It does this by representing the voices of the marginalised and poor communities and promoting their

developmental agendas. Further, IPS Africa journalistic practices bring out stories from the Global South that include native journalism, citizen media, and other practies that are counter-hegemonic to the dominant Global North narratives of an Africa of poverty, war and natural disasters.

In native journalism for instance a reporter who lives in the community and is familiar with the local contexts is the one who writes about the progress towards the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals in the country. Atton's model of radical and alternative media is used to explain the making of news by IPS Africa with emphasis on radical media content.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter looks at the methodology that I used for this study which is anchored in the qualitative research tradition. I approached the study from a critical realist perspective that sees the social world as a product of social and cultural formations (Deacon, 1999). The methods I used to collect data are participant observation, semi-structured interviews, analysis of documents and textual analysis.

I collected the data during my employment with IPS Africa which lasted 26 months from December 2008 to January 2011. I used purposive sampling to get specific information on the context of IPS Africa and in choosing informants. Although I wanted to use semi-structured interviews as my main method, I ended up using multiple methods. This was not by design but because of circumstances that arose during the research. For instance, I had access to a huge number of internal documents that gave me insights into the study and the valuable nature of this led me to include analysis of documents as a method. Participant observation became the other method for the study because I was firmly engrossed in the setting – observing how the stories were written and the processes involved.

To further illustrate how the setting helped me in this research, I attended workshops and meetings where interesting debates and discussions took place especially on the role of the media and good governance in the development of the Global South. I can also refer to an occasion where a planned one-on-one interview with an editor after a workshop ended as a group discussion that took place over dinner because there was no other appropriate time as the delegates had flights to catch the following day and at different times. However, I conducted four semi-structured interviews, and then carried out a textual analysis on 14 stories that were published on the IPS Africa website.

4.2 Critical realism

My research methods are informed by critical realism which sees the social world as "reproduced and transformed in everyday life" and shaped by the broader social and cultural formations that provided "the means, media, rules and resources for everything we do" (Deacon, 1999).

Critical realism emphasizes that unlike the structures that organise the natural world, social and cultural structures have a traceable history. Structures may be resilient but are not permanent and emerge at times under a particular set of circumstances and are continually modified by social action until they are eventually transformed into something else. Therefore, the understanding of the relationship between social and cultural structures, and everyday activities, are based on a "transformational conception of human activity" (Deacon, 1999, p. 5). The critical analyst role is to

bring structures to light and explain how they work to encourage informed action aimed at eradicating barriers to equity and social justice.

Unlike positivist approaches that focus on what people do or say in situations, critical realism is an interpretive approach which attempts to understand how people make sense of their world beyond immediate human actions, intentions, and statements. Critical realism explores why events happen by looking at the root causes and this calls for analysing "generative mechanisms underlying and producing observable events" and every day meaning systems. The approach is concerned with the underlying formations that organise meaning making. In the case of this study critical realism seeks to understand the relationship between IPS Africa structures and the practices of its journalists and how these are positioned in relation to the global media and communications system. It also explores how journalism is shaped by differential access to material resources – command over money, free time and usable space, social resources, access to networks of support and confirmation of identity and cultural resources. This includes competence in negotiating systems of language, representation, and self-representation (Murdock, 1997, p, 190).

4.3 Qualitative research

Qualitative research methods gain access to research subjects through, among other things, theoretical selection of cases, snowball sampling, methods of data collection such as participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and the use of personal documents to construct life stories etc. In this case the use of organizational documents to construct a news agency's history. The methods of analysis include grounded theory, analytical induction, narrative analysis, and textual analysis. In qualitative research the "natural setting" which studies social processes over time is preferred to the laboratory-based approaches. The natural setting gives the researcher an insider or emic perspective in which the study takes place as seen through the eyes of the actors themselves. Working at IPS Africa for over two years afforded me this opportunity. Additionally, the actions of the research participants are described in greater detail in ways that develop empathy towards actors' beliefs, history, and context.

Instead of counting and quantifying patterns, qualitative research brings out a "thick description" which is:

> [...] a rich, detailed description of specifics (as opposed to summary, standardised descriptions of quantitatively measured variables). A thick description is usually a lengthy description that captures the sense of actions as they occur. It places events in contexts as they occur. It places events in contexts that are understandable to the actors themselves. Rather than reverting to abstract, theoretical constructs, qualitative researchers prefer to use categories and concepts

> used by the actors themselves as a further attempt to stay true to the meanings of the actors themselves. (Babbie & Monton, 2001, p. 272).

Contextual interest

Contextualising events, actions and processes are the hallmarks of qualitative researchers. This happens within what is described as idiographic research strategies that consider historically defined structures as opposed to nomothetic approaches which in turn follow the laws of nature (Babbie & Monton, 2001). This study refers to IPS historical documents as some of the ways to decipher and understand its philosophy of news and the making of alternative news.

As a media programme co-ordinator for the Mwananchi programme my responsibilities included supporting the objectives of the programme with a focus on media partners, identifying and developing media networks to enhance reporting on governance issues, developing media strategies for NGOs that were part of the programme in the selected countries, providing training on use of media tools and platforms for good governance, research, and sharing of information on governance.

The programme goal was for citizens "to effectively express their views and interests and hold government to account for their actions at different levels of the governmental system" (Tembo, 2009, p. 5). The purpose was that "civil society, media and elected representatives are better able to understand and support the use of evidence-based approaches to shape policies and practices that meet the interests of citizens" (Tembo, 2009).

I was also responsible for the training of the NGO partners as part of the capacity building component of the programme. The training gave me insight into how the partners perceived the role of the media in good governance and the limitations that the media faced in their countries including attempts to curb media freedoms. The programme documents stated: "IPS Africa provides capacity building (training, mentoring and resource development) for media actors and play a critical role in documentation and dissemination of lessons learnt via the media […]" Tembo, (2009).

There were advantages of being at IPS Africa more specifically on doing research at an organization where one is employed. When I declared my interest in studying how IPS Africa made news from the Global South, I received support from the director and colleagues. The director gave me files with rich historical background of IPS Africa and on how the news agency operated. This in a sense contributed to what has been described as an "insider view" to the news agency as well as the evolution of its philosophy as an alternative news agency from the Global South that specialized in

development news. This means I did not face access problems when obtaining information because it was freely given upon request.

Further, some of the information on IPS Africa, including the stories that were published was available on the website and therefore accessible. I read most of the stories as soon as they were published and was also able to discuss with editors about story development, the writing process, sub-editing, and the posting of the final stories. My understanding of the IPS Africa approach to development news as outlined in Chapter 1 also grew.

It can also be said that although donors can have overbearing influence on projects that they fund, there can also be congruence of interest as expressed in the Mwananchi programme. The programme can be described as a convergence of common interests for the donor who had a governance agenda and an alternative news agency that identified governance as one of the key components for development to take place. Although there are common interests, the bringing in of different concepts by the donor means donor assistance can also be ideological. The identification by IPS as a media of civil society that represented the voices of the marginalised as earlier explained made the working together with the Overseas Development Institute in the Mwananchi programme possible. The programme emphasised the important role of the media in governance as explained below:

> The media is a principal source of information for citizen voice, creating a powerful communicative platform for citizen state engagement. It also plays a critical role as a public watchdog – monitoring and reporting on government activities and public issues. The media are therefore an integral part of achieving transparency, informed debate, and accountability. (Tembo, 2009, p.10.).

Intersubjectivity

Within the quantitative approach a key aim is to control the various sources of error that might affect the validity of the research results. The researcher also attempts to get closer to research subjects to get legitimate and insider perspectives and descriptions. With this paradigm, gaining trust and establishing rapport is important. It is less about controlling extraneous variables and more on generating credible intersubjectivity that does "justice to the object of study" (Babbie & Monton, 2001, p. 273). Being at IPS Africa during the period of study allowed me to get clarity on questions that I had about the news agency through conversations with some of the key players.

Trustworthiness

In the notion of trustworthiness, the researcher convinces the audiences that their findings are worth paying attention to. Researchers do this to make their work valid because a study cannot be considered valid unless it is reliable. Furthermore, for the study to be replicated or transferrable to other areas it must be credible and dependable.

Credibility

Credibility implies trying to make the study true by testing the compatibility of the constructed reality with that which exists in the minds of the respondents. Credibility is achieved through prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, referential adequacy, peer debriefing, and member checks (Babbie & Monton, 2001).

Transferability

This is the extent to which the findings can be applied to other contexts or with other respondents. The qualitative researcher does not claim that knowledge gained in other contexts or in the same context but at different times is relevant. It is up to the researcher to ensure that findings can be generalised from a sample to its target population. In qualitative research the obligation is on demonstrating transferability based on those who wish to apply it on the receiving context. It depends on similarities between the sending and receiving contexts and detailed descriptions of data that is precise thus allowing for judgements on transferability to be made by the readers (Babbie & Monton, 2001).

Dependability

A study must also provide its audience with evidence that if it were to be repeated with the same respondents in the same context its findings will be similar. This means that the research must leave an audit trail of daily journal, data, findings, interpretations, and recommendations.

Confirmability

This is the degree to which the findings are the product of the focus of inquiry and not the hunches of the investigator. An audit trail consisting of raw data (recorded tapes, written field notes, documents and surveys); data reduction and analysis products (field notes, theoretical notes, working hypotheses); data reconstruction and synthesis products (themes, findings, conclusions and final report); process notes (methodology and audit trail notes), materials relating to intentions and dispositions (inquiry proposals and personal notes) instrument development information (pilots and surveys) (Babbie & Monton, 2001, p. 278).

4.4 Methods used

As a researcher, I made a concerted effort to ensure that the study would have the qualities above. The methods that I used to ensure this are participant observation, focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews, and analysis of documents.

Participant observation

While working at IPS Africa, I was able to observe how the news agency made news from the Global South from the inception of the story idea until it was published on the website or sent to subscribers. As a programme coordinator for a governance programme, I took part in meetings and workshops that conceptualised the work that we were doing. In participant observation, the researchers immerse themselves into the group or setting that they are studying and become participating members of the group's cultures by adopting a role that is recognised by the group as "contextually appropriate and non-threating" (Lindlof, 1995, p. 4).

> By participating in the activities of a group or setting the researcher gains insights into the constraints, motivations, emotions, and meanings that members' experience. Effective participation – in the sense of being able to act, think, and feel as a true participant would – is thought by many to be prerequisite to making effective observations. (Lindlof, 1995, p. 4.).

Semi-structured interviews

The semi-structured interviews on IPS Africa were insightful. The expression and passion that interviewees express in an interview is difficult to get or imagine if the responses are to be in writing. The tone and emphasis of the interviewee gives you leads and pointers on what to look for in the literature. Interviews have several names that include in-depth, unstructured, semi-structured, intensive, collaborative, and ethnographic and are useful to "understand the complex behaviour of members of society without imposing any *a priori* categorisation that may limit the field of inquiry" (Fontana & Frey, 1994, p. 366).

> In qualitative research, one interviews people to understand their perspective on a scene, to retrieve experience from the past, to gain expert insight or information, to obtain descriptions of events or scenes that are normally unavailable for observation, to foster trust, to understand a sensitive or intimate relationship, or to analyse certain kinds of discourse. (Lindlof, 1995, p. 5.).

Focus group discussions

I had a focus group discussion with an editor, a reporter and other IPS Africa staff after a workshop. The focus group method involves bringing together a group, or, more often, a series of groups of subjects to discuss an issue in the presence of a moderator. A moderator ensures that the discussion

remains on the issue at hand, while eliciting a wide number of opinions on that issue (Lunt & Livingstone, 1996, p. 80). The group interview has the advantages of being inexpensive, data rich, flexible, stimulating to respondents, recall aiding, and cumulative and elaborative over and above individual responses (Fontana & Frey, 1994, p. 365).

Analysis of documents

The research benefitted immensely from organizational documents that were made available to me during the period of study. These documents provided important historical and contextual information about the news agency. Organizational documents can be described as a form of material culture as they existed as books, papers and in electronic formats (Bertrand & Hughes, 2005). Paper and electronic documents now commonly referred to as soft copies to differentiate them from the printed or hard copies were made available to me during the study. An important quality of the documents is their discursive element in that the texts could be interpreted as what happened in this study.

4.5 Conclusion

IPS was launched as a news agency to provide radical alternative news from the Global South and in that sense, it is critical project and has remained so over the years. It is from this analysis that I angled my inquiry more from a critical paradigm perspective as is seen by the selected methods. The methods that I used are semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and analysis of documents. The next chapter on findings and results is hinged on whether IPS Africa has been true to its mission of being the "voice of the voiceless" by the way it reported on issues affecting the poor and marginalised from the Global South and the challenges it faced to achieve this goal.

Chapter 5: A presentation, discussion, and interpretation of the findings: Telling Africa's untold stories

5.1 Introduction

IPS Africa's motto of "Telling Africa's untold stories" will be used as a theme to present the findings of this study because it captures the essence of the news agency. As mentioned earlier, this study is anchored on Atton (2001) model of radical and alternative media that recognized radical content as one of the markers of alternative media. In general, the findings contribute to existing research on IPS and IPS Africa. However, the findings confirmed what previous research on the IPS news service concluded. Firstly, that it was an alternative news agency that promoted the perspectives of the Global South (Giffard, 1998, 2000 and 2002); Giffard & Clark (1997); and Joye (2010).

Secondly, that it exuded a distinctly African ethos in the form of the native journalism practices of the reporters. The findings also confirmed that IPS Africa used counter-elite sources, just in the same way that elite sources are routinely used in the mainstream media. Therefore, the counter-elite sources can also be described as primary definers according to Hall (1978).

Thirdly, that viability and sustainability are key issues as this researcher felt the anxiety of respondents when the issue of donor relations came up in the interviews. According to the respondents these relations impinged on "editorial independence", "objectivity" and "professionalism." However, this sensitivity to the donor question brought to the fore the contestations and historical insinuations that terminologies such as editorial independence, objectivity, and professionalism often contained.

To explain these findings, I looked at how IPS Africa constructed the news; how it stayed true to its founding mission, who its reporters were, and what I consider to be a fallacy of its use of a "professional" approach. I also analysed its stories as radical content that can be described using the Foucauldian sense of an "insurrection of subjugated knowledges" (Foucault, 1972). My contemplation also fell on the training programme, the marketing of its products and services, and possible financial and resource mobilisation strategies.

5.2 The making of news at IPS Africa

This is the heart of the matter as seen in the title of this study: *An inquiry into how Inter Press service Africa makes alternative news from the Global South.* News stories at IPS Africa originate from the organization's themes and those of its project partners. Story ideas also come from the reporters, editors, and other outside sources. For example, a press statement on an event or issue could lead to a story (IPS Africa Staff Three, 2011). Nevertheless, stories that emanated from the reporters

appeared to be well thought out with detailed pitches and clear description on what they wanted to write. According to the editors, this could be the case because such stories are not only "from the ground" but are motivated by what the reporter witnesses and encounters which is related to their everyday lives.

> Stories that slapped reporters in the face were the ones that IPS Africa was interested in doing. I prefer a story that is centred on what the reporter has seen. Something that they see as important and worthwhile. Reporters are also passionate and have motives to propose particular stories. You can see that they have an affinity to the issue, and it is clear why they want to report on it. In cases where a reporter chooses an issue to work on it almost always results in a well-written story because the reporter will be writing about their personal experiences (IPS Africa Staff Three, 2011).

When the story idea is selected the reporter pitches it to the editor. The idea of a pitch – a brief outline or synopsis of the story – is embedded in IPS Africa's journalism training approach. However, this process increases the workload for the editors and is time consuming. The reporters are not a homogeneous group as some needed more coaching than others. The reporters had different skills set. However, the editors said with tight deadlines it is difficult to coach reporters as this lengthens the writing process and especially when this happened when there were targets to be met. This means the editors are not only responsible for sourcing copy but double up as trainers. Therefore, some of the stories are used only for training purposes and never published as they did not meet the required standards.

As part of developing reporters' skills, the editors give detailed briefs. Using their knowledge and industry experience, they advise on, among other things, the preferred length of a story which usually does not exceed 800 words, the story structure, and the use of language.

> I prefer a situation in which a reporter identifies a person or a group of people at the centre of an issue so that we have movement and can ask the question "why?" This is an important question for social journalists. I am also interested in the background and wider significance of an issue and people [who are quoted as sources in the story] should be given the opportunity to explain. If the reporter is in Swaziland or Uganda and wants to do a story, the question they must answer is: in what sense does their story matter to the rest of the world? Obviously, sources are important. I push reporters to identify not only sources who know about the story but also sources that are directly affected by the issue. Again, I am trying to get close to the lives of people who are affected and who are trying to influence change. Once we have a pitch with all those elements: who is doing what and why they are doing it, we are ready to roll (IPS Staff Three, 2011).

Living in the countries from which they write has several advantages including bringing authenticity and writing from a position of knowledge. "It is a reality they are living, and the stories tell a reality the journalist is experiencing" (IPS Staff Two, 2011). This allows the journalist to engage in critical

interpretations of their environments which can only happen through local memories and by listening to marginalised voices in their communities. Reporting on issues of sustainable development, access to water, HIV and AIDS and recently on the impact of the coronavirus disease pandemic on communities, for example, requires local knowledge on how communities have dealt with poverty and inequality and disease prevalence including pandemics in the past. From local memory a reporter draws the kind of responses that have worked in the past and are more likely to work in the future. It is more than writing a story, but of an investigation on how to transform the social lives of people in the Global South through the agency of an alternative development news story. The journalist becomes the modern griot, but this only happens when he or she understands the local context.

In a sense this is related to the power and knowledge nexus in local and specific settings, and the journalists become a conduit through which the subjugated voices speak. The journalist uses the power of the media and their own local knowledge to support the initiatives and aspirations of local communities in the Global South.

This approach of using local journalists has the advantage of witnessing events and issues as they unfold and allows for the interpreting of the local voices. It can be argued that this enables the journalist to use their experience in analyses that are context specific. It is not surprising that this essence has been flagged as one of the core characteristics of IPS Africa approach to alternative journalism.

> We were always a news agency that could not cover the continent in terms of breadth. We just did not have the capacity in terms of money and resources, but where we did have stringers on the ground, that story was told on the context and basis of that country. It was not parachute journalism, where a journalist was flown into the capital to write a story. We were always telling the story from journalists within the country and beyond the capital cities (IPS Africa Staff Four).

IPS stories are not restricted by notions of newsworthiness or relevancy but look at issues that have been taken off the radar of the public gaze and dialogue – issues that could be said to have become subjugated. By doing this, it challenges mainstream media's notions of newsworthiness and news values thus redefining and providing alternatives to some of the journalistic concepts of the mainstream media. "Things that society thinks are not important such as a fistula sufferer in Malawi or a circus in Burkina Faso are what we go for. We are a place where we will listen to you if you have something to say (IPS Africa Staff Three, 2011).

5.2.1 Training and capacity development

When IPS Africa was launched it had to define in unambiguous terms what it was trying to do as an alternative news agency from the Global South and the journalists had to be trained in its way of seeing and doing alternative development journalism. Cognisant of its small size and thinly spread on the continent, there was understanding that more could be achieved by training the news agencies that already existed in most countries. Although the agencies were useful, they had operational problems. News agencies on the continent were often in government ministries responsible for information and seen by ruling elites as their appendages that had to sing the praises and dance to political party drums. Not surprising then that this thinking led the news agencies to operate more like government public relations departments with journalists that were more like civil servants.

> When IPS started operating it was trying to distinguish itself in several ways. When we started IPS a big component of the work was the building of journalist capacity in Africa, not only for IPS stringers and correspondents, but a programme to build capacity of all news agencies to get better on reporting, news analysis and features because they were only news agencies. So, at some point we had journalists from African news agencies that came to Harare (Zimbabwe) for training. IPS always saw itself as not putting out news but also building the capacity of news agencies. Training seminars and training for journalists have been some of the defining features of IPS Africa. (Made P., 2010.).

The training is also meant to equip journalists from the Global South with skills to challenge the hegemony of the Global North's media monopolies. This ensures that the African story is told "from different geographical locations with a breadth and perspective that mirrored the richness of the continent" (IPSIA, 2009, p. 28). Hence, training and capacity development are some of the core activities for IPS Africa.

To its reporters, IPS Africa is a nursery where skills are nurtured and more. Others describe it as a playground to do the journalism that one desired without pressure and an opportunity to work with news values that did not serve commercial interests. Its multifaceted activities were likened to a "friendly beast with many heads and identities" (Focus Group, 2011).

The training provides learning opportunities for development reporting for journalists accustomed to formulas of the mainstream media and focused on specific developmental issues such as poverty. The trainers are sometimes accompanied by specialists drawn from local, regional, and international institutions, education centres and NGOs that are involved in journalism and media training and are in partnership with IPS. The training normally begins with a five-day workshop attended by about 10 journalists and is followed up with online coaching and support by the editors. The journalists then immediately go into the field and begin filing stories.

5.2.1 The IPS Africa story as a development news genre

Although stories are generally pitched as per preceding explanation there are other variables that come into play including the type of story. As attested to in the previous chapter, the IPS Africa story has several characteristics: it is contextual, captures civil society and citizen voices, is written by a local journalist and thus provides insider views and to use Giddens' (1984) terminology it is "constituted" and is "constitutive" of a development perspective from the Global South. Therefore, one can conclude that the IPS ideal story comes from the development news genre.

IPS publishes about six types of stories in its genre pool which include news analysis, the global story, the regional story, national and international events, commentary, and conferences (IPS, 2008). The news analysis story gives detailed accounts of issues or significance of events thus providing the socio-economic and political contexts. The news analysis story provides the background to specific events and issues. Meanwhile, the global story deals with issues of globalization and their effects on Global North-Global South relations and include global governance issues and campaigns against, for instance, the neo-liberal capitalist policies of the World Trade Organization, World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund, among others.

> The global story takes an event in one geographic location and connects it to global processes that make the story meaningful to people in other regions. The story also shows the impact of an event outside [of] its immediate geographic area. (IPS, 2008, p. 14).

The regional story, for example, covers developmental issues pertaining to specific geographic regions in Africa including the Southern African Development Community, the East African Community, the Economic Community of West African States, North Africa, and other regional economic communities. The aim of these stories is to promote regional co-operation, integration, and the formulation of common strategies for the socio-economic development of the continent.

National events are covered but with an eye to their wider significance for the rest of the world – a method that has been described as "glocalisation" in which one foot is in the local scene while the other one is in the global (Alankus, 2009). On governance issues, both internalist arguments on state failure including debates on neo-patrimonialism and externalist arguments that focus on neo-colonialism are considered because the news agency sees local conditions as being mediated by particularities of history.

International events such as those published annually by the United Nations are also covered as stories by IPS Africa. These include events commemorating the International Women's Day (8 March); World Press Freedom Day (3 May); International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (17 October);

and the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (25 November); World AIDS Day (1 December) and others.

Commentary, which include blogs, are also part of the stories, and are published under the columnist service which provide critiques of important development issues. Further, the conference stories especially on UN conferences are published in newsletters made up of copy from IPS Africa reporters.

5.2.2 Who are IPS Africa reporters?

IPS Africa reporters can be put into two groups: correspondents and stringers. Correspondents are those in the full-time employment of the agency and stringers are freelancers. During the research period the agency had three full-time correspondents – representing Southern, East and West Africa. These were stationed at the headquarters in Johannesburg and at the bureaus in Nairobi, Kenya and Cotonou, Benin. Obviously, these are not enough considering the size of the regions. Further, there were regions that did not even have correspondents altogether such as Central and North Africa. However, it should be noted that trying to cover the entire African continent is an ambitious task for any agency whose human and financial resources are constrained like those of IPS Africa.

In addition to the reporters were five editors: the regional editor (who was the editor-in-chief), the French editor (responsible for French copy and translations to cater for Francophone Africa) and three editors who were responsible for copy on specific themes such as good governance. The rest of the 104 reporters were stringers who wrote on a freelance basis at a prescribed fee. Most of the journalists got to know IPS Africa because of its alternative development news approach, as an opportunity to develop writing skills and to earn a living, while others came across it through the Internet and social media when they read the agency's copy that was published by newspapers or NGO websites.

The stringers, some of whom were full-time employees of mainstream media organizations, had a diverse skills base. While some had masters' degrees and were graduates of journalism schools, others were simply competent writers who had developed the craft on their own. However, it is ironic, as in one case, where the reporter could not even type, let alone use email and the Internet. This journalist hand wrote his stories which were typed and emailed on his behalf from an Internet cafe. It is like a case of "a fish that couldn't swim" as put by one editor (IPS Staff Three, 2011). Therefore, based on this observation the journalists are a mixed bag. Some write stories that require little editing, while others write stories that need a lot of reworking. However, most of them improved with time only to stop writing for IPS Africa after being offered better opportunities elsewhere.

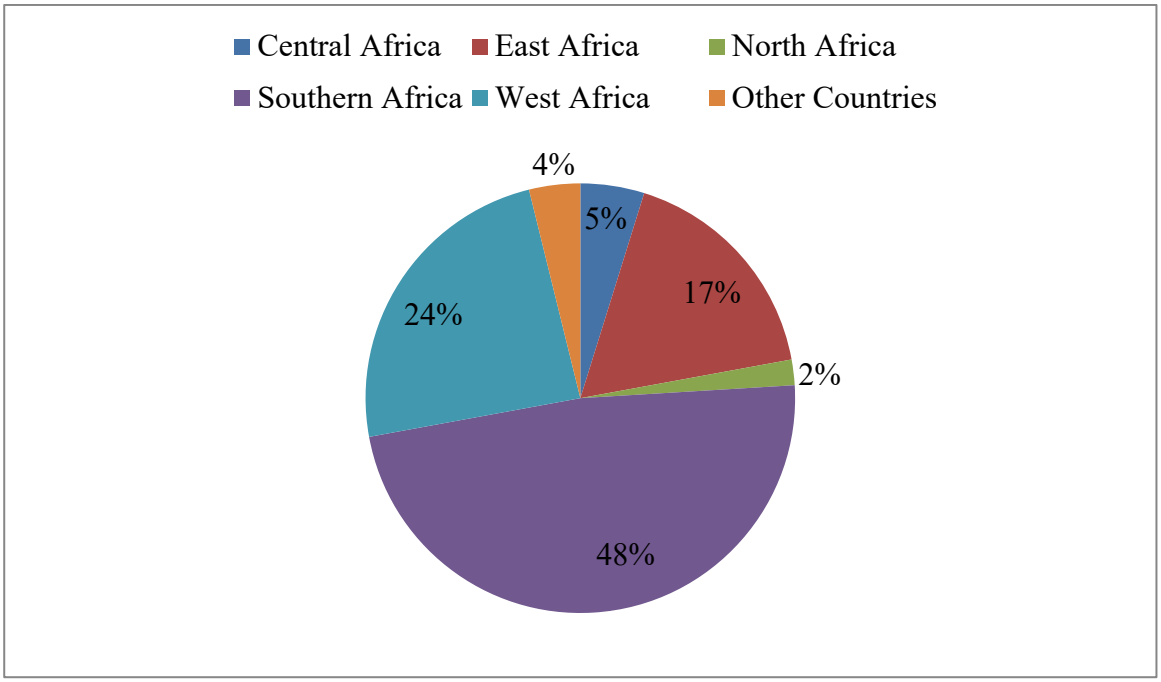
Table 4: IPS Africa Reporters by country

Region	Country	Organization	Other media	Reporters
Central Africa	Burundi	IPS, Bujumbura	Radio Burundi	1
	Congo-Brazzaville	IPS, Brazzaville		1
	Democratic Republic of Congo	IPS, Kinshasa		1
	Rwanda	IPS, Kigali		2
East Africa	Ethiopia	IPS, Addis Ababa		1
	Kenya	IPS, Regional Office (Nairobi 6; Mombasa 1)	World Vision	7
	Somalia	IPS, Mogadishu	Reuters	1
	Somaliland	IPS	Care International	1
	South Sudan	IPS, Juba	African Women and Child Feature Service; Internews	4
	Tanzania	IPS, Dar Es Salaam		1
	Uganda	IPS, Kampala	Teso Radio	3
North Africa	Algeria	IPS, Algiers		1
	Morocco	IPS, Rabat		1
Southern Africa	Angola	IPS, Luanda	BBC	1
	Botswana	IPS, Gaborone	Mmegi newspaper;	3
	Lesotho	IPS, Maseru	SABC	2
	Madagascar	IPS, Antananarivo		1
	Malawi	IPS (Lilongwe; Blantyre, 2)	Blantyre Newspapers; Voice of America	3
	Mauritius	IPS		1
	Mozambique	IPS, Maputo	BBC Radio Mozambique;	3
	Namibia	IPS, Windhoek	The Namibian	4
	South Africa	IPS, Head Office (Johannesburg, 12;	Associated Press; Mercury	23

		Cape Town, 6; Durban 3; Polokwane; and Pretoria)	newspaper; Radio Islam; Workers World Media Production	
	Swaziland	IPS, Mbabane		2
	Zambia	IPS, Lusaka	PANOS	5
	Zimbabwe	IPS, Bulawayo		2
West Africa	Benin	IPS, Cotonou, Regional Office		2
	Cameroon	IPS, Yaounde		3
	Chad	IPS, N'Djamena		1
	Cote D'Ivoire	IPS, Abidjan		2
	Ghana	IPS, Accra		2
	Guinea-Bissau	IPS		1
	Guinea	IPS, Conakry		1
	Liberia	IPS, Monrovia	Internews	1
	Mali	IPS, Bamako		1
	Nigeria	IPS (Northern Nigeria, Kano, and Lagos)	BBC; News Agency of Nigeria	5
	Niger	IPS, Niamey		1
	Senegal	IPS, Dakar		2
	Sierra Leone	IPS, Freetown	BBC	2
	Togo	IPS, Lome		1
Other countries	France	IPS, Paris		1
	Germany	IPS, Berlin		1
	United Kingdom	IPS, London		1
	Switzerland	IPS, Geneva		1
Total				**104**

Adapted from IPS Reporters Register 2010.

IPS Africa reporters by region



5.2.3 Staying true to the mission

IPS's founding mission statement aims to:

> contribute to development by promoting free communication and a professional flow of information to reinforce technical and economic co-operation among developing countries [...] its purpose is to support the production and dissemination of information on national and international realities with particular regard to the developing countries. (IPSIA, 2003, p. 15.).

From this overarching mission statement some long term objectives were developed to promote peace, human rights, development and democracy by "producing independent and high quality information that supported the growth of free and diverse media, and helped to safeguard freedom of expression." (IPSIA, 2003, p. 16.).

Other objectives are to disseminate information using multimedia platforms such as online newspapers and to create dialogue between the media, civil society and policy makers on global political and economic policies and how these impact on relations between the Global North and the Global South (IPSIA, 2003, p. 16).

> There has always been a tension in IPS. But the tension became heightened in the late 1990s moving to 2000 because of many things. IPS was set up globally as a news agency and for many years was referred to as the sixth largest news agency in the world. The difference between IPS and Reuters, UPI and AFP is that it is trying to break the flow of news agency

> copy from the Global North into the developing regions, and even coverage of the development regions into the market came from agencies of the Global North.
>
> The agency was trying to break this flow and put into the market news copy from developing regions and then direct that flow of the copy into the Global North. It was about the same time that there were debates on the NWICO. IPS was situating itself as that agency that could change the information flow and contribute to the information order with news coming from the Global South written by local journalists moving into the Global South and then into the Global North. Then I think IPS gained so much – by not selling – but there were donors from the Nordic countries and others who were interested in supporting the change of information flow in the world and IPS found itself attracting that funding. (Made P. , 2010).

In a sense IPS Africa operated within the philosophy of the founding mission and objectives as earlier mentioned. Its work is also identifiable with the Windhoek Declaration made by African newpaper journalists in 1991 at a UNESCO seminar on "Promoting an independent and Pluralistic African Press". The declaration called for the establishment of an independent, pluralistic and free press as a prerequisite to the development and maintanance of democracy and economic development. Alternative media had potential to promote freedoms of information and the press and freedom of association. The demands in the Windhoek Declaration are meant to stop the repression as aptly captured in Article 6:

> In Africa today, despite the positive developments, in many countries, journalists, editors and publishers are victims of repression – they are murdered, arrested, detained, censored and are restricted by economic and political pressures such as restrictions of newsprint, licensing systems which restrict opportunities to publish. In some cases visa restrictions also prevent the free movement of journalists, restrictions on the exchange of news and information, and limitations on the circulation of newspapers within countries and across national borders. In some countries one party states control the totality of information. (UNESCO, 1991.).

IPS Africa's mission also has resonance with the African Charter on Human and People's Rights. So in terms of protecting, or staying true to the legacy of the organization, IPS Africa is arguably achieving its goals. This is evident in IPS Africa's policy documents which are clear on the organization's politics, and what it wants to achieve.

5.2.4 The fallacy of professionalism

Although its journalistic practices are different, IPS Africa's claim to be an organization that uses a professional journalism approach locates it in the same boat as the mainstream media. Further, the notion of professional journalism has been challenged. For example, can journalism be defined as a profession in the same way as teaching or nursing? Studies have concluded that a lot should be

considered before journalism can be called a profession. This includes considering the influence of editorial policies and ideologies on journalism and that the exercise of journalistic professional judgement is influenced by editorial policies. There is also ambiguity on what professionalism is based on and what it means. Journalism also has no entry requirements and other prerequisites for it to be called a profession (Curran, 1991, p. 99).

However, the agency explicitly serves the public interest and thus its journalists aim to counter the growing influence of media owners, advertisers, and governments. This is in line with the ideology of professional responsibility (Curran, 1991). Whatever its wishes to be "professional" are, there are constraints as highlighted by a staff member:

> In the scenario of IPS, the issue of professionalism is very blurred in the sense that most of our projects are donor funded. So, when we speak of professionalism and a journalist who is embedded and reporting an African story, we must also consider that the project they report on is mandated by donor funds. The reporter ends up reporting the issue from an empathetic point of view – to highlight the plight of an HIV positive child in ways that conform to donor requirements. If a UN agency that deals with HIV positive children happens to be the donor then you must follow their brief.
>
> I cannot say donors have 100 per cent control but the fact that we write proposals means we are at the peril of the donors. For instance, if a donor is to agree on a proposal, they will say that they want IPS Africa to do a certain number of stories on a particular issue. (IPS Africa Staff Two.).

Furthermore, reporting about conferences is not always productive as illustrated by another staff member.

> IPS was invited to cover a conference held in a Southern Africa country and organised by a UN agency, with delegates drawn from all over Africa including heads of states. To our surprise no concrete conclusions came out of the discussions, and if you looked at the cost of flights and accommodation you felt that the money could have been put to better use on some development project. But we could not report on this failure. In a way we were tied down by the agreements we had with the UN agency and I wondered whether IPS Africa had become an agency that covered talk shows for other organizations and in the process becoming a public relations organization (IPS Africa Staff One, 2010).

5.3 Good governance and development stories

The textual analysis sample is taken from 14 stories on governance that were produced under the Mwananchi programme and published on IPS Africa's Active Citizens' web page from 2009 to 2010. In the stories, citizens call for better participatory governance. The Mwananchi programme was anchored in research that explored the media as an interlocutor on good governance together with

civil society, elected representatives, and traditional leaders. Interlocutor in this sense means that the media provided information as a platform for debate and dialogue to facilitate citizen engagement with the state. The name Mwananchi means ordinary person in Swahili, and according to Masolo (1986) the term referred to people "who did not have any outstanding (political and/or financial or administrative) powers and privileges in public or private sectors" (Tembo, 2009, p.3). Kagwanja (2003) further expanded on this definition:

> The widening gap between the rich and the poor also found articulation in the social discourse on citizenship. The public discourse distinguished between *wananchi* (Kiswahili for the ordinary citizens) and *wenyenchi* (owners of the nation). With the endemic corruption, a new category was introduced, the *walanchi* ("eaters" of the nation). This distinction has been specially used to express popular disillusionment with the elite who continue to live luxuriously, despite the dire economic conditions of ordinary citizens. It is also a commentary on the scandal and cynical corruption and crude accumulation by the elite, which has taken a toll on the lives of ordinary citizens (*wananchi*). Tembo (2009.).

The Mwananchi programme was financed by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) which entered into a partnership with IPS Africa through funds obtained from the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID)'s Governance and Transparency Fund. Therefore, the Mwananchi programme was born out of DFID's 2006 White Paper which showed interest on how to make good governance work for the poor people at the grassroots level and as part of its initiatives proposed ways to increase capability, accountability, and responsiveness of governments (DFID, 2006). Capability referred to organizational attributes including the capacity to get things done and it is argued that this could be achieved through effective policy formulation and implementation; accountability meant that one group of people is held to account for their actions by other groups; and responsiveness is when governments or public authorities tried to identify and meet the needs and demands of citizens (Moore & Teskey, 2006). These concepts were part of the brief given to IPS Africa reporters, and therefore constituted part of how the news on good governance were to be conceptualised and written.

The Mwananchi programme had another partner, CIVICUS – a global alliance of civil society organizations and activists – which was responsible for providing support to civil society organizations including on building capacity on global best practices in participatory governance and social accountability.

I will briefly attempt to explain the context of the seven countries of Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Uganda, and Zambia from where good governance stories were written. The

context is the one prevailing during the Mwananchi project (2009-2011). These countries were selected based on their diverse contexts as emerging democracies that had managed regular elections and peaceful power transfers (Ghana, Malawi, and Zambia). Others were post-conflict countries (Sierra Leone, South Sudan, and Uganda) and countries that were closing democratic spaces for citizens (Ethiopia). It is also not within the scope of this study to provide the contexts of the countries in greater detail so what will be presented are snapshots that illustrate the arguments in the selected textual analysis.

Although African states are complex, I looked for common traits that are found in the news constructs by IPS Africa. This is not an easy task because the characteristics and evolutions of postcolonial states are complex. For example, Mamdani (1996) argued that the independent African states that emerged from colonisation were deracialised and not democratised; and that their nationals were not treated as citizens but as subjects (Mamdani, 1996, p. 8). Furthermore, I adopted the view of the nations as imagined communities meaning that the narratives of the nations which comprised "a set of stories, images, landscapes, scenarios, historical events, national symbols and rituals which stand for or *represent* the shared experiences, sorrows triumphs and disasters which give meaning to the nation" (Hall, 1992, p.293 emphasis in the original). Nations can be described as a myth and this argument is applicable in this study because "as was the case with many African nations which emerged after decolonisation, what preceded colonisation was not "one nation, one people" but many tribal cultures and societies" (Hall, 1992, p. 293).

However, these narratives were appropriated by postcolonial governments as part of their construction of the nation, and therefore used to consolidate political power. Thus, it is also in the name of nation building that the colonial media was nationalised:

> […] effectively turning them into mouthpieces of the postcolonial state. The media was structured and operated under the influence of the ideology of national identification, unification and development sweeping across the newly independent nations of Africa. The media was seen as instruments in forging and sustaining a unified national identity (Banda, 2008, p. 92).

The notion of the democratic developmental state in Africa is applicable to some of the ways in which IPS Africa stories were approached. The developmental state is "one that not only embodies the principles of electoral democracy, but also ensures citizens' participation in the development and governance processes" and this meant "bringing citizenship back into politics" (Edigheji, 2005, p. 5).

The debates in the stories supported the creation of strong institutions in the countries and exposed the type of governance systems that existed. However, most African states were not democracies as

practiced in the Global North and that is why they were sometimes referred to as hybrid or fragile states. Dominated by neo-patrimonial politics, the leaders of some African countries were often too powerful and not accountable thus leading to profligacy regimes that did great damage to the country's coffers and undermined public institutions.

> In "hybrid" states where neo-patrimonial politics are the norm it is by definition a weak legal regime. In such a state the constitution, rules, laws, and behaviour norms may well be articulated or written down, but they are weakly applied. The institutions normally responsible for their application are themselves weak – judiciaries, watchdog institutions, parliament, police, media, civic education etc. They are sometimes captured by the leader through his control of the appointment (and dismissal) process, or through patronage and clientelist practices (Cammack, 2007, p. 1).

The above complexities are reflected in the governance stories published by IPS Africa. The general thrust of the stories explored some of the ways in which citizens participated in the governance of their countries. This type of coverage is reflective of radical media content.

Textual analysis

The themes that emerged from analysing the text included demands for representation at local government level, how to enhance citizen participation, concern over banning of radio stations, how women's representation in parliaments could be increased, youth as combatants in inter-ethnic warfare, constitutional reforms, governance and democratisation in Africa, peace and justice, ending corruption, problems of ethnic federalism, and governments' muzzling of criticism from civil society. These themes are a representation of citizens aspirations, and this is what radical media content aims to achieve.

For instance, a story from Malawi published under the title, *New efforts for citizen power,* announced the launch of the Mwananchi programme in Malawi and explained that the programme aimed to "strengthen citizen demand for good governance through evidence based approaches" so as to enable "citizens to meet their aspirations better and at the same time holding the government accountable" (Semu-Banda, 2008).

The stories also highlighted the importance of good governance in the continent's development. Arguments were proffered that the failure of the continent to develop resulted not only from economic reasons but from political causes as well. For example, traditional governance systems could also be appropriated for the enhancement of good governance.

The stories also urged African countries to take responsibility by confronting the challenges they faced instead of playing the blame game. Ahmed Mohiddin, an expert quoted in one story, suggested a possible solution.

> We are the ones who must look at our problems. We cannot blame other people. They have created problems for us, yes, but these are our problems. We cannot just go on and say it is them. Other countries like India and Indonesia were colonised like we were but they decided that they had to find solutions. (Vadi, 2008.).

In another story with a heading *Malawians demand local councils,* Claire Ngozo writes: "In Malawi, local government elections are as rare and endangered as the country's black rhino." She argued that the delays in holding local government elections were not only unconstitutional but short-changed citizens as there was no representation at the local level and "bridges across major rivers cannot be built because there is no one to take up the issue." The delays were also against the decentralisation policies adopted by the government of Malawi, transparency, and citizen participation (Ngozo, 2009).

A story on Ghana notes progress in the advancement of the country's constitution. "The country has made progress since then. Ghana has been ranked seventh best country on the continent according to the Mo Ibrahim Index on African governance" writes Osabuteh Anny from Accra in a story entitled: *Constitution under knife.* Ghana's history has made issues of constitutional review, democracy, and human rights paramount and this did not escape the attention of IPS Africa. The roles played by civil society in the dynamics were also highlighted. Constitutional review is the topic of yet another story, *Grumbling over constitutional review,* filed from Lusaka, Zambia which made calls to entrench democratic ideals and promote citizen participation. (Kachingwe, 2009).

Besides constitutionalism other stories focused on how poor families were coping with increasing poverty. Instead of pulling their children out of school because they had no money, families were sending them to affordable and accessible community schools which were a lot cheaper than the government and private schools. In some cases, the government schools were too far away when compared to the community schools in the vicinity. In addition, the communities had a say on how the schools were run as they sat on the management committees. Some of the community schools were run by churches with funding coming from donors and well-wishers. Although the community schools provided an important service, they did not receive state funding. Hence the explanatory heading: *Communities doing it for themselves* (Kaunda, 2009). The pupils who attended the community schools included the children whose parents died of complications from HIV and AIDS. This story looked at how poor communities reacted when they saw that their children were dropping

out of school simply because they could not afford school fees. Radical media content also champions community issues.

Peace, justice, and security are issues that dominated news on Africa. But IPS Africa approached the same stories with a different perspective by bringing out the brutalities and stating that for the betterment of society solutions had to be found to stop armed conflict. *In Youth wars cause turmoil in Jonglei,* Southern Sudan, the brutality of war: violence, death, graves, bodies, guns, and tribal militias is vividly narrated (Wheeler, 2009).

In contrast to this gloom and doom there were efforts towards *Seeking a democratic South Sudan* and the putting in place of mechanisms for women's participation. Like in most IPS Africa stories, the reporter paints the scene by providing the context. For governance to reflect efforts to accommodate women in decision making at national and local levels, it is important to put several measures in place. Other than increasing the number of women in public offices, there is a need to build the capacity of women for them to participate in leadership reform that touches on, say parliament and the judiciary (Gathigah, 2009).

Although traditional systems were useful in conflict resolution, did they cater for the complexities of modern society? *In search of peace and justice* by Joshua Kyalimpa who writes from Kampala, Uganda analyses how the long running conflict in Northern Uganda could adopt some traditional means, such as that used by the Acholi tribe, to build peace in war ravaged communities in addition to the prosecution of war criminals by the International Court of Justice at The Hague and other processes (Kyalimpa, 2009). In another story *Sharing the national cake* by Evelyn Matsamura Kiapi corruption was one of the ways to share the national cake (natural resources) among the more than 50 ethnic groups that make up Uganda. It did not surprise the reporter because the country had a bloated cabinet.

However, the citizens expressed anger at this profligacy and extravagancy: "I do not see why Uganda should have a larger cabinet than developed countries like Britain and the United States" argued Boniface Katervega, a taxi driver (Matsamura-Kiapi, 2010).

Doubts were expressed on how the Ethiopian federal state is constituted in a story entitled *Ethnic federalism could lead to election violence*. The reporter argued that the federal state was dominated by one ethnic group and that this arrangement promoted divide and rule and consolidated the ruling People's Revolutionary Democratic Front's power. Regional governments were said to be lacking in

financial and human resources that would enable them to effectively carry out the management of the decentralised administration and development projects (Redi, 2009).

Another story *Strangling criticism* highlighted attempts by the Ethiopian government to control the activities of non-governmental and civil society organizations specially those working in human rights, governance, and social justice (Chebsi, 2009). Another governance matter that the stories focused on included those on media freedom.

Radio stations banned by Lansana Fofana from Sierra Leone focused on the closure of two stations accused by the authorities of broadcasting hate speech (Fofana, 2009). In another story, the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists complained that press freedom was under threat from the country's "obnoxious laws". Again, IPS Africa stories as radical media content dealt with diverse issues including press freedom.

Actors and sources

Who are the actors and sources of the good governance stories that were written and published by IPS Africa under the Mwananchi programme? Based on available documents, and the published stories as earlier explained, it can be said that the first primary sources are the programme documents that defined and conceptualised the programme. Other sources are the civil society organizations that were involved in the implementation of some of the activities. It can further be argued that the main actors and sources in the IPS Africa governance stories can be described as elite sources. These sources included experts, politicians, NGOs, CBOs, and other sections of civil society. The use of elite sources is also common in the mainstream news agencies. If the sourcing routines are similar, how then are voices of the marginalised represented in alternative news agencies stories.

Hall (1978) describes such sources as primary definers. According to Hall (1978), the social hierarchies in a society determine which elites have privileged access to the media. The pressure of deadlines also forces journalists to over access sources that are easily available thus perpetuating a scenario in which the same voices are heard repeatedly, and dominant ideologies promoted. Elite groups and institutions will gain "structural positioning and representative status" and become the primary definers of news who will then enjoy "power, legitimacy and authoritativeness" (Atton, 2006, p. 347). This often goes against the objectives of radical forms of alternative journalism where the "deviant" or "speechless" are given platforms (Atton, 2006).

The textual analysis shows that alternative media that focus on development news also have participatory democracy and promotion of citizen voices as some of their characteristics. It can be

argued that for participatory democracy to take place it must be underpinned by a political system that allows for citizen voices to be heard and one in which the government is accountable and responsive to social needs. The stories on constitution making illustrate how IPS Africa promoted democratic change as a strategy for sustainable development. The political history of some African countries shows that the decolonisation processes never took place as colonial media became state media. Therefore, alternative news agencies like IPS Africa had to continue campaigning for the democratisation of communications and media freedoms. Issues on conflict resolution and peacebuilding are also key to development hence stories focused on ending wars and armed conflicts. Community involvement in pandemics like the HIV and AIDS are also covered by IPS Africa as the continent is the worst affected. This is part of the overall coverage that the news agency carries out on the SDGs.

5.4 Sustainability and viability of the IPS model

The funding streams for IPS Africa included financial support from the head office in Rome and funding for projects from donors that included UN agencies and civil society organizations from the Global North. IPS current and past funders include United the Nations Foundation, United National Development Programme, United Nations Fund for Population Activities, United Nations Women and United Nations Democracy Fund. Other funders are the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the World Bank, Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation, the European Union, the Association for South East Asia Nations, German Technical Cooperation Agency, Directorate General for International Cooperation, Department for International Development, Overseas Development Institute, Food Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network, the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation, and the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

> It does not make sense to give away content that we are paying people to produce. It is a lose-lose situation because we are spending and not making money. We are also not breaking even. For me that has always been a concern. If you are a bakery that bakes cookies and gives them all away there is no way you will be able to pay rent or be sustainable. Even if you do not want to be a multimillionaire you need at some point to balance things so that you keep going especially at a time when you have a recession. We need to generate income.
>
> We are too reliant on donors and that funding model is not working very well. If we go on like this, we will reach a situation where there will be no donors. Under the current set up no donors means no IPS Africa? The idea of an African news wire is phenomenal, and it is something we need because Africa must get on its feet. We need to tell people what is going on, and on our terms. (IPS Staff Three, 2011)

The donor question has always been a crucial one. Often accompanied by huge debates on whether alternative media must continue to rely on donor funding; should raise their own money on the market; or adopt capitalist business formats to be sustainable and viable in the long term. Even within IPS these debates have been taking place for some time. As concluded by an evaluation of the agency:

> For IPS, with its specialised focus, and with a substantial part of its operations in the Global South, the chances of profitability are remote. There is little doubt that, without donor assistance, IPS would cease to exist. We believe it is imperative for that assistance to continue, given the importance of IPS in the new global information order (Reddy & Izeboud, 2003, p.20).

The Mwananchi programme and the media programme associated with it are an example of the limitations of donor funding. Most programmes have a life cycle after which the programme ends. This means that the focus on the governance stories only intensified during the period of the programme and fizzled out when the programme ended after about three years. Donors do not only provide financial assistance, but they also fund programme activities whose terms of references support particular ideas and concepts. In the case of the Mwananchi programme there was emphasis on good governance which had to be reflected in the activities. Building the capacity of the CSOs on media engagement in the selected countries also ended.

5.5 Conclusion

This study contributes to existing research on IPS and IPS Africa and confirms that it is a radical alternative news agency that publishes radical media content. The agency practised native journalism and used counter-elite sources as primary definers (Hall, 1978). Its involvement in training national news agencies is important in persuading the agencies to pursue national interests in support of development and human rights as defined in the Windhoek Declaration (1991) and the African Charter on Human and People's Rights. However, viability and sustainability remain key issues with relation to donor funded projects. However, the making of the news shows that although IPS Africa stayed true to its mission, it is debatable that its journalists are professionals. There is an uneven spread of the journalists with more being concentrated in Southern, Central and East Africa.

The IPS stories published under the Mwananchi programme show that good governance issues are illustrative of alternative development news and radical media content. However, the initiative came from a donor funded programme and this meant that some of the donor's philosophy and ideology featured in the news. This calls into question organizational autonomy and whether the news agency can survive without donor funds. There are suggestions to recoup at least some of the production cost by selling some of the content.

Chapter 6: A discussion and interpretation of the findings: Alternative development news remain relevant

6.1 Introduction

There is no doubt that there is a need for an alternative global news agency like IPS. But its survival entails adopting new strategies and finding more innovative ways of making news from the Global South. For example, does it need only professional journalists to write copy for the agency? What about the possibility of sourcing copy direct from the citizens with the assistance of the reporters as suggested in the grassroots journalism approach in which the reporter assisted the community on ways of telling their stories (Traber, 1985). Will that not enrich the telling of the African stories?

> The difficulty lies in securing the amount of capital necessary over a long enough period to create a large-scale organization and it is also at this point that this strategy runs up against a seemingly unsolvable contradiction: that a large-scale organization created in this way is seen to run the risk, not only of hypocrisy but also of depoliticization (Kim & Hamilton, 2006, p. 542).

The research confirmed that IPS Africa is well-known within civil society and the NGO sector but not as much by the mainstream media. In this scenario it can be argued that alternative development media appeals to a particular audience as seen in the writing of stories of interest to NGOs and civil society. In this respect it makes sense for the agency to explore some ways to be more visible and better known by diverse actors that include the mainstream media. So, visibility and greater use of IPS Africa content by the mainstream media is another key issue. Its advertising policy should also be adapted to allow cooperating partners to advertise their activities on the website for instance. The belief that advertising sells your audiences to the market and is capitulation to capital compromises the more important imperative of the survival of the alternative news agency in the long term.

> The choice of evils (do not sell out your audience and ideals but get used to being irrelevant or support your organization by whatever means necessary for maximum effect but run the risk of reinforcing the very system you hope to overcome) is itself a product of Western theorising about media, communication, and society. It takes for granted the presence of a highly developed consumer society, widespread private ownership of capital and industry, a liberal tradition of representative democracy with concomitant varying relations between government and industry – in short, a Western capitalist, liberal democracy. (Kim & Hamilton, 2006, p. 543.).

Efforts have already started with the development of marketing strategies to increase the subscription base, make IPS known to the mainstream media in most countries through networking and the use of social and multimedia tools to reach diverse audiences. Some of the challenges facing IPS were aptly captured by respondents who were interviewed during an evaluation exercise.

> As someone who worked for IPS and is now a client, I can say that there is nothing else out there that matches IPS in terms of a Southern perspective. Yet still I feel IPS is not what it can be. Many of the stories on the daily wire are wasted because they are late, too timeless, contain vague writing, lack of pictures and infographics, wire service style that is boring and sterile, and others that are obviously project driven. However, even the two or three stories every day that are relevant, interesting, and sharply focused make up for all that (Reddy & Izeboud, 2003, p. 29).

Another respondent from the evaluation expressed sentiments that were close to the findings of this study that IPS's reporting on its clients is compromised: "IPS does not report objectively and dispassionately on the activities of UN agencies and NGOs, which can skew its reports" (Reddy & Izeboud, 2003, p. 29). However, there is room for the further development of the IPS Africa niche on alternative development journalism considering that the genre is being used by other news agencies, and that news agencies from the Global North continue to report on Africa in a skewed way.

> IPS needs to find a more viable niche. Many important issues of interest to developing countries are reported abysmally in the Western media. It needs to strengthen the authority of its content with more stories based on well-researched pieces by specialists who can present strong, fact-based arguments on the topic of the day, as is done by the best of the major western media. This way it can strengthen developing country media and influence western journalists (Reddy & Izeboud, 2003, p. 29).

Further, IPS Africa should market itself and make its presence known as a focal point for development news. This can be done through closing the gaps in some of its services by making them more efficient.

> Tragically at this time when we need a service like IPS more than ever, the world does not seem ready to embrace it. People seem keener to get alternative viewpoints on their own, going to websites rather than supporting an operation that, in addition to providing an alternative view, can also influence what is reported in the mainstream media. (Reddy & Izeboud, 2003, p. 29.).

6.2 Conclusion

Alternative news agencies have faced the criticism that they have remained rigid and not transformed thus failing to make use of the opportunity that has been provided by the Internet and the digitalization of news. With its long history and larger audiences, alternative news agencies like IPS Africa can lead in the digitalization of the development news genre.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

Founded in 1964 as a non-profit international co-operative of journalists, then called IPS Third World (*Tercer Mundo*), by Roberto Savio, an Italian freelance journalist, and Pablo Piacentini, an Argentine political scientist, IPS aimed to "fill the information gap" in Europe and the United States especially on reporting events in the Global South such as the 1959 Cuban Revolution and Africa's struggle against colonial rule from the perspectives of the citizens in those countries (IPSNewsdesk, 2008). While the Cuban revolution sparked social unrest and political awareness in Latin America, in Africa the nationalist struggles for independence that included armed struggles forced colonial governments into negotiations or were forced to flee the countries ushering in period of independence from colonial rule (IPSIA, 2009). It is from a history of the struggle for a just and decolonised information system in society that IPS's philosophy of news developed.

According to Boyd-Barrett (1999) news agencies, including IPS, were pioneers in distributing and commodifying consciousness. The NWICO debates, for instance, sought to reverse the empire-colony relationship. These debates can be summed up as being centred on the democratisation of communication and the decolonisation of the flow of information, ending international media monopolies from the Global North, and the promotion of information and communication that supported the development of the Global South. Obviously, the debates were caught up in the Cold War politics of the time.

7.2 Philosophy and news values

To understand IPS Africa's philosophy of news I drew on rich alternative media theorisation and concluded that it did not fit into obvious categories for alternative media. For example, using Atton's (2001) concepts, the agency is non-commercial and therefore would be considered "decapitalized" because it is a non-profit.

However, IPS Africa is an alternative news agency at the level of its radical content and news values, which this research has demonstrated. Therefore, it is best to describe the news agency as a hybrid media organization as it exhibits some traits from the mainstream media while others are typical of the alternative media organizations. The model adopted for this study was from Atton (2002) model of radical and alternative media which included the following attributes: radical content and news values; distribution networks used by alternative media; and how the production process transformed relationships. The study focused mainly on the radical content and news values

of IPS Africa. It can be argued that the philosophy of news leans more towards the development news genre.

The study sought to ascertain the value of the news agency's reporting on the issues of good governance in Africa. However, this is a complex issue which needs further interrogation.

The study made efforts to answer the following and related questions as mentioned earlier.

- Why did IPS set itself up to produce stories and analyses that privileged developmental perspectives of the marginalised communities and peoples from the Global South?
- What kind of alternative journalism training is offered by IPS Africa to journalists, media organizations, CSOs and NGOs?

The philosophy of news is evident in the organization's prioritisation of human rights and democracy, sustainable development, the environment, natural resources and energy, health and agriculture, international finance and trade flows, international politics and conflict resolution, culture and science and technology (Reddy&Izeboud, 2003). The news agency also emphasised on gender awareness in the editorial policy as seen in the promotion of women's rights and steadfast positions on violence against women.

7.3 Literature review

The literature review teased out alternative media theorisation in relation to understanding the IPS model. There are multiple definitions for alternative media. These include as alternative public spheres and public access media. Alternative media are also described as autonomous, independent, for minorities, communities, and for the grassroots. Further, they are citizens and social movement media that are radical, counter-hegemonic, counter-information, participatory, resistance media, and rhizomatic media amongst other characteristics. These multiple definitions led Downing (2008) to conclude that the term alternative media can be an oxymoron.

The history of alternative media suggests that they emerged to challenge neo-liberalism and the tryranny of the market (Hadl 2007). Two main traditions subsequently developed approaches to the study of alternative media: the Marxist Latin American *communicacion alternativa*, and a radical alternative media tradition (Downing 1984; Rodriguez 2001). Alternative media have also been studied as promoting democracy by challenging social inequality and being anti-capitalist and standing against possessive individualism which is generally seen as undemocratic and contradicting the ideals of social change and development. To this end, they promoted radial democracy and social change (Mouffe 1992). Some of the ways to identify alternative media is through their representation

of the views of the under-represented groups in society and the ways they champion the interests of marginalised social and cultural groups. This is done through radical media content and promoting philosophies for social change and development.

According to Sandoval (2009) alternative media is a negation of repressive social conditions and devotion to oppositional content. They are also dissident voices in support of citizen participation, direct action and collective decision making and challenge the standardised repetroire in news and question journalistic news values and news gathering methods. As citizens media, they conscientise the readers and disrupt dorminant narratives and promote community activism and cultures. Therefore, alternative media are to be approached as "live creatures" (Rodriguez, 2001).

Foucault's notion of the insurrection of subjugated knowledges is also relevant to alternative media theorisation and studies. The concept of hegemony as defined by Gramsci is another useful concept in the study of alternative media as well as Hall (1986) definition of ideology. According to Hall social realities are constructed in particular ways.

7.4 Methodology

The study used qualitative research methods that included immersion into the setting as I was employed by IPS Africa at the time of the study. I also carried out in-depth interviews, analysed some of the news agency's historical documents and carried out a textual analysis.

7.5 Findings and interpretation

I used IPS Africa's motto — Telling Africa's untold stories — to explain the findings and for interpreting them. The findings concluded that IPS Africa is an alternative news agency that makes alternative development news from the Global South, and that this is strongly influenced by the news agency's history (Giffard, 1998; Joye, 2010). The agency is a producer of radical news content and also trained journalists to write development news. There is aso a reliance on native journalism approaches where the reporters lived in the communities and societies from which they wrote the stories with emphasis being placed on stories that might appear trivial in the Global North but of huge importance in the Global South.

IPS Africa stayed true to its mission to "support the production and dissemination of information on national and international realities with particular regard to the developing countries" (IPSIA, 2003). Its approach had resonance with the Windhoek Declaration and the African Charter on Human and People's Rights.

Despite having a diverse skills base, there are very few reporters to cover the continent and are mainly concetrated in Southern Africa (48 per cent). The Francophone countries are poorly represented. Conference reporting for UN agencies is also seen as being similar to public relations.

A textual analysis explored themes that were covered in one of IPS Africa's projects called Mwananchi which was on citizen participation and good governance. Again, in this project we see how the content can be influenced by project design and understanding news making as discursive practices becomes important.

Over reliance on donor funds also affected the sustainability and viability of IPS Africa. Questions could be asked about the autonomy of organizations that received donor funding especially the influence of donor philosophies and ideologies on news content. However, alternative media like IPS Africa should explore how to increase revenue streams for the agency to survive, and this might be found in the digitalization of news.

7.6 Scope for further research

IPS Africa can be described as legacy media whose focus is mainly on how the media can promote sustainable development through alternative news. According to studies legacy media are characterised by "largely passive audience experiences" (Wasserman, 2018, p. 3). However, Wasserman (2018) suggests that it will be important to also consider the question of user agency when interacting with digital media. This opens an area for future studies of IPS and IPS Africa. The agency largely focused on democratisation of communication by promoting equal access to communication resources. This is IPS Africa's historic mission, but the world is confronted by a public health crisis brought by the coronavirus pandemic, climate change, and the Fourth Industrial Revolution which are important development issues that the agency should cover as well. Adapting to new challenges and evolving issues are key to the agency's future.

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