

# **Public Radio Broadcasting and Cultural Pluralism - South Africa's case of 'Holy Cultural Matrimony'**

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## **Abstract**

A closer analysis of the long and arduous journey traversed by African nationalism often shows ethnicity marching along as an invisible 'matrimonial' partner. It is on that note that this article seeks to present South Africa's project of managing ethnic diversity using public radio broadcasting as new form of cultural 'holy matrimony', with its consummation evinced through the implementation of policies that encourage ethnic diversity. The article acknowledges that the re-appropriation of meaning for ethnicity in South Africa now denotes the politically correct and constructed descriptor of 'culture', and is characterized by the continued conflation of ethnicity and race relations. Unlike in some parts of Africa, where ethnicity is criminalized as 'tribalism' – thus emphasizing its instrumentalized destructive element – in South Africa cultural diversity is seen as the panacea for a stable democratic arrangement. This article proposes to discuss cultural pluralism as a democratic imperative within the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), which is a public service broadcaster (PSB). Two case studies of ethnic minority radio stations will be presented as empirical evidence: Munghana Lonene FM and Phalaphala FM.

**Keywords:** cultural pluralism, ethnicity, nation, public service broadcasting, South Africa

This article seeks to make sense of ethnic minority radio stations in South Africa as 'residual and incremental policy models'. Two radio stations have been selected to serve as case studies of ethnic minority radio stations; these are Munghana Lonene FM and Phalaphala FM.<sup>1</sup> First, on the notion of 'residual policy models' – it is argued that the current configurations of these radio stations follow the template that was already put in place by the Apartheid system.

Second, while it may be accepted that the structural arrangement of these radio stations and their genealogy during Apartheid and the post-Apartheid period might share similarities, it is also clear that there are differences regarding the ideology and purpose for which these radio stations exist. During Apartheid these radio stations were created to mediate, entrench and valorize the 'Bantustan' policies of creating homelands in which South Africa's different ethnic groups had to subsist within balkanized semi-autonomous states dotted across the country (Lekgoathi, 2009). The current political order has sought to re-negotiate the normative value of these radio stages by according them new meaning and value without completely dismantling them. The latter illustrates the 'incremental policy model', which shows attempts by the post-Apartheid leadership to continue with some of the existing broadcasting structures by transforming them from being state broadcasters to PSBs. This incrementalist model speaks to the new ethos of the state and is in line with the social transformation process as an emancipatory project.

By grappling with these structural continuities and discontinuities which the new democratic transformation process inherited from Apartheid, this article seeks to locate the current discourse within the ambit of the emancipatory project whose focus, it is argued, was to usher in a new era of transformation. The article will conclude by acknowledging the emerging hegemonic trends following the use of ethnic minority radio in bringing about a reproduction of social relations within the discourse of cultural pluralism – thus confirming the features of what is commonly referred to as the 'Rainbow Nation' or 'Proudly South African.' As will be discussed later, South Africa's proudest moment of nationalism, stretching from 1996 to the turn of the new millennium, was characterized by the relaunch of Radio Tsonga as Munghana Lonene FM and Radio Venda as Phalaphala FM – a move which clearly marked the open acceptance and acknowledgement of the role of ethnicity as a visible partner of South Africa's new form of nationalism. Thus, a nativist form of nationalism was created, in which ethnic identities are openly celebrated and believed to be a tributary of South Africa's 'proudest moment' – commonly referred to as the African Renaissance (see Hoppers, 2006; Mbeki, 1998; 1999). The change of names for these radio stations was in line with the state's social transformation

process, which, as a nativist project anchored South Africa's new form of nationalism, was typified by the celebration of ethnic identities. Even the names of locations were changed from Afrikaans to local ethnic languages; for example, the name Pietersburg where Munghana Lonene FM and Phalaphala FM were located was changed to Polokwane. This changed political terrain and media landscape calls for new lenses in terms of theories of engaging issues of ethnic minority media. In order to further understand these developments, Stephen Riggins' (1992) models of ethnic minority media will be engaged.

### **Cultural Solidarity as a Nodal form of Structuration**

The rise of ethnic consciousness in Africa, in particular its cultural particularism, began in the early 1960s, alongside ferocious calls for Pan Africanism and nationalism. As a result ethnicity was criminalised by the nationalist and founding fathers of Africa. This criminalization of ethnicity saw it being tagged alongside traditional forms of identity and criminalized as backward and retrogressive. Despite all these challenges and forms of tagging, ethnicity continued to influence the direction of yearning for most new nation-states, especially on the eve of independence and just after the attainment of independence. It is this cultural particularism which gave impetus to cultural forms of ethnic solidarity and defined the structures of a new state, together with the attendant actions and policies. The influence of ethnicity was even more pronounced in different radio broadcasting arrangements and in the ways that nation-states sought to handle broadcasting as a catalyst for curbing explosive anti-nationalist moves. The policy processes of the new nation-states and the demands of their political currencies, as Anthony Giddens (1984) would argue, present structural processes in which ethnicity plays a central role in influencing human behaviour in a politically nuanced environment. Structuration as the question of power and the role it plays in the equation of structure and agency, considers that agency is fundamentally a social concept and that individuals are social actors whose behaviour is constituted out of their matrix of social relations and positioning, including factors such as class, race and ethnicity (Mosco 1996: 215). This also is our acknowledgement of how social structures continue to exist through the productive practices and relationships of human

actors as seen in the case of members of South Africa's legislative assembly, the ministry concerned together with SABC board as rational and politicians. Subsequently, the behaviour of social agents (individuals) will to a large extent be influenced by social constructs such as ethnic belonging. In South Africa, for example, the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), together with parliament, act as structures in which ethnicity plays the role of agency, thereby allowing for action through the policy of cultural pluralism. Like both a voyager and a ship in the turbulent seas of the nation-state, ethnicity in the case of South Africa is unwittingly presented with a unifying role. It also provides the anchor for the discourse of cultural diversity, as opposed to the old notion of seeing ethnicity as a divisive force.

Furthermore, by continuing with ethnic based radio stations under the SABC, the motive blended with the concept of public interest as a democratic imperative. But the major structure and function of the SABC as a broadcaster, which is answerable to parliament through a body of appointees, remains unchanged. While the process of transforming the SABC has continued within the democratic dispensation, very few scholars have set out to interrogate the arcane and often blurred nature of the notion of the 'public' in a public broadcaster. It is generally accepted that democratic wheels are functioning as long as the SABC continues to be answerable to parliament through an appointed board, which is first subjected to parliamentary scrutiny, as a form of oversight, before being finally appointed and sworn-in by the president. That the whole process may itself be tainted and stage-managed by politicians within the prism of structuration is not considered. As a result, the notion of democratic scrutiny finds acceptance through the belief that parliamentarians themselves are voted for by the public. But there is a need to understand the social transformation process together with ethnic pluralism. The next section attempts to discuss that.

### **Reconfigurations of Ethnicity in South Africa: In Search of Pluralism**

South Africa's social transformation process, in particular ethnic pluralism, presents an interesting case for analysis, especially when ethnicity and minority language issues are understood in relation to public radio broadcasting. South

Africa's uniqueness lies in the provision of airspace to eleven official languages. The interest here is in understanding the politics behind the existence of ethnic minority radio stations as a means of acknowledging and cementing the notion of South Africa as a 'Rainbow Nation'. In line with the above positions, the uniqueness of my case studies hinges on the fact that nation-building in this case is not placed under the old monolithic nationalistic lens, as seen across Africa, where the old mantra was that 'for the nation to live the tribe must die'. In the case of South Africa, the new mindset seems to suggest that 'for the nation to live, everybody must be included'. As a result, South Africa, acts as a typical critic of the monolithic presentation of an 'ideal' nation-building process in Africa, where ethnic subjectivities remain subdued by state policies. This uniqueness can be attributed to the fact that South Africa, as a late decolonizer, was able to assess and learn from the pitfalls of nationalism, and of denying the existence of ethnicity. By encompassing everybody – that is, allowing for the celebration of ethnic diversity – we see the creation of a PSB in which all ethnic groups are represented (Lekgoathi, 2009).

Without seeking to over-emphasize South Africa's uniqueness it must be observed that, unlike most sub-Saharan states that settled for 'nativized' naming of the state, with the name of the state usually taken from the major ethnic groups, South Africa opted for a geographical cardinal point. The new state policies led to a re-tribalisation process that accorded eleven ethnic languages space within public radio. However, of the eleven languages, English has remained the main language of commerce and it stands out as the main beneficiary in terms of usage, unlike most other ethnic languages, in particular Afrikaans (see Leon, 1998; Mazrui and Mazrui, 1998; Moyo, 2010).

As opposed to ethnicity being considered anathema to the nationalist cause, as it has been across Africa, South Africa's uniqueness has been in how it allowed the new democratic dispensation to further embrace ethnic identities. This became a form of nativism which, in the process, has contradicted the ideals of the African National Congress (ANC) Charter<sup>2</sup> on which the social transformation process was initially predicated. The first 'charterist nationalism', which gave currency to the social transformation process, had earlier denounced ethnic or race-inclined nationalism (Wesemüller, 2005). As

stated above, nativism as a deliberate move was influenced by Thabo Mbeki. One of my respondents trenchantly puts into perspective the new paradigm on ethnic minority radio stations in South Africa by saying:

If you want to build a strong nation, it has become clear now that you can only ignore ethnicity and minority languages at your own peril. In South Africa, we have the advantage as a new nation of being born when all nations were already born, so we learnt lessons from them. One major lesson is how to encourage ethnic diversity and yet still celebrate our nation and its ethos. We call that unity in diversity.<sup>3</sup>

In view of the above suggestion, it is worth emphasizing that:

... ethnicity in Africa is more than a mere relic from the past. It is at the heart of the everyday realities of morality, accountability and representation and, as such, needs to form the bedrock of any realistic political theory of the continent. (Chabal, 2009, 6)

As a result it can be further suggested that media and politics are inextricably intertwined, particularly where nation-building is a central focus and political elites are engaged in a ceaseless effort to unite races and ethnicities in a state like South Africa. In such a situation, media, especially public radio broadcasting, tends to be organized in a way that seeks to mediate the nation; that is, by allowing citizens to mirror their everyday realities through the media lenses. Through these cultural forms of mediating the 'loud silences' and nativist aspirations of ethnic belonging, the SABC, as a structure of mediation, provides the necessary pedestal on which the state's nativist policies are constructed, conversed about and passed on to the citizens. This is further encapsulated in the slogans; '*Vuka Sizwe*' ('Re-awakening the Nation') and 'Broadcasting for Total Citizen Empowerment'.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, Daya Thussu, citing Silverstone, acknowledges that media in society act as a contributor 'to our variable capacity to make sense of the world, to make and share its meanings' (2009, 2). Hence it

is in this ubiquity and complexity, its interlocking with what is central to our everyday lives, such as cultural forms of belonging, that we must understand media in all their social, cultural and economic dimensions.

In view of these contributions, it is necessary to acknowledge the centrality of radio broadcasting in post-Apartheid South Africa – a country with 50 percent of its population living below the poverty line (CIA, 2011) and with an estimate of over 30 million people owning radio gadgets so far. South Africa's rural poverty-stricken population is estimated at between 40 and 49 percent of the total, thus implying that radio stations such as Munghana Lonene FM and Phalaphala FM provide the basic source of information. Given the unemployment rate of over 24 percent, most people do not have access to other forms of media, like television and newspapers. This is further exacerbated by the remoteness of most rural areas. Nkonko Kamwangamalu (2003, 233) and Last Moyo (2010, 427) add that radio broadcasting seems to have excelled both as a medium and platform for ethnic and linguistic minorities, especially in encouraging the celebration of their cultures, but the experience of television has been poor. Kamwangamalu adds that: 'in spite of the change from apartheid to democracy, the indigenous African languages remain marginalized (by television and higher education), much as they were in the apartheid era' (2003, 233).<sup>5</sup> This information provides a case for radio and is quite telling about the state of radio broadcasting in South Africa. It further reinforces Louise Bourgault's (1995) and Fardon and Furniss's (2000) assertion that radio broadcasting continues to occupy a central position as the major medium of communication in Africa.

However, it is worth acknowledging that South Africa has progressed in seeking to balance ethnicity and manage ethnic minority issues and rights. Even during the negotiations at the Convention for Democratic South Africa (CODESA), this issue became one major item on the transitional agenda. The basis of it being that during Apartheid, South Africa was under the tight grip of the Afrikaner ethnic minority group and, partly, other white ethnic minorities who converged on the use of English as their language of communication. Understanding the possibility of a radical transformation - one that could end up reproducing a reversal of roles in terms of down-grading the influence Afrikaans

had as a language - the CODESA era, as a watershed transitional period, involved the protection of ethnic minorities and their languages, in particular Afrikaans. Similarly, Moyo (2010, 426) trenchantly writes:

CODESA aimed to ensure that most of the democratic values, especially the respect for minority rights, became the hallmark of the new post-apartheid dispensation. This was done partly to allay the White minority fears of the retributive backlash from the Black majority who were the victims of the apartheid system.... The agenda-setting in the negotiations was actually based on direct influence from the lobby groups that represented the economic, political and cultural interests of the Afrikaner and English people. As minorities they had more to lose if change was spontaneous, unnegotiated and revolutionary.

The above suggestion presents an interesting thesis on ethnic minority issues and how re-tribalization was later engineered. Further, it provides a telling narrative of the creation of a post-Apartheid 'landing pad' and constitutional safeguards that were initially intended for Afrikaner and English people but whose catchment area expanded to benefit other ethnic minority groups. Tony Leon (1998, 57), in his argument for the need to protect Afrikaans and all other language rights, shares the same view, suggesting that:

A language does not become a living, breathing, growing thing merely because it is officially recognised. A language lives because it is used and respected ... if it is not used and respected it can die despite all the constitutional guarantees in the world, choked by the restrictions of practicality. The future of Afrikaans and other African languages in South Africa will not be determined by legal and philosophical debates about group or individual rights. It will be determined by the actions and decisions of the government, business and those who hold the



language dear.

It becomes clear, therefore, that in a new dispensation there was a need for constitutional safeguards for Afrikaans, as the language of the former colonizer (Zegeye and Harris, 2003, 14). Even more interesting is the unwitting acknowledgement of the fact that other ethnic groups ended up benefiting from these constitutional safeguards. It must be further acknowledged that, unlike in other African countries, where the language of the former colonial administrator continued to gain prominence as the language for business, Afrikaans required constitutional safeguards as a home-grown language which is partly a dialect of Dutch developed out of its mix with other African languages. And so it could not be considered as the language for business. This new policy implied that Afrikaans, as a language associated with a particular ethnic group, was being demoted. In view of this development, Ali Mazrui and Alamin Mazrui (1998, 205) ask whether Afrikaans 'should be treated as just another "native vernacular?"' In response to that question, one presenter at SABC summed it up as follows:

Afrikaans is our language. We can claim ownership as Coloured people. We developed it. When Whites came they only spoke Dutch, etc. Us, their offspring, produced a mixture of these languages. An amalgamation of languages taken from our black mothers, that were either San, Khoe or other Bantu languages fused with the Dutch to produce a brand of it commonly referred to as 'Fanikalo'. Out of 'Fanikalo' – Afrikaans was born. But because White people are academic, they started to develop it at that level. They put the comma and full-stops, and then claimed it was theirs thereafter. The truth is – we are the original speakers of Afrikaans.<sup>6</sup>

While the above statement presents another well-intentioned and pertinent argument, this article will not seek to explore it further. The intention of raising it was to locate this discourse on ethnic minority radio stations within the matrix

of South Africa's ethnic language policy and to tease out issues of ethnicity and radio broadcasting within the official public broadcaster, SABC. However, the emerging thesis for the purposes of this article is that other ethnic minority groups have benefited from a policy that had initially been set in motion with the intention of offering Afrikaans a lifeline.

### **Models of Ethnic Minority Media Revisited**

The discussion of ethnic minority media would not be complete if Stephen Riggins' five models were not presented here. Due to lack of space not all the five models will be discussed in detail; but they will be acknowledged. They are the *integrationist model*, the *economic model*, the *divisive model*, the *pre-emptive model* and the *proselytism model*. It is also worth emphasizing that there is no clear-cut model that neatly fits a radio station or a particular context in isolation, as a result these models tend to overlap.

The most relevant models for this article include the *integrationist*, the *economic* and the *pre-emptive models*. In the *integrationist model* state authorities tend to subsidize minority media following the assumption that such a move might better integrate minorities into national life. The underlying rationale for this model is the creation of the impression of the state as a 'benevolent institution' (Riggins, 1992). However, on the part of the state, the intention is to monitor minorities and to prevent them from imagining political independence, let alone their own radio station independent of the state. Considering that, in the case of South Africa, most regions initially existed as semi-autonomous states during Apartheid, they could have easily managed to establish their own community-centred radio stations, with a potential of gaining more sponsors, if the state had abandoned the current scenario of taking all ethnic radio stations under the SABC wing. The other aspect is to encourage 'functional bilingualism', as a way of gradually assimilating minorities into majority languages.

The *economic model* is encouraged by the state to push for the spread of a managed form of multiculturalism, linked to the *integrationist approach* and adopted for the good of the state. Usually in such situations a managed literacy campaign is created with the aim of enveloping minorities. In most cases the

preservation of a language and culture is not the concern of the state, but the creation of a vibrant economy which is all-inclusive is. This can be seen in the case of South Africa where the celebration of different ethnic minorities has also encouraged the spread of cultural tourism in every region of the country. However, multiculturalism in this case is superficial, but may be publicly proclaimed as a façade, in the hope that it will not ultimately modify the state's core values. Riggins (1992, 10) also argues that this form of multiculturalism is usually shallow and not genuine.

Another model is when the state usually encourages the establishment of minority radio stations that it will fund as a pre-emptive arrangement. This is called the *pre-emptive model*. Usually, the intention is to ensure that minorities do not obtain funding from other external sources. The re-establishment of radio stations like Munghana Lonene FM and Phalaphala FM can be interpreted using these theoretical lenses. It should be emphasized here that these radio stations existed earlier as the mouthpiece of the Apartheid system. As a result the re-establishment of these radio stations can be interpreted as a sign that the state acknowledges the potential for the Tsonga and Venda communities to agitate for their old radio stations. From this explanation it emerged that the state's approach through SABC was a form of pre-emptive engagement, with a view to repelling potential external sponsors and keeping these broadcasting arrangements under the control of the state. This argument holds in that South Africa now has more than hundred community radio stations and so these radio stations could have easily been transformed into community stations (Mhlanga, 2006, 2009).<sup>7</sup>

From the presentation of the three models of ethnic minority media, above, it can be gleaned that policies are often formulated in a bid to contain and manage ethnic minorities. While it may also be acknowledged that, during Apartheid, the policy of containment was the major issue, pointers seem to suggest that even the new social transformation process had its policies anchored in the *integrationist, economic* and the *pre-emptive models*.

Similarly, Comaroff (1997) adds that, in as much as collective social identity always entails some form of communal self-definition, it is invariably founded on a marked opposition between 'we' and 'others'. Ethnic minority

radio stations tend to conjure those 'we' feelings by providing a symbolic public realm for engagement. The paradox in these scenarios is the creation of boundaries between ethnic groups while at the same time seeking to encourage cultural diversity through the notion of a 'rainbow nation'. Ethnicity in this case is then translated into the collective identity which forms the new 'public' in a PSB, thereby giving impetus to the constant arousal of consciousness of ethnic belonging using various social symbols and narrations of memory through the media. To avoid a backlash of sorts, the leaders in South Africa further allowed each ethnic group to have its own radio station as part of cultural pluralism in a democracy.

From the position above it is noted that ethnicity is being perpetuated by factors different from those that aroused it, by allowing the continued existence of ethnic radio stations that were inherited from Apartheid. This new ideology acts as a counterbalance that progressively dismantles Apartheid structures while also embracing the audience as rational agents who constantly negotiate their position in society, with the radio playing the symbolic role of conjuring ethnic belonging and valorizing ethnicity through mediation as part of the social transformation process. This process as part of the emancipatory project is encouraged by the creation of collective consciousness.

### **Ethnic Radio Broadcasting and the Creation of Collective Consciousness**

Most African communities have been able to gain a form of attachment of sorts to a radio station based on the enigmatic instance of radio broadcasting as a form of socio-psychological intrigue. By taking advantage of this scenario as a natural human element (whereby people often identify with a radio station that communicates in their mother language), radio in Africa has continued to be pervasive. In South Africa, ethnic radio has created ethnic consciousness and group identities. The major reason has been the continuation of the bifurcated state as a postcolonial Africa arrangement (Mamdani, 1996; Young, 1997), in which inherited patterns of Apartheid that demarcated the state along the old Bantustan models continue to exist. To compound this, most regional homelands have remained rural, traditional and with low literacy levels compared to the urban centres that continue to dominate the 'modern' and progressive economy.

In the case of Munghana Lonene FM and Phalaphala FM, their history dates back to the 1960s. Munghana Lonene FM and Phalaphala FM, were established in 1965, as Radio Tsonga and Radio Venda respectively. Both were located in Pietersburg; Tsonga was the language of broadcasting for Radio Tsonga, while Venda became the language of broadcasting on Radio Venda. In 1996 these names were changed following the new South African government's policy of transforming broadcasting landscape from state broadcasting to public broadcasting. Radio Tsonga became Munghana Lonene FM while Radio Venda FM became Phalaphala FM. The target listenership for the two radio stations was initially rural community dwellers within Limpopo province, but now it has been expanded to other regions, although they have continued to broadcast from their original location in Polokwane (formerly Pietersburg), Limpopo province. The extended broadcasting spectrum covers Guateng province (Johannesburg). Further, they each have transnational coverage, with Phalaphala FM broadcasting into Zimbabwe, while Munghana Lonene FM's coverage extends into Mozambique and some parts of Swaziland and Mpumalanga province. This move by the post-Apartheid government presents a case of 're-tribalization' of the state, but with a thrust towards a new cultural pluralistic democratic imperative which informed the re-establishment of these radio stations.

According to information obtained from most of my respondents at SABC, and confirmed by Sekibakiba Lekgoathi (2009), together with Console Tleane and Jane Duncan (2003), ethnic radio stations that existed before 1994 served the state by broadcasting into the Bantustan homelands and not to the audiences as the public, thus making these radio stations stand out as state broadcasters and not public broadcasters. Being aware of these realities, the post-Apartheid leadership decided to transform these radio stations into 'public' radio stations, with a new public mandate – to educate, inform and entertain – while still keeping them within their original homelands. This move to transform these radio stations from being state broadcasters to PSBs with a marked existential ethnic remit was confirmed by the Head of Public Service Broadcasting Radio Section. He emphasized that:

Wisdom from lessons learnt from other African countries

showed us that you do not just dismantle and throw away every structure associated with your oppressor simply because the oppressor has been defeated. We discovered that some structures are necessary even for our state, only when transformed to serve the interests of a democratic South Africa. For example, the fact that Apartheid had created a broadcasting system which served to entrench itself did not entail that there is everything wrong with broadcasting. Rather, it became clear that there was everything wrong with Apartheid as a structure. So when we managed to remove it, we set out to transform the inherited the broadcasting structures. Now we have a public service arrangement.<sup>8</sup>

The position above presents an interesting case for the continuation of these ethnic radio stations, including the maintenance of homelands in the post-Apartheid South Africa as provinces. However, Tleane and Duncan argue that:

Given the country's past divisions that were based on the homeland or Bantustan system, which, as some argue, have been resurrected in the form of provinces, attempts to build a 'provincial identity, culture and character' might be seen as further perpetuating the old divisions and, in fact, in direct opposition to attempts to build a nation. (2003, 103)

Tleane and Duncan's position is hinged on the monolithic position of nation-building in Africa, which encourages nationalism to thrive by repudiating ethnic allegiances. But these assumptions about nation-state formation as a continuous process were disputed by 78 percent of my research respondents at these ethnic minority radio stations. In contrast to Tleane and Duncan's position, they argued in favour of these radio stations. They also stated that these radio stations, as symbols of their peoplehood, had helped them to develop their sense of belonging in their different ethnic groups. It was also stated that their pride in being South Africans is because they go into it coming from their own ethnic

groups that are recognized by the state. To them, belonging to an ethnic group creates a sense of duty and responsibility in a democracy.

In that respect, radio, as a form of modern technology, seems to assist in the new mediated form of transaction in which ethnic languages are in dialogue with the, thus presenting a localized form of contra-flows, with radio encouraging the ethos of state formation and the ideals of social transformation as an emancipatory project. By so doing, old notions of 'supertribalization' (Wallerstein, 1960; 2001) are transformed, followed by the deconstruction of old binaries in which the ethnic rural represented tradition and "lack of progress", and the urban represented "progressive" modernity. Following these new post-Apartheid scenarios an *economic model* exists in which ethnic radio broadcasting is considered part of the technology of modernity, in a bid to also influence cultural tourism (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2009). Cultural tourism, in this instance, uses modernized forms of communication to find economic value for ethnicity, both within South Africa's provinces and for the entire state. The advantage of this approach, if assessed using Comaroff's (1997) proposition, is that ethnicity is being perpetuated through the use of radio, but this time by factors that are quite different from those that caused its emergence.

From the foregoing it can be further argued that when a message is communicated using a particular language it creates the 'we' feeling as part of ethnic belonging (Mhlanga, 2010, 2009), hence the view that language is the 'mother tongue' (Mazrui and Mazrui, 1998). Fanon (1967) holds that to grasp the morphology of a language implies assuming and learning a culture which supports the weight of a particular form of civilization<sup>9</sup>. In the case of South Africa, radio has taken advantage of this situation thereby giving new life to ethnicity. By allowing these radio stations to broadcast into these communities, the post-Apartheid leaders sought to capture and possess the world expressed and implied in the languages of broadcasting; that is, the Tsonga through Munghana Lonene FM and the Venda through Phalaphala FM. For the two ethnic minority radio stations used as case studies, they captured the centrality of communicative action in ethnicity, by conjuring a sense of ownership ('we' feelings on the part of the different ethnic communities to which they broadcast), as decentralized forms of public broadcasting. As a result, radio's popularity has

increased ahead of other types of media (especially newspapers, magazines and television).

Also, the new technologies and convergence radio can be listened to through mobile phones, thereby showing the advantages of affordability and portability. While the use of mobile phones may not be widespread in some rural African communities, radio generally remains popular. Having acknowledged the impact of low literacy levels, and returning to the notion of the subliminal 'we' feeling that ethnic radio creates while at the same time encouraging the observance of the concept of the 'public' in a public broadcaster, it was also observed that radio seems to have become a substitute for the role of traditional community elders (Mano, 2004). Further, an assessment of programme schedules showed that all the radio stations have programmes in which issues pertaining to different social groups and tastes are discussed; for example, girls among the Tsonga and Venda have programmes that play the role of 'aunts' and 'uncles', having to deal with socially delicate issues, ranging from stages of growth to marriage. Through the performance of this function by these ethnic minority radio stations the 'we' feeling is concretized.

Paradoxically, as decentralized versions of the public broadcaster, these ethnic minority radio stations have been able to enhance ethnic diversity and to allow different communities to live and act it. If suggestions by various scholars, such as Malešević (2004, 3) and Eriksen (2002 [1993], 10) are to be followed, especially Frederik Barth's (1969) radical perspective that in order to understand ethnicity 'the critical focus of investigation becomes the ethnic boundary that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses', it can be further argued that these ethnic minority radio stations encourage people to celebrate their ethnic identities by acknowledging the existence of other ethnic groups around them. This highlights the pre-emptive role of ethnic minority media. It also becomes clear that while ethnicity has the collective point of group identity, it also delineates a set of relations and acts as a mode of consciousness (Comaroff, 1997, 72). Another emergent issue from these two ethnic minority radio stations is that of proximity; that is, the closer these ethnic groups are to each other the more likely they are to experience ethnic hatred and rivalry. This can be extended to suggest that the closer in terms of proximity these ethnic



groups are, the more likely they are to compete for resources.<sup>10</sup> This competition for resources increases the functionality of belonging and celebration of one's ethnic identity.

The discussion above can be understood through Martin Heidegger's engagement of social boundaries (cited in Bhabha, 2002 [1994], 01) that: 'a boundary is not that at which something stops but, as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which something begins its presencing'. Through these ethnic minority radio stations, ethnic groups not only celebrate their ethnic identities but also their social boundaries of group consciousness and collective entitlements. The sense of animosity caused by the existence of social boundaries and being in proximity is also evident among the three ethnic groups found in Limpopo province; the Venda (Phalaphala FM), Tsonga Munghana Lonene FM) and Pedi (Thobela FM). Further, as a result of the location of these radio stations in the same building, one of my respondents told a story of how it was finally agreed that the names of each radio station had to be removed from the front of the building following scenes of ethnic clashes and animosity in which each group argued for the name of their radio station to be placed ahead of the others. While such a contest may be easily brushed aside, a critical assessment shows the contest for space, visibility and the narration of 'self' and belonging among these different ethnic groups.

The building that houses these ethnic radio stations, as a resource, is seen as symbolic of the nature of phanerons held by society about each ethnic group; that is, the pecking order of being respected as an ethnic group, with each group claiming to lead the pecking order. So, in their view, this meant that an ethnic group whose radio station was listed below the other radio stations was also considered to be weak and insignificant. Due to the crisis over the order of names on the building, it was finally agreed that the building would simply be named 'SABC'; that is, denoting the structure and neutral name to which no ethnic group could lay any claim.

The idea of conjuring the celebration of ethnic identities on one hand, and rivalry on the other, presents an ambivalent situation in a state that boasts of ethnic diversity and of being the 'Rainbow Nation'. Charles Husband (2000, 200) views this ambivalence as hinged on 'instrumentalized citizenship'; that is, how

these ethnic radio stations, in their quest to encourage national identity, as public entities enjoy 'quasi-legal' status as para-statal, and are able to engrave their influence on the histories of each one of these ethnic groups in order to extract from them the inner core that can be exploited for the benefit of the state. History, Charles Husband further argues, carries with it deeply embedded notions of who the "real" members of the society are, thus encouraging the creation of social boundaries as stated above. Radio as the medium which captures people's imaginations, has the ability to exploit these histories, social boundaries and to create the 'we' feeling. Research findings following the study of Munghana Lonene FM and Phalaphala FM suggest that the concept of the Rainbow-Nation is predicated on the notion of instrumentalized citizenship.

### **Repositioning Cultural Pluralism in 'Public' Service Broadcasting**

In order to understand public service broadcasting as both a conceptual framework and policy process, there is a need to further engage the notion of the 'public' in a public broadcaster (Scannell, 1992; Curran and Seaton, 2003). In the case of South Africa's public radio broadcasting, the 'public' has two meanings. First, is the conventional usage; that is, the way it is used loosely by every politician who wishes to claim 'people-centred' ownership, merely deploying it for political correctness. Second, it is derived from parliamentary politics and its conventions, here denoting 'representation', implying that the legislators in parliament are representatives of the people and are mandated to act on behalf of the ordinary citizens in a state (Curran and Seaton, 2003). These legislators gain their mandate through elections. Then, through the legislature, each Member of Parliament (MP) is considered to represent the views, hopes and aspirations of people from their constituencies – the 'public'. Using parliament – as both the institutionalization of political democratic representation and the space for political legitimacy – they maintain control and regulation of public broadcasting through an act of parliament.<sup>11</sup>

The concept of the 'public', according to John Downing (1992) lies awkwardly next to the notion of collective signification. Collective signification would entail ethnic consciousness and is raised with a view to serving as a catalyst for nation-building, thereby feeding into the discourse of political

legitimacy gained through parliamentary representation. The fundamental sense of 'public' entails openness or something common, whose antonym is 'private', 'secret' or 'restricted' (Downing, 1992, 260). In South Africa, as in developed democracies, the concept of the 'public' denotes a 'one-size-fits-all' approach (Downing, 1992, Scannell, 1992), and is loosely used, often deliberately vague, yet disguised as a product of parliamentary representative democracy. John Downing aptly writes of it – attempting to provide a classical engagement with the concept, taken from Jürgen Habermas – that:

The Basic laws guarantee: the spheres of public and private (the kernel of the latter being the sphere of intimate social relations); the institutions and instruments of the public on the one hand (press, parties) and the basis for private autonomy on the other (family and property); finally the functions of private people – political as citizens, economic as commodity-owners.  
(Habermas, 1962, 96, cited in Downing, 1992, 260)

Similarly, Paddy Scannell (2007, 234) says the notion of the 'public' has been granted normative value through an act of parliament. More so, this normative value goes with the expectations of a public broadcaster; for example that the SABC should be responsible and able to deliver to the citizens. SABC's slogan encapsulates it as: 'Broadcasting for total citizen empowerment.' Total empowerment of citizens seems to be encouraged through decentralizing the public broadcaster into ethnic regions as a way of embracing ethnic diversity. However, while this normative value ensures acceptance, citizens remain unable to influence programming, which is managed from SABC headquarters. Unlike during Apartheid era, when regional ethnic radio stations such as Radio Tsonga FM (now Munghana Lonene FM) and Radio Venda FM (now Phalaphala FM) were answerable to their regional administrators, the new era of social transformation has brought with it a policy of centralized command for all ethnic radio stations.<sup>12</sup> This form of command, while hinged on the normative acceptance of the government's role in the management of a public broadcaster, seems to thrive on the pragmatic side of control of the 'public' in that

broadcaster. This pragmatic use of the 'public' element can be interpreted as an emphasis on the political nature of radio broadcasting as a major resource for control. The notion of pragmatism here refers to the state's usage of normative rules, obligation and morality in furtherance of a political agenda (Bailey, 2001, 4). In South Africa, the majority of citizens are found in their regions of ethnic belonging, so, radio broadcasting in different languages is always useful for the leaders when communicating with people in their ethnic regions. Paddy Scannell (2007, 234) adds that: 'the rise of consumer capitalism and the mass-media combine with new forms of political management to suborn public life, which regresses to its earlier, pre-modern forms'. He sees this shift as hinged on the notion of morality, in which the state claims legal (normative) grounds for controlling these ethnic radio stations, yet the ultimate end is a pragmatic one, which fulfils the goals of social transformation as part of state capture. In this case 'it is a morality tale of the rise and fall of rational public opinion' which is emphasized (Scannell, 2007). Following this assertion it can be argued that Munghana Lonene FM and Phalaphala FM, as ethnic minority radio stations project a democratic imprint of being people-centred, while on the other hand the concept of the 'public' continues to be elusive as it gains conventional usage. In reality, the notion of the 'public', in the conceptualization of a PSB, is political and tends to serve pragmatic ends (Habermas, 1989, 8; Scannell, 2007).

The state also has a duty to manage and harness ethnicity before it becomes a force of division, as it has been elsewhere in Africa. The essentialization of ethnicity has led to the state's management of the nation-building crusade by being able to register each ethnic group's interest, thereby causing cultural particularism, which paradoxically translates into the celebration of ethnic diversity and pluralism. As a result, these ethnic groups claim to have collective rights within the state and their ethnic minority radio stations stand as their ethnic symbols. By using ethnic radio stations as subsidiaries of the public broadcaster, South Africa has been able to re-tribalize the state and to mobilize ethnicity as a major national resource and an ingredient of state-formation (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2009). In such a re-tribalized state, ethnicity has become a major cultural resource for cultural tourism in furtherance of the state's neoliberal agenda. The two ethnic minority radio

stations (Munghana Lonene FM and Phalaphala FM) now have a duty, as decentralized public broadcasters, to parade their cultural artefacts in the service of the nation-state. They also work as conduits through which the state's nativist form of nationalism can be communicated to its citizens. As a result, Scannell (2007, 235) says: 'the state begins to appear as a permanent public authority that increasingly intrudes upon the lives of the majority. Linked to these historic processes is the emergency of society'. While, according to Habermas (1989), the public has manifested itself through the literary works of print media and its marketable value, in this case, radio's forms of 'public' and 'publicness' find expression in societal acceptance and the languages of broadcasting, with their messages churned through these ethnic minority radio stations.

This approach has managed to create a sense of social trust in these ethnic radio stations as the avenues for the mediation of people's hopes and aspirations. These radio stations carry special symbolic meaning and effect in the lives of the Tsonga and the Venda. Further, for these ethnic groups the radio stations now act as modernized systems that impart or herald messages, thus fulfilling their public utility role. For example, while it is accepted that historically for the Venda important messages used to be communicated by blowing the horn, now, through the radio broadcasting, Phalaphala FM performs a similar function. As a result, the station staff, management and presenters, consider themselves to be messengers with a duty to blow the new modernized horn – the radio, for the Venda people. This has managed to create the feelings of group identity among the Venda people. Similarly, this can be said about Munghana Lonene FM and the Tsonga as an ethnic group. But it has been accepted that the language of broadcasting has the power to capture people's imaginations as will be shown in the following section.

### **Revisiting the Power of Babel: Ethnic Belonging and Language Broadcasting**

From the foregoing, it can be gleaned that, in South Africa, ethnic minority radio stations were designed to use their different ethnic languages as subsidiaries to the public broadcaster and to serve the imaginary 'public' – the nation. This is

because the nation, as a product of socio-political construction, cannot be pinned down to any physical location. Rather, it is the spatial presentation of the people's notions of belonging and identity, captured in the inner recesses of their imaginations of existence. The ambivalence resulting from this conception of a nation is that a nation, therefore, is a group of people, as citizens, who clearly identify themselves as different ethnic groups that remain loyal citizens to the state. In such a scenario, ethnic nationalism among black South Africans, as Ali Mazrui and Alamin Mazrui (1998, 205) argue, became a manifest destiny. By so doing, it created an interesting reincarnation of the biblical story of the 'Tower of Babel',<sup>13</sup> whose narrative tells of a unified effort as people worked with one language as their medium of communication. From this observation a new concept emerges through which we can attempt to understand ethnicity; the 'Babelian motif'.

Using this 'Babelian motif', I contend that the structure of Apartheid, which lasted more than four decades, had Afrikaans as its central language (the main language of communication), also with English as the language of commerce. However, Apartheid's negation gained through the encouragement of ethnic identities, although they remained contained within the Bantustan homelands. This encouragement of ethnic identities led to self-actualization and the creation of a collective consciousness, as discussed above. The creation of the Bantustans with Afrikaans as the major language was aided by Bantu radio stations<sup>14</sup> (Lekgoathi, 2009), and was seen as a way by which the system entrenched itself. Contrary to this common position, I contend that that, by creating these ethnic radio stations, the Apartheid system actually caused its own negation and ultimate demise as a structure. This position may be understood as an oxymoron and as a departure from the perspective which views the re-tribalization of the state as likely to lead to chaos. However, it strengthens the argument of the 'Babelian motif' by showing how the new leaders of independent South Africa, Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki, were able to use these ethnic groups, in particular their languages, to dismantle Apartheid using the nativist mindset. This ideology ushered a new type of state formation, based on the ideology of African nationalism, in which other ethnic groups felt a sense of belonging (Mazrui and Mazrui, 1998).

This informed nativism as a new form of nationalism, derived from Thabo Mbeki's famous 1996 speech, 'I am an African', which offered a blueprint for the nation-state's nativist agenda and the celebrating cultural pluralism; referred to as the 'Rainbow Nation'. It was further confirmed in May 2006 following the formation of a think tank under the banner of the Nativist Club, with a theme; 'Where are the Natives?' The Native Club was chaired by Magashe Titus Mafolo, senior political adviser to the president Thabo Mbeki (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009). This move also paved the way for a form of cultural pluralism which was to become a major rallying point for neoliberalism, and which Mazrui and Mazrui refer to as 'ethnic nationalism'. This was realized through the transformation of SABC into a public broadcaster with a new mandate in which the old Apartheid structures of the Bantu radio stations were continued, this time in the service of a new nation-state. Social transformation and the 'Rainbow Nation' paradigm then employed the slogans; '*Simunye*' (meaning 'We are one')<sup>15</sup> and 'Proudly South African', as South Africa's proprietary badge in the neoliberal market economy. Ethnic radio stations, which had earlier been used by Apartheid were re-engaged, rebranded and given a new nativist-inclined public mandate. The latter was also disguised as people-centred, however, a closer analysis reveals a newly formed hegemonic arrangement.

### **Ethnic Minority Radio: 'Community Ownership' or 'New Hegemony'?**

The challenge of ethnic minority radio stations as extensions of the main public broadcaster in South Africa lies in the paradox of their being 'community-owned' but with the possibility of creating a new state-sponsored hegemony. This challenge fuels the ambivalent scenario of 'public' ownership as discussed above. The hermeneutical question being 'Who is the public in a public broadcaster?', thereby presenting us with an understanding of the notion of the 'public' as seen through the prism of a perceived community whose existence is further linked to a particularized past as the basis (an *ethnie*) of giving it a sense of responsibility and existentialist 'ownership' (Smith, 1986).

But a line can be drawn to show how these ethnic radio stations indirectly feed into government ownership of the SABC through the Minister of Communications, a political appointee who also serves the interests of the ruling

party (ANC). However, this paradox of 'public ownership' has gained currency through inculcating the impression that when a radio station broadcasts in a particular language, and is located within the community, coupled with the use of its naming and symbols, it is therefore a project owned by the people.

Furthermore, by engaging cultural symbols, as slogans for these ethnic radio stations, and the use of minority languages as a major cultural tool of communication seems to buttress the view of these ethnic radio stations as 'community owned'.<sup>16</sup> In a question to the station management and presenters on whether they considered their radio stations to be 'community radio stations', responses showed that 71 percent held the view that their radio stations were community oriented. Then another 29 percent acknowledged ethnic community belonging, but still felt that the stations were answerable to government through SABC. This then created a contradiction. However, the 71 percent also presented a correlation between the radio station's languages of broadcasting, use of certain cultural symbols, such as the stations' crests, and the fact that they, as radio station staff, actually came from the communities. So they used these as factors for maintaining that their radio stations are community owned. As a result they failed to acknowledge the role played by SABC in the ownership of these radio stations.

Moreover, the SABC, as a public broadcaster is seen as providing the locus of power as a major institution of social organization within ongoing elite struggles. Radio as a mass communication project is often seen as likely to help those in power by conjuring public opinion leading to a process which according to Habermas (1989) marks the re-feudalization of society or, as Downing (1992) suggests, the colonization of the life-world. It is here that the existence of a public realm in a representative parliamentary democracy is acknowledged. However, these ethnic radio stations are seen as carrying both covert and overt powers. By being able to attract support from a wider section of the population (the public) they act as political capital. Further, this notion finds currency through continued reference to the ideals of PSB, whose definition remains 'elusive'. For example, the argument that SABC serves to provide the ordinary citizens with a voice, in particular, to act as a realm in which rational public discourses take place, remains questionable.



Further, as stated above, these radio stations have been useful in the construction of the 'we' feeling through broadcasting in different languages. But it can be argued further that, while there is some modicum of public service in these ethnic minority radio stations, the major thrust has been to concretize the new hegemonic arrangement. It can be further observed that these ethnic radio stations have gradually led to the attainment of symbolic meaning through continued social construction of meanings and their narratives. This attainment of symbolic meaning also leads to the continued injection of ideas that are presented on one hand as being driven by the public, while on the other hand they represent the views of the élite. It is this primed acquiescence which was displayed by the presenters and station managers, who proudly stated that these ethnic minority radio stations were, in fact, symbols of their peoplehood. It is on that note that Slavoj Žižek's argument finds meaning, that:

Every belonging to a society involves a paradoxical point at which the subject is ordered to embrace freely, as the result of his choice, what is anyway imposed on him (*we must all love our country ...*). This paradox of willingly (choosing freely) what is in any case necessary, of pretending (maintaining the appearance) that there is a free choice although in fact there isn't, is strictly co-dependent with the notion of an empty symbolic gesture. (Žižek, 2008, 36, emphasis added)

This approach causes cultural pluralism to work for the nation-state, but, above all, it feeds into the social transformation process as a form of elite transition. From the research findings, one can glean that the emergence of ethnic minority radio stations in South Africa becomes the battlefield for managed cultural pluralism (Riggins, 1992). By rebranding these ethnic minority radio stations, a new form of societal renegotiation was engineered, thus aligning them with the ideology of African nationalism (nativism) (Mazrui and Mazrui, 1998; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009) and neoliberalism. This new ideology is alive to global economic trends and the need to enter the market with an 'exotic' nativist agenda, this time hinged on the emergent cultural pluralism and the old ethnic identity, which is

packaged as the end product of cultural tourism (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2009).

## **Conclusion**

From the foregoing, it can be gleaned that, by embracing ethnic radio broadcasting, a new hegemonic arrangement has been unwittingly created. But a critical assessment of these ethnic radio stations presents an ideological impetus to the social transformation. The notion of ideology here is seen as a process that 'forms part of that aspect of human condition under which human beings live their lives as conscious actors in a world that makes sense, or is made to make sense to them in varying degrees' (Therborn 1980, 02). Ideology therefore becomes the medium (in the case of Munghana Lonene FM and Phalaphala FM) through which this consciousness and meaningfulness operates, also as part of the 'unconscious psychodynamic processes' (Therborn, 1980). The process of social transformation, with its nativist form of nationalism, has benefited from this 'psychodynamic' effect through various means by which memory is continuously reshaped using ethnic minority radio stations. Stories are being narrated and retold in the endless process of state-formation through radio broadcasts, hence the celebration of the 'Proudly South African' moment and the endlessly elusive 'Rainbow Nation'. This consciousness of everyday life and general experiences informs my engagement of the two ethnic minority radio stations as decentralized public broadcasters.

The two radio stations have also been able to create a sense of belonging among the different Tsonga and Venda in the process, encouraging consent and constant renewal of the ongoing hegemonic arrangement. Following the radio's generation of socio-psychological intrigue as a form of enigmatic instance, histories of ethnic identities and forms of social relations are reproduced and valorised. It has continued to reposition societal worldviews and life-worlds within the process of social transformation. It is here that these ethnic minority radio stations find use, as conduits for cultural and moral production; that is, to continue with their educative function as decentralized public broadcasters within their different ethnic communities. Further, these radio stations, through the news and current affairs programmes that are managed from the centre (SABC headquarters) continue with the narration of the anti-Apartheid struggle

in a bid to non-coercively whip people into patriotic mode. This anti-Apartheid sentiment, coupled with the state's encouraged celebration of ethnic diversity within different provinces, buttresses the rise of nativist thought and cultural pluralism.

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<sup>1</sup> These radio stations are managed and owned by the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), but serving different ethnic groups. Munghana Lonene FM serves the Tsonga people, while Phalaphala FM serves the Venda.

<sup>2</sup> As espoused in the ANC People's Charter of 1955. The charter's preamble captures the spirit that influenced the social transformation.

<sup>3</sup> This statement was echoed by Zolisile Mapipa, a respondent with whom I enjoyed my encounter, in particular because of his intellectual engagement with my research. Zolisile Mapipa is the Programme Strategist for Public Service Broadcasting Radio.

<sup>4</sup> For more information on this slogan see the following website:  
<http://www.sabc.co.za/portal/site/sabc/menuitem.3eb4c4b520e08a22f22fa121a24daeb9/>

<sup>5</sup> This information was also confirmed by two senior officers at SABC, one being the Head of Radio News and Current Affairs, the other being the Group Executive News and Current Affairs.

<sup>6</sup> This was a response by one of the Coloured research participants from *Radio Sonder Grense FM* during my visit to their SABC offices in February 2009. Please note that this respondent referred to himself as a Coloured, in South Africa the name Coloured refers to people of mixed parentage; that is, offspring of black and white parents. As it is an acknowledged position that at the centre of every colonial administration in Africa was a marked form of apartheid (racial discrimination) in which people were pegged along racialist gradations based on their appearance, most colonial administrations actively encouraged the coinage of and separation of people of mixed parentage from other blacks, and thus encouraged reference to them as Coloured. This phaneron as a social construct became useful for the Apartheid system, and has continued to be used in the postcolonial era as a sociological cultural descriptor of racial difference.

<sup>7</sup> For more information on community radio in South Africa see:

<http://www.southafrica.info/about/media/community-radio.htm>.

<sup>8</sup> Thami Ntenti is the Head of PBS Radio at Auckland Radio Park, Johannesburg. He was interviewed in February and March 2009.

<sup>9</sup> This position is derived from Frantz Fanon's position on language and society; that is the sociology of language. Fanon, in his book *Black Skin White Masks*, argued that 'a man who has a language consequently possesses the world expressed and implied in that language.... Mastery of language affords remarkable power' (1967, 18).

<sup>10</sup> This was observed among the Venda and Tsonga people in Limpopo province. It was also confirmed by the research participants who were interviewed at SABC offices in Polokwane. They even added that due to these rivalries among the three main ethnic groups in Limpopo province, the Tsonga, Venda and Pedi (Northern Sotho), the management of the three radio stations (*Munghana Lonene FM*,

*Phalaphala FM and Thobela FM*) agreed to have certain times when broadcasting sessions are combined, so as to symbolically encourage their listeners to follow suit. The logic of combined broadcasting, it was argued serves to encourage co-existence among the three ethnic groups given the often heightened ethnic rivalries. It was also a way of managing the challenge of xenophobic violence that had affected South Africa in June 2008.

<sup>11</sup> For more information, see the Broadcast Act of 1999, which was further amended in 2002 and finally assented to by the President on 4 February 2003.

<sup>12</sup> This information was obtained from a senior official at SABC offices in Polokwane during face-to-face interviews in April 2009. He also emphasized that, in contrast to the Apartheid era, the chain of command from the SABC regional offices in Polokwane to these radio stations is dotted and marked with almost blurred lines, while it has become stronger and more pronounced towards the centre at SABC headquarters in Johannesburg.

<sup>13</sup> The narration of the story of the Tower of Babel suggests that people's sole purpose in creating the tower was to make a mark for themselves and to reach God. However, the tower miraculously collapsed. Following its collapse, people suddenly discovered that they now spoke in different languages; a process which, it is argued, marked the beginning of languages as we know them to date.

<sup>14</sup> This was the name given to ethnic radio stations during Apartheid (for an historical engagement with Bantu Radio stations, their origins and general ethos at the time, see Lekgoathi (2009).

<sup>15</sup> This is the slogan that SABC uses on both radio and television.

<sup>16</sup> This view was captured as an answer to Question 16 in the Question Guidelines for Station Managers and Staff, during my research at SABC Headquarters in from October 2008 to May 2009.