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Why has social media not democratized the socio-political context of Zimbabwe?

“The painful truth may be that Zimbabwe, the youngest of Africa's former colonies, has simply followed where the continent has led, treading the well-worn path beaten out of the lie that taking power from the colonialists and delivering democracy to the people are one and the same”

Petina Gappah<sup>1</sup>

“...manga chena yakaparira parere nhema”

Shona proverb<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> P. Gappah, *'Zimbabwe's nightmare will end, the dream will live again'*, (The Guardian - Opinion, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> Translates to: “The good can make the bad visible.”

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## Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to explain why social media has not (yet) democratized Zimbabwe. It discusses questions such as; ‘What role do Social Networking Sites play in the context of Zimbabwean society?’ ‘Who uses SNS in Zimbabwe and are these usages different?’ ‘Are there possible potentials of SNS in relation to democratization in Zimbabwe?’ It argues that the reason for the absence of democratic change so far, can be explained through the presence of four conditions: A digital divide, the context of Zimbabwean society, the online/offline-aspect in Zimbabwean socio-politics and the Zimbabwean media-landscape.

*Aanvullen met verdere abstract: toekomst perspectief, conclusies en bevindingen geven: kijken naar voorbeeld democracy-stuk famed en simon.*

*Eigenlijk kijken later of deze abstract niet herschreven moet worden.*

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## Acknowledgements

Thanks must first go to all the kind people I met during my time in Zimbabwe. It being my first trip abroad alone, I especially want to thank my host Mai Zure and her family, for so generously opening up their home to me and making me feel safe. In addition, I want to thank Bruce Mutsvairo, who brought me in contact with NewsDay and helped me with countless other things during my stay.

Thank you to Mirjam de Bruijn, my supervisor, who provided me with interesting conversations and needed structure throughout the process of this thesis. Thank you to the Bristows, who showed me Zimbabwe's nature and for letting me stay with them in their beautiful home in the bush.

And finally, thank you to my parents - for never doubting my ability to achieve the things I set out to do and for guiding me along the way.

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## List of Acronyms

AFB	American Federal Bank
AIPPA	Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act
BSA	The Broadcasting Services Act
CECA	Censorship and Entertainment Controls Act
ED	Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa
GB	Gigabyte
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICT	Internet and Communication Technologies
LAA	Land Acquisition Act
LRRPII	Land Reform and Resettlement Program Phase II
LTE	Long-Term Evolution (in Communication Technologies)
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
MB	Megabyte
MISA-ZIM	The Media Institute of Southern Africa in Zimbabwe
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OSA	Official Secrets Act
POTRAZ	Postal and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe
RTGS	Real-Time Gross Settlement
RBZ	Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SNS	Social Networking Sites
UDI	Unilateral Declaration of Independence
USD	United States Dollar
ZANLA	Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army

ZANU PF	Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front
ZAPU	Zimbabwe African Peoples Union
ZBC	Zimbabwe Broadcasting Company
ZDI	Zimbabwe Democracy Institute
ZNA	Zimbabwe National Army

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## Chapter One: Introduction and Methodology

### Introduction

Protests erupted on the 14th of January 2019 in the cities of Harare and Bulawayo in Zimbabwe. What started as a ‘National Stay-Away’<sup>3</sup> quickly turned into violence. Most of the unrests took place in townships surrounding Harare, with reports of at least 12 people dead and many more injured. The protests were mainly triggered by a government-ordered increase in fuel-prices. Driving to the offices of NewsDay the previous days, I had seen the long fuel-queues - hearing stories of people being in line for three straight days. They were waiting for fuel that would not come, because the Zimbabwean government did not have the money to buy and import the fuel. As such, corruption led to owners of fuel-stations keeping a large part of the fuel for themselves or selling it on the black market. Further reasons for discontent under the Zimbabwean population were the currency problem<sup>4</sup>, the mayor difficulties in finding work (mostly for highly educated, young people), the 37-year legacy of erroneous governance by Robert Mugabe<sup>5</sup> and the crushing realization that his successor Emmerson Mnangagwa is no different.<sup>6</sup> The anger of the protesters was mostly

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<sup>3</sup> As a form of protest against the worsening economic and political situation in Zimbabwe, a popular hashtag on Twitter summoned people to strike and not go to work for a period of days.

<sup>4</sup> Zimbabwe’s official currency is the US-dollar. Unfortunately, the country does not have the financial recourses to buy the dollars from the American Federal Bank. Because of this, an un-official currency has emerged called the ‘bondnote’. The Zimbabwean government insists the worth of one bondnote is the same as one USD. This is not the case: most of the time the worth of the bondnote fluctuates between 2.5 and 4.5 times less than the USD. This causes significant problems for the Zimbabwean population, not the least of them being that people are now paid between 2.5 and 4.5 times less in salary than before.

<sup>5</sup> Robert Mugabe was Zimbabwe’s first president after the country attained its independence from Britain in 1980. Formerly called Rhodesia, Zimbabwe held great promise. It was rich with natural recourses and its infrastructure was well developed. Under Mugabe’s rule, the country was led into a long period of crisis, corruption, economic downfalls and racial cleansing.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Mugabe was forced to resign his presidency after a coup staged by the Zimbabwean army in November of 2017. His successor was Emmerson Mnangagwa, who had long been Mugabe’s right-hand

directed at the police. Police buildings were set on fire and police cars overturned. The police and the Zimbabwean state-army reacted swiftly and harshly: protesters were beaten and shot, reports of woman that were raped by army and police surfaced in the days after.

During the course of the protests, Zimbabwean citizens and newspapers were using Social Networking Sites <sup>7</sup> to spread news concerning the protests. Under the name of ‘fake news being spread and containing the situation’, the Zimbabwean government shut of all social media. This had little effect, as people almost immediately started using VPN’s and Telegram – both methods of gaining access to social media despite of the ban. The Zimbabwean government quickly realized the ban was not effective. They then decided to shut down the internet completely – only to turn it back on again after the unrests died down around the 18<sup>th</sup> of January. Social media like Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter were switched on even later, on Monday the 21<sup>st</sup> of January, when the high courts of Harare ruled the ban ‘unlawful’.

Having personally witnessed the protests while doing my internship at the Newsday offices in Harare from January 2019 to March 2019, I made the following observations:

1. In the case of *participation* and *location*, the protests seemed to have erupted in the high-density parts of the cities. In these areas, the participation was also high. This is particularly true for Harare, where the protests and the violence were heaviest in Mbare, a slum near the center. Less to no participation was observed in the low-density areas of Harare, like Avondale. Contrary to Harare, Bulawayo’s infrastructure is less divided in different sections and areas. Here the protests took place throughout the entire city-center.
2. In the case of Harare and Bulawayo, one can definitely speak of a *mobilization*. The mobilization started with the hashtag ‘#StayAway’ on Twitter, which summoned people to strike by staying at home. This was supposed to happen on Monday the 14<sup>th</sup>. Instead of staying inside their houses, people gathered on the streets and started protesting. The first unrests started early in the morning. They seemed to have started in Bulawayo and a short time later in Harare, but the exact time and place remains unclear. Information about the unrests was

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in Zanu PF. After the coup, Zimbabweans were hopeful that things in their country would change. It seems that this is not the case so far.

<sup>7</sup> Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter, amongst others.



mostly spread over WhatsApp, but Twitter and Facebook were also circulating messages. Being at the NewsDay-offices that day, I was put in charge of keeping up with the live-blog.<sup>8</sup> NewsDay-reporters would drive to different locations where the protests were erupting and they would report to me via WhatsApp. I was also told to collect information via Twitter. It must be noted that the information coming in via WhatsApp and gathered on Twitter was not crosschecked. I was told the aim was to distribute it as soon as possible, being it semi-factual or not.

3. Despite the mobilization and the participation, the protests cannot be called a successful *movement*. For this, the protests were too short and had too little impact. More importantly, the Zimbabwean government knew exactly how to stop them. This will be further explained in Chapter Three.

In the case of the Zimbabwean protests, it can be observed that social media played a minor role in the mobilization and participation-process. However, it failed to function as the tool Zimbabweans could potentially use to orchestrate a successful movement and as such, pave the way to a more democratic Zimbabwe. So why then, did it fail?

There are cases where SNS have proved to play a course-altering role, the Arab Spring being most widely known of. Although recent bodies of literature on the subject are now bringing a more nuanced view on statements concerning the positive influences of social media in the Arab uprisings, there still seems to be an overall consensus that social media did in fact fulfill an essential role. In their research on ‘Opening Closed Regimes: What Was the Role of Social Media during the Arab Spring?’, Philip Howard and Aiden Duffy et al. present the following conclusions: “*Social media played a central role in shaping political debates in the Arab Spring, (...) a spike in online revolutionary conversations often preceded major events on the ground (...) and social media helped spread democratic ideas across international borders.*”<sup>9</sup> A more cautiously formulated view is brought forward in the research of Taylor Dewey et al., arguing that “*(...) the authors did not find a consistent correlation between social media use and successful mass protest, suggesting social media is a useful but not sufficient tool for protest. However, the analysis also indicates that Internet communities can serve similar functions as civil society organizations, particularly in*

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<sup>8</sup> Link to the live-blog of NewsDay: <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2019/01/updates-on-the-zimbabwe-protests/>

<sup>9</sup> P. Howard, A. Duffy, D. Freelon, M. Hussain, W. Mari, M. Mazaid, ‘Opening Closed Regimes: What Was the Role of Social Media During the Arab Spring?’, *Project on Information Technology and Islam* (2011), 1-30.

*countries where government repression prohibits certain political groups. Because membership in civil society is more highly correlated with protest activity, the ability of social media to offer a sort of virtual civil society platform likely further boosted participation in protests during the Arab Spring.*<sup>10</sup> A recent example of the interplay between socio-politics and ‘the power’ of social media can also be found in the 2019 election-race of India. There, SNS are being used by political parties to reach potential voters and to spread their campaign messages – reaching even the most rural parts of the country.<sup>11</sup>

In the case of Zimbabwe, academic research on the role of Social Networking Sites and ‘democratization’ has - for a large part - also focused on these ‘positive’ influences. Drawing conclusions from the Arab Spring, scholars predicted that Zimbabwe would follow the same course of action: using social media for mobilization and for information, democratization - in one form or another - would automatically follow. Emphasizing positive bottom-up concepts like ‘participatory media’, ‘digital activism’, ‘citizen journalism’ and ‘communitive action’, the scholarly works of recent years have concentrated on the potential of democratic change that Social Networking Sites could bring.

However, after examining the protests of last January, this ‘potential’ does not seem that evident anymore. The aim of this thesis is to explain why social media has not (yet) democratized Zimbabwe, by concentrating on the following research questions: What role do Social Networking Sites play in the context of Zimbabwean society? Who uses SNS in Zimbabwe and are these usages different? Are there possible potentials of SNS in relation to democratization in Zimbabwe? I argue that the reason for the absence of democratic change so far, can be explained through the presence of the following four conditions:

1. A digital divide
2. The context of Zimbabwean political society
3. The online/offline-aspect in Zimbabwean socio-politics
4. The Zimbabwean media-landscape

These subjects will respectively account for Chapter 2, 3, 4, and 5 in this thesis. Chapter 6 will concentrate on a future perspective and presenting a conclusion.

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<sup>10</sup> T. Dewey, J. Kaden, M. Marks, S. Matshushima, B. Zhu, ‘The Impact of Social Media on Social Unrest in de Arab Spring’, *Defense Intelligence Agency* (2012), 1-53.

<sup>11</sup> NOS, ‘Nieuwsuur’, <https://nos.nl/nieuwsuur/artikel/2282706-honderden-miljoenen-smartphones-vormen-last-en-zegen-bij-indias-e-verkiezingen.html> (Accessed on May 9, 2017).

## **Methodology**

This study uses data that is gathered through different data collection techniques, although the main emphasis lies on qualitative data. The first collection of data is a series of fifteen interviews, conducted in the period between January 2019 and April 2019. The interviews have been conducted during my stay in Zimbabwe, as well as after my return. Most of them were done during my internship at NewsDay. NewsDay is a Harare-based Zimbabwean newspaper. There I was completing an internship as part of the Masters-program of Leiden University. I stayed in Zimbabwe for a total of 3 months. The first series of data has been recorded on recording device, the second has been saved via WhatsApp. As for the first batch, a series of 14 questions were asked. These varied from questions about personal social media usage and personal opinions about the socio-political situation in present Zimbabwe. Some of the interviewees have been requested to stay anonymous; others gave their permission to use their names. Content analysis has been used to examine the different answers.

The second data collection consists of personal observations. These were made and written down in the period between January 2019 and March 2019. The observations consist of personal remarks about the January-protests, notes about the workings at NewsDay and notes about my internship. No names were used in these records. These personal notes will be used throughout this thesis, placed in small textboxes between paragraphs. It is my opinion that they illustrate and amplify the arguments I am bringing forward.

The third data collection consists of around 25 newspapers, deriving from ‘NewsDay’, ‘The Daily Standard’, ‘H-Metro’, and ‘The Herald’. They will be used for a case study in Chapter Five.

As for the outline of the chapters, each chapter will start with a literary review. After examining literature written about the interplay between social media, democratization and politics in Zimbabwe, I will aim to refute the general arguments brought forward by applying my data and observations. Social sciences are a specific field to work in, as scholars are not allowed to present their data as irrefutable facts. Instead, we must present a hypothesis and support it with clear observations and accountable data, which is what I will aim for. Another remark must be made in relation to the case study in Chapter Five. In this chapter, the quality of media in Zimbabwe will be discussed, including that of NewsDay. Although I am thankful for the internship I was allowed to complete at their offices, I felt it necessary not to leave them out of my analysis. I wish to make it clear that my scholarly views are not in any way

personal, nor is my analysis personally directed, in any way or form, to the people working there.

## **Terminology**

Before moving further into the analysis, there is a need to clarify three important terms used throughout this thesis.

The first of these is ‘democracy’. Although I have chosen to use the term in my main research question, I hold an ambiguous attitude towards its definition and application. In my opinion, ‘democracy’ is a Western-coined term as it was created in a Western context with a specific Western history preceding it. Applying this Western framework on an African political system, like that of Zimbabwe, would be wrong. Unfortunately, there is no alternative term yet that I can use in this thesis. In his article ‘Towards an African Theory of Democracy’, Ademola Fayemi argues that the alternative is strongly needed as it will help provide political scholarship with clear “*underlying principles, meaning, canons and criteria of democracy in African culture (...)*” and will help expose “*(...) conceptual errors implicit in the conflation of democracy as a concept and as practiced in different political systems.*”<sup>12</sup> This will also help to utilize “*Africa’s democratic heritage and values, rooted in her traditional past, in resolving her peculiar problems*”.<sup>13</sup>

In addition to these considerations, my opinion is that we must be critical of seeing Western democracy, or any kind of democracy for that matter, as the ultimate end goal of a political system. Systems and societies change, and political frameworks evolve. We must keep in mind that there are societal-political systems that might prove to work better than the one(s) we have now. Concluding, when the words ‘democratizing’ and ‘democratized’ are used in this thesis they are based on the minimalist assumption of democracy, namely: all people are free (liberty) and all people are equal (equality).

Secondly, attention must be drawn to the term ‘hype-literature’. This indicates literature in which the attention is centered on the power of social media to bring change in suppressed political systems. Briefly touched upon in my introduction, the Arab Spring

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<sup>12</sup> A. Fayemi, ‘Towards an African Theory of Democracy’, *Thought and Practice: A Journal of the Philosophical Association of Kenya* 1:1 (2009), 101-126.

<sup>13</sup> Fayemi, ‘Towards an African Theory’, 102.

brought with it the idea that social media would be the tool that could bring democratization to ‘un-democratic’ countries by channeling news, creating ways of mobilizing protests and by forming civil societies online and offline. The ‘hype’ in this case is the notion that SNS have a democratizing power, and that this power could also be applied in other countries, like Zimbabwe.

Lastly, it is needed to explain “*the interchangeable nature of the terms ‘state’, ‘government’, ‘ZANU PF’, and ‘ruling party’*”<sup>14</sup> De facto the terms above have the same meaning, as ZANU PF dominates all government structures. There is little need to distinguish between them, as all originated from ZANU PF agency. In Zimbabwe, state and party are inextricably linked.<sup>15</sup>

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## Chapter Two: The Digital Divide

Academic enthusiasm for the potential of digital democracy first started in the late 1990’s, when scholars focused on the idea of creating virtual public spheres.<sup>16</sup> These spheres would “*(...) significantly improve democratic governance through the open and equal deliberation between citizens, representatives and policy-makers, afforded by the new information and communication technologies.*”<sup>17</sup> This what proved to be utopian view was quickly replaced by a more practical one, as scholars found that new media should rather be understood as part of ‘everyday life’ instead of as a way of promoting democracy.<sup>18</sup> However, with the rise of new social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp over recent years; a fresh wave of technological optimism emerged.<sup>19</sup> This wave focusses more on “*(...) the role of the*

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<sup>14</sup> G. Letcher, ‘The ‘Not Yet’ of Society’ (Published Master-Thesis, University of Leiden, 2016), 1-57.

<sup>15</sup> G. Letcher, ‘The ‘Not Yet’, 13.

<sup>16</sup> B. D. Loader, ‘The Governance of Cyberspace: Politics, Technology and Global Restructuring’, Routledge, London (1997).

<sup>17</sup> B.D. Loader & D. Mecea, ‘Networking Democracy?’ *Information, Communication and Society* 14:6 (2011), 757 – 769.

<sup>18</sup> B. Wellman, A. Haase, J. Boase, W. Chen, ‘Examining the Internet of Everyday Life’, *Centre for Urban and Community Studies*, (2002) 1-18.

<sup>19</sup> B.D. Loader & D. Mecea, ‘Networking Democracy?’, 758.

*citizen-user as the driver of democratic innovation through the self-actualized networking of citizens engaged in lifestyle and identity politics.”*<sup>20</sup>

A body of literature supports this line of thought. A few examples are discussed below.

Democratization cannot be achieved with traditional mass media, reasons Eric Von Hippel in his research on the democratization of innovation. He argues that the democratizing powers of social media lie in the fact that these media have the potential to ‘reconfigure communicative power relations’.<sup>21</sup> In theory, this means that citizens could challenge political propaganda and mass media by networking. By doing this, they are no longer dependent on professional media and thus ‘freed’ from passively consuming controlled media.<sup>22</sup>

Kalliopi Kyriakopoulou argues that social media not only provides a means of accessing ‘free’ information for citizens, it additionally raises awareness and exposes signs of authoritarian orders.<sup>23</sup> These factors would enable the creation of virtual forums, which in turn would encourage social capital: citizens engaging and collaborating to ensue political and societal change. Kyriakopoulou mentions: *“The online dialogue and interaction—if sustained—can produce the need for collective action or become the starting point of smooth political participation depending on the circumstances under which further organized action may emerge. The creation of a “public sphere”, an online space of deliberation, may be the hope for the online activists who use online tools to fight for democracy.”*

Lastly, Zimbabwean scholar Last Moyo argues that social media creates platforms in which Zimbabwean citizens *“(…) disseminated news and told stories about the harsh realities of Zimbabwean life and politics. In some cases, these spaces were also seminal to public discussions and thus became informal counter-hegemonic public spheres where public opinion could be formulated, nurtured and sustained. (...) As is normally the case in authoritarian environments, the internet in Zimbabwe thus became (and continues to be) the platform through which most of these subaltern or anti-state discourses are articulated and exerted.”*<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> E. Von Hippel, ‘Democratizing Innovation’, *The MIT Press* (2005).

<sup>22</sup> B.D. Loader & D. Mecea, ‘Networking Democracy?’, 759.

<sup>23</sup> K. Kyriakopoulou, ‘Authoritarian States and Internet Social Media: Instruments of Democratization or Instruments of Control?’, *Human Affairs* 21 (2011), 18-26.

<sup>24</sup> L. Moyo, ‘Blogging Down a Dictatorship: Human Rights, Citizen Journalists and the Right to Communicate in Zimbabwe’, *Sage Journals* 12:6 (2011), 745 – 760.

Thus, central to the optimistic view on social media promoting democracy is the concept of ‘the citizen’ who will use social media to access information, create online space to discuss politics, organize (online and offline) movements and ultimately, democratize his or her political and societal surroundings. I will argue however, that the arguments brought forward by the scholars above are not entirely applicable to the current societal and economic context of Zimbabwe. To achieve democratization through usage of social media, a number of conditions need to be met. The conditions used in this chapter are access to internet, affordability of internet services and skills to utilize the web. My research revealed that these conditions do not always apply for a significant number of Zimbabweans, resulting in *a digital divide* and *digital illiteracy*.

This chapter will start by explaining the extent of the digital divide in Zimbabwe. It will examine the reasons for the divide, the concept of digital illiteracy and the divide’s social-economic-geographical aspects. Working towards a short conclusion, I will discuss some recommendations for ‘bridging’ the digital gap.

### **The Digital Divide**

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines ‘a digital divide’ as follows: “(noun) - *the economic, educational, and social inequalities between those who have computers and online access and those who do not.*”<sup>25</sup> These aspects can also be applied to the Zimbabwean case, with the added factor of ‘geography’ – although this is closely linked to ‘social inequalities’. In Zimbabwe, the argument can be made that the digital divide is caused by the following considerations, to be discussed below.

The first are the high prices of (mobile) internet in the country, which continue to increase (Figure 1 and 2). The reason for these price-hikes lie in the currency-system, which is particular to Zimbabwe. The country’s official currency is the US-dollar. Unfortunately, the country does not have the financial recourses to buy the dollars from the American Federal

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<sup>25</sup> Merriam-Webster Dictionary. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/digital%20divide>. (Accessed on May 16, 2019).

Bank. Because of this, another currency has emerged called the 'bondnote' or 'RTGS'. The Zimbabwean government insists the worth of one bondnote is the same as one USD.

# The Price of Mobile Internet Worldwide 2019

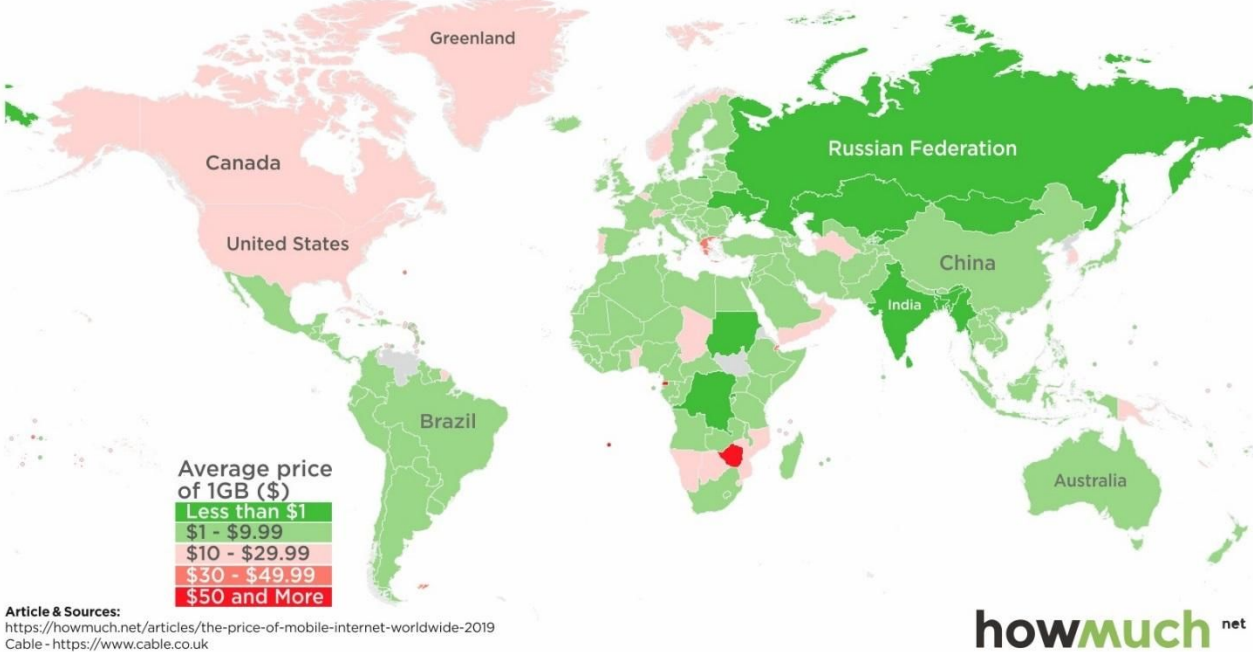


Figure 1. The Price of Mobile Internet Worldwide 2019.



# The Price of Mobile Internet 2019

## Africa

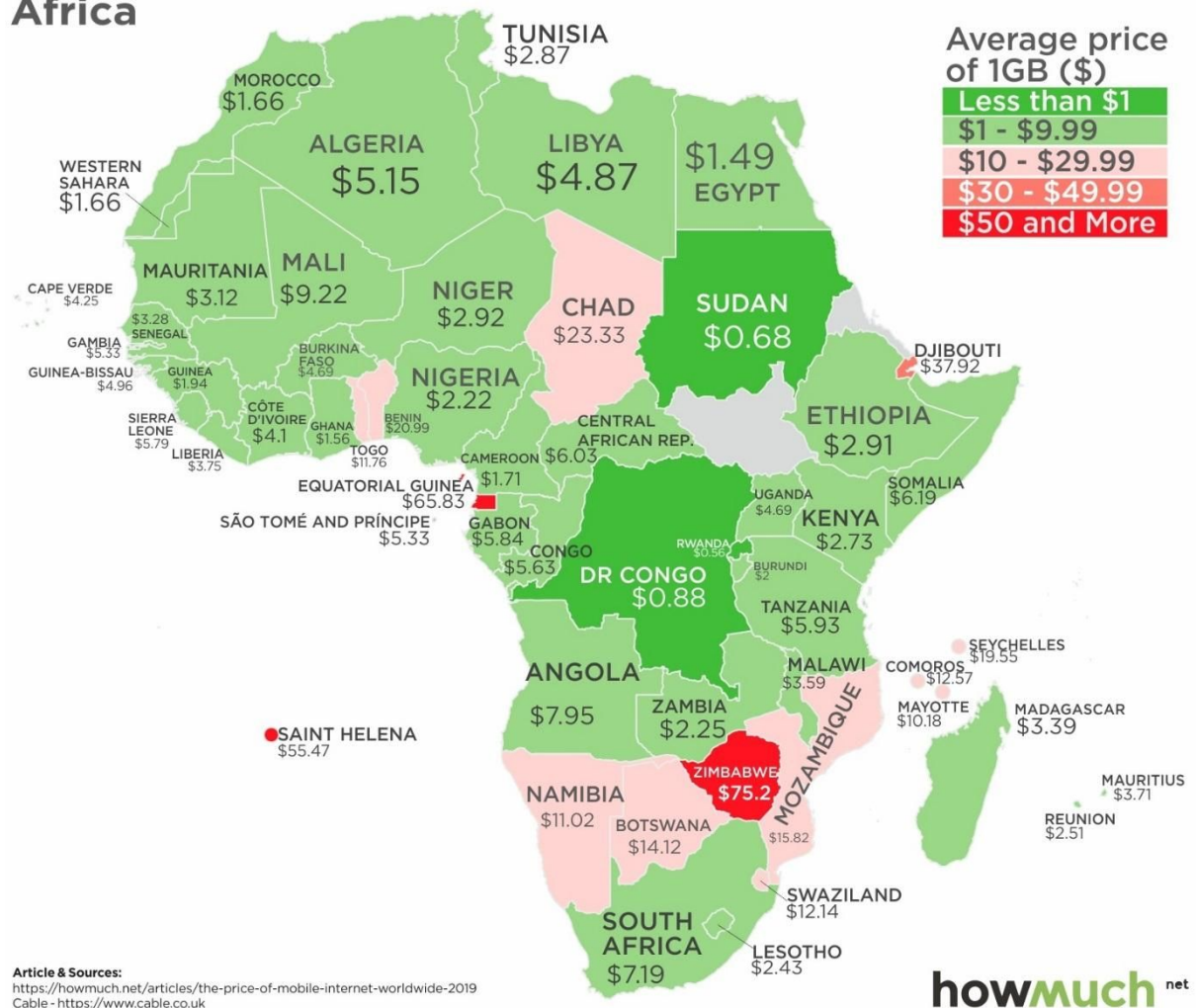


Figure 2: The Price of Mobile Internet in Africa in 2019. Zimbabwe pays the highest price, with an average of 75.20\$ per Gigabyte. It must be noted that this figure does not take into account the inter-bank exchange rate. If this is done, the price is translate to about 15-20 USD. In Zimbabwe, this is between \$45 - \$70 RTGS/bondnote – depending on the exchange rate.

This is not the case: most of the time the worth of the bondnote fluctuates between 2.5 and 4.5 times less than the USD. In March of this year, the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe devaluated the bondnote against the United States Dollar, making it 2.5 to 1.<sup>26</sup> Since then, Zimbabwean internet-providers like ‘EcoNet’ have increased costs in name of ‘re-aligning their prices to the correct USD-value, coping with rising inflation and service delivery costs’.

<sup>26</sup> M. Dzirutwe, ‘Zimbabwe Central Bank head hints at more weakening of new currency’, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-zimbabwe-economy-currency/zimbabwe-central-bank-head-hints-at-more-weakening-of-new-currency-idUSKBN1QS1E3> (Accessed on May 16, 2019.)

<sup>27</sup> The Media Institute of Southern Africa in Zimbabwe (MISA-ZIM) has recently published a report on this issue, condemning the price-hikes: “*Local Internet service providers and mobile network operators have capitalized on (...) confusion to continuously and unjustifiably increase data costs.*”<sup>28</sup> The organization fears that “*(...) increases in Internet costs, especially mobile data costs will most likely see a reduction in the number of Zimbabweans that can access the Internet. Limited access to the Internet also means Zimbabweans will not be able to enjoy their rights to access information and to share their opinions in online spaces. This means that these inordinate hikes in data costs become an indirect attack on people’s constitutional rights.*”<sup>29</sup>

A short note must be made in reference to the data-system used in Zimbabwe. Mobile operators mainly sell ‘bundled data’, which refers to bundles that only give access to specific apps. For example, one can buy a Facebook-bundle – to gain access just to Facebook. The same goes for WhatsApp and Twitter. This seems cheaper, as you do not use your MB’s for other applications on your phone. “However”, states MISA-ZIM in their report, “*this pricing structure is actually more profitable for mobile network operators and more expensive for the consumer. For example, if a subscriber buys a 1-gigabyte bundle of data that is valid for a day at RTGS \$5, that subscriber would, in theory, spend around RTGS \$150 on Internet in a 30-day month.*”<sup>30</sup> To avoid high data-usage, many Zimbabweans choose the data-option that uses the least MB’s, which is ‘WhatsApp’. They join many different ‘groups’ with a variety of different subjects, with other members who have the same interests; a ‘news-group’, a ‘sports-group’ or a group with news about your favorite artist.<sup>31</sup> It is via these WhatsApp-groups that Zimbabweans access their news, instead of wasting precious MB’s by using ‘Google’ or other sites/apps. A significant downside to these groups however, is the increased spreading of unverified news, also called ‘fake news’.

In addition to the prices of mobile-services increasing, average salaries and incomes are declining. This is also (partly) attributed to the Zimbabwean currency-issue, as salaries are

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<sup>27</sup> MISA, ‘Latest Internet Data Price Increases Unjustified’, <http://zimbabwe.misa.org/2019/04/30/latest-internet-data-price-increases-unjustified/> (Accessed on May 16, 2019).

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

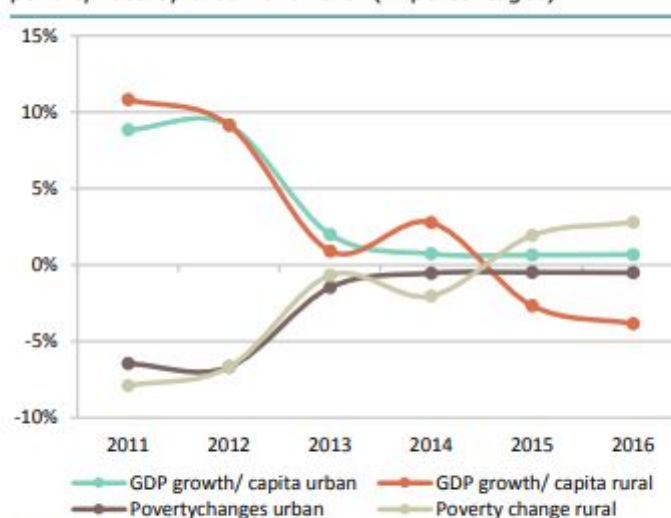
<sup>31</sup> When the famous Zimbabwean performer Oliver ‘Tuku’ Mtukudzi died on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of January of this year, I witnessed many around me joining Tuku-groups on Whatsapp. Thousands of messages were sent per day, remembering his songs and sharing news surrounding his death.

adjusted to fluctuations between the bondnote and the USD. Furthermore, the current economic climate of Zimbabwe is worsening. Under President Emmerson Mnangagwa, fiscal mismanagement and currency risks are increasing, as economic policies and corruption are pushing the country into poverty.<sup>32</sup> These economic factors also deprive many Zimbabweans of accessing social media. A ‘POTRAZ’ report of December 2018 claims that 8.7 million Zimbabweans had access to internet that year.<sup>33</sup> With the country’s current population of around 17 million, this means little under half of Zimbabweans can afford to use the web.<sup>34</sup>

### Rural Versus Urban and ‘Digital Illiteracy’

The second reason for the ‘digital divide’ in Zimbabwe can be found in the socio-geographical aspects of the country, especially in the dichotomy between ‘rural’ and ‘urban’. Economic differences play a role, as statistics illustrate the difference in GDP per Capita between urban and rural parts in Zimbabwe. (Figure 3). The figure shows a decline of -1,5% in rural areas, and a small growth of + 3% in urban areas. According to World

**FIGURE 2 Zimbabwe / Changes in GDP/capita and the poverty rate by urban and rural (in percentages)**



Source: World Bank staff estimates.  
 Note: Due to limited access to the national survey data, the international comparable poverty rate for Zimbabwe cannot be calculated. This chart presents projected likely changes in the poverty rate based on growth elasticity of poverty reduction.

Bank, this “will present enormous poverty challenges for rural areas”.<sup>35</sup> With the poverty challenges rural areas in Zimbabwe are facing, one can argue that the spending of money on mobile data and mobile phones will also decline.

<sup>32</sup> 2019 Index of Economic Freedom, ‘Zimbabwe’, <https://www.heritage.org/index/country/zimbabwe> (Accessed on May 16, 2019).

<sup>33</sup> MISA, ‘Latest Internet Data’, <http://zimbabwe.misa.org/2019/04/30/latest-internet-data-price-increases-unjustified/> (Accessed on May 17, 2019).

<sup>34</sup> Worldometers, <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/zimbabwe-population/> (Accessed on May 17th, 2019).

<sup>35</sup> World Bank, ‘Macro Poverty Outlook for Zimbabwe’, p. 289. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/201371468196138291/pdf/104809-WP-PUBLIC-Macro-Poverty-Outlook-for-Zimbabwe.pdf> (Accessed on May 17, 2019).

Figure 3: GDP per Capita in Zimbabwe for the year 2016. Unfortunately, the World Bank has published no new data for 2017 and 2018 due to limited access to Zimbabwean data.

This assumption seems to be substantiated by statistics demonstrating low internet-usage in rural areas. An advocacy paper published in 2018 by ‘The Zimbabwe Democracy Institute’ indicates that, although most of Zimbabwe’s population lives in rural areas (67.72 %), only 23.12 percent of these people have access to internet.<sup>36</sup> This low internet-access is not only due to poverty, but can also be explained through poor communication-infrastructure, as there is little electricity and limited access to 3G-connection<sup>37</sup> or LTE’s.<sup>38</sup>

A third restriction, which contributes to the digital divide, is that of ‘digital illiteracy’. The term indicates the absence of knowledge to use smartphones, laptops and other digital devices to communicate online. According to the report published by the ZDI, “*The government of Zimbabwe has (...) failed to incorporate digital technology in the country’s education curriculum over the years. Therefore the level of digital literacy at grassroots level is very low to stimulate service uptake and usage, especially in rural areas.*”<sup>39</sup> Being a ‘digital illiterate’ means one has limited access to the internet, social media and its contents – which in turn leads to ‘digital exclusion’, and ultimately; to the digital divide.

Summarizing, because of issues like ‘digital illiteracy’, increased data prices and the dichotomy between rural and urban parts of the country, one cannot speak of equal access to internet in Zimbabwe. Social groups like the elite and parts of the Zimbabwean middle-class have a financial and geographical advantage, causing the ‘digital divide’. These groups have access to news, are able to follow political developments and seem to be more informed than the rural, poorer parts of the country. As for the literature discussed in the beginning of this chapter, the idea of ‘a citizen-user as driver of democratic innovation through a self-actualized network’ has proven not to be applicable to Zimbabwean contexts, as unequal access to digital networks ultimately prevent processes of significant democratization.

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<sup>36</sup> Zimbabwe Democracy Institute, ‘Internet Freedom Challenges in Rural Areas: Digital Discrimination’, ii-12. <http://www.zimsentinel.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Internet-Freedom-Challenges-In-Rural-Areas.pdf> (Accessed on May 17, 2019).

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 1.

<sup>38</sup> LTE’s are a form of wireless broadband communications for mobile devices.

<sup>39</sup> Zimbabwe Democracy Institute, ‘Internet Freedom’, 5.

However, some potential recommendations to bridge the divide can be presented here. The ‘ZDI’-report concludes “*the country’s political, legal and socio-economic environment is currently a challenge to the enjoyment of internet freedoms by the people residing [in Zimbabwe].*”<sup>40</sup> In order for this to change, ZDI proposes involving Zimbabwean government.<sup>41</sup> Yet, other players should be kept in mind too. Per example, NGO’s and Human Rights-organizations can be used to lobby between governments and to campaign for better communication-infrastructure. In addition, journalists and civil society should be involved by creating platforms discussing issues such as data-prices and brining global awareness to the economic issues the country is facing, mostly with its currency. Lastly, it could be proposed that the donating of digital devices and the educating of peoples in rural areas on the advantages of internet and on the usage of social media could help further close the digital gap in Zimbabwe’s society.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>42</sup> Zimbabwe Democracy Institute, ‘Internet Freedom’, 11.

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### Chapter Three: Zimbabwean Political Society

This chapter examines Zimbabwean political society, regarding it as one of the reasons ‘democratization via social media’ seems to be failing. It starts by giving a historical overview of the country’s political history, and briefly discusses the political context today. It then gives a summary of literature analyzing the reasons why Zimbabweans so far are failing to change their oppressive regime. To support this perception, an analysis of the protests in January 2019 will be used as an example. Observations and fieldwork-notes will be presented throughout the paragraphs. The chapter also concentrates on the ways Zimbabwe’s regime has ‘adapted’ to using social media for their own purposes, as I argue that social media is now increasingly becoming an effective tool for the Zimbabwean government to shape the contours of public discussion and to undermine its opposition.<sup>43</sup>

#### *Zimbabwean Politics: A Historical Overview*

To understand Zimbabwe’s current political society, one must first examine its history. Under British rule since 1895, the country was called ‘Rhodesia’. Zimbabwe officially attained independence on April 18 in 1980, concluding a period of war that had been fought between the ‘Zimbabwean African National Liberation Army’ (ZANLA) -led by Robert Mugabe, and the Rhodesian government - led by Ian Smith. Ian Smith was prime minister of Southern-Rhodesia and had already rejected a possible Zimbabwean independence in 1964.<sup>44</sup> Instead, Smith introduced the ‘Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) in the following year, stating that ‘the black majority rule’ was no longer permitted and that Rhodesia would become an independent sovereign state.<sup>45</sup> With no European or African countries recognizing his state however, Smith saw himself forced to negotiate with Zimbabwean leaders Robert

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<sup>43</sup> S. Gunitsky, ‘Corrupting the Cyber-Commons: Social Media as a Tool of Autocratic Stability’, *American Political Science Association Cambridge* (2015), 42-54.

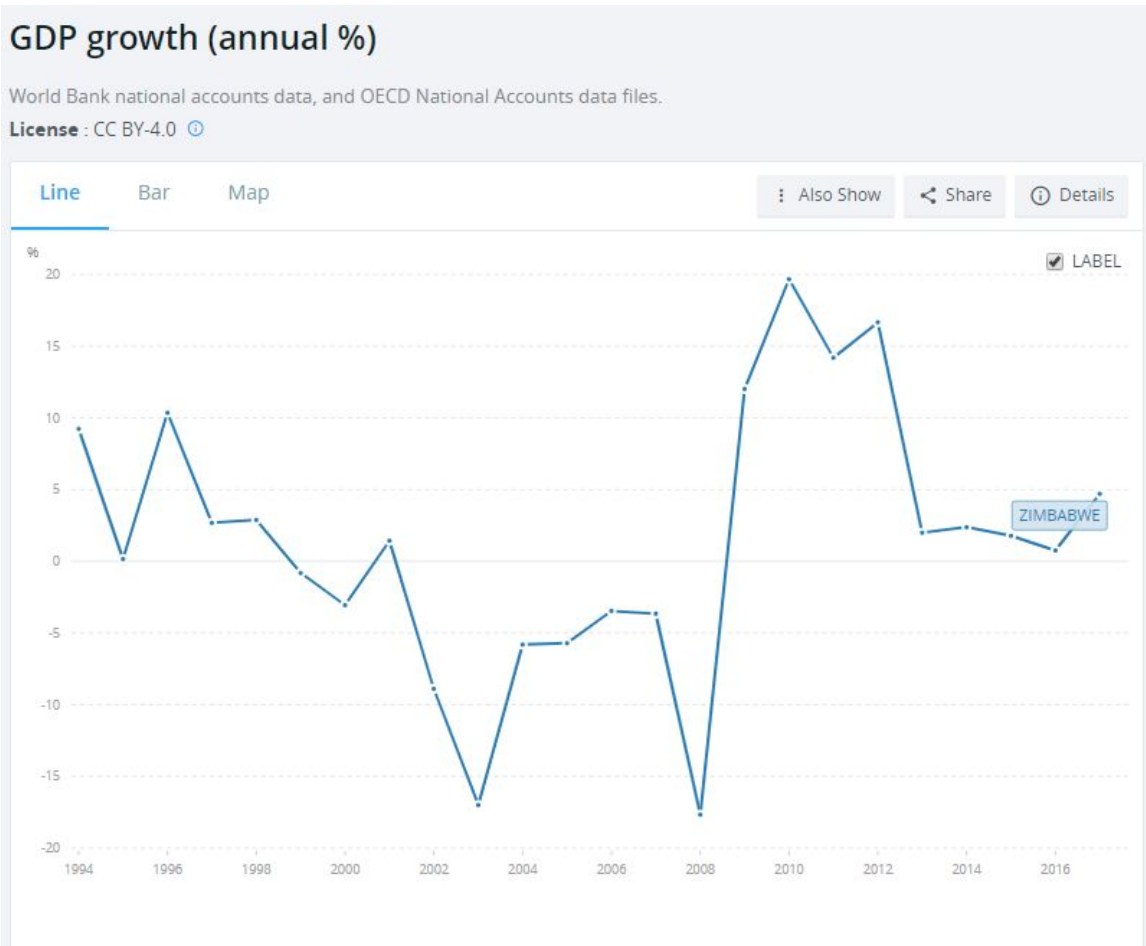
<sup>44</sup> B. Mutsvairo, ‘Power and Participatory Politics in the Digital Age: Probing the use of New Media Technologies in Railroading Political Changes in Zimbabwe’, Leiden (2013).

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, 33.



Mugabe (ZANU) and Joshua Nkomo (ZAPU). This led to the ‘Lancaster House Agreement of 1979’, in which Zimbabwe’s independence was shaped and finalized. One of the agreements made was that the new Zimbabwean government would be justified in taking back land possessed by white farmers – an act called ‘The Land Acquisition Act’ (‘LAA’).

According to Bruce Mutsvairo, “to understand Zimbabwe’s political problems, one has to look at the way the country handled the battle for land ownership in the aftermath of the [Lancaster] conference. The majority of Blacks, who had been victims of the racial colonial past and whose fertile land had been forcibly taken by the new White arrivals from Britain, saw Mugabe’s ascension to power in the 1980 as a sign that they for the first time would enjoy the economic advantages of the nation’s rural wealth. They were wrong.”<sup>46</sup>



The ‘LAA’ had severe consequences. Although the act stated that the Zimbabwean government had the right to purchase lands from white farmers, they did not have the funds to do so. In the meantime, ZANU-veterans who had fought in the Rhodesian war and had been promised land as reward by Mugabe, became impatient and started attacking the white-owned

<sup>46</sup> B. Mutsvairo, ‘Power and Participatory Politics’, 34.

farms. Farmers were killed or fled the country. Mugabe did not condemn the violent invasions.

Figure 4: Data World Bank - GDP annual growth in Zimbabwe in the period 1994-2016. Major drops can be seen around the time of the land invasions in 2000 and Zimbabwe's political-economic crisis in 2008.

Instead, he issued the 'Land Reform and Resettlement Program Phase II'. Between 1998 and 2000, white-farms were nationalized and then distributed under members of Mugabe's party, war-veterans and his loyal supporters. These new owners however, did not have the skills or the knowledge to work the lands they had received, and farm output dropped significantly. Economic decline and inflation followed (Figure 4).

### *A 37-year rule: Robert Mugabe*

Mugabe became a controversial figure after the land reforms in early 2000. In the eyes of black Zimbabweans, he was seen as a liberation war-hero who empowered the country. White farmers and the West saw him seen as a failed authoritarian ruler and a war criminal. In 1980, Mugabe had become prime minister of a newly independent Zimbabwe. In the first years of his office, Mugabe and his ZANU-government committed themselves to ensuring free healthcare and education for Zimbabweans. The country became known for having one of the highest literacy-rates in the world. After the nationalization of farms in 2000, a decade of inflation and crisis followed. Corruption and mismanagement from ZANU-PF led to an inflation-crisis in 2006. Opposition party 'Movement for Democratic Change (MDC)' of Morgan Tsvangirai started gaining ground around this time, but faced strong resistance from Mugabe and his party. After an intervention of South-Africa's 'SADC', it was decided in 2008 that MDC and ZANU-PF would hold power together. Zimbabwe's economy recovered slightly, as the hyperinflation-issue was 'solved' by switching to the US-dollar. In 2013, elections were held and Mugabe won with 60% of the votes. MDC claimed that the polls were rigged.<sup>47</sup>

Mugabe's time in office has also been marked by controversy. Human-rights activists claim Mugabe and his party were responsible for the 'Gukurahundi-killings'<sup>48</sup>, a conflict in

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<sup>47</sup> 'Timeline: Mugabe's life and career in politics', <https://www.enca.com/africa/mugabes-life-and-career-in-politics> (Accessed on May 21, 2019).

<sup>48</sup> I will not go in much detail about this period in the context of this thesis, but the 'Gukurahundi-conflict' is and remains an important aspect of Zimbabwe's history. The following link provides more information for those who are interested: <https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-gukurahundi-43923>.



the early 1980's where many anti-Mugabe people from a tribe called the 'Ndebele' were killed.<sup>49</sup> Mugabe also received international backlash for his homophobic rants and his anti-LGBT laws in Zimbabwe. This evoked further criticism and sanctions by the West. In a speech addressing the United Nations over these sanctions, Mugabe stated: “(...) *In that regard, we reject the politicization of this important issue and the application of double standards to victimize those who dare think and act independently of the self-anointed prefects of our time. We equally reject attempts to prescribe "new rights" that are contrary to our values, norms, traditions, and beliefs. We are not gays! Cooperation and respect for each other will advance the cause of human rights worldwide. Confrontation, vilification, and double-standards will not.*”<sup>50</sup>

Mugabe's lavish personal spending whilst the country itself was impoverished has been an additional reason of (international) criticism. Mugabe's wife Grace Mugabe- who has mockingly been dubbed 'Gucci Grace'- has further reinforced this image, as she and her sons are said to have spent billions of USD on real estate, parties and clothes over the course of Mugabe's presidency.<sup>51</sup>

#### *The Coup and a New President for Zimbabwe*

*“In the end, it was the human weaknesses that proved the undoing of the world's oldest dictator. Arrogance, pride, stubbornness and obsessive family loyalty – a mundane collection of ordinary frailties, but they were enough to bring down a ruler who had dominated Zimbabwe for 37 years.”*<sup>52</sup> So speaks reporter Geoffrey York in 2017, who was then covering the coup unfolding within Zimbabwe's top political-circles. Mugabe had become old. His wife Grace, who had been presented as a potential successor, was unpopular. A fraction within ZANU-PF took place, and Emmerson Mnangagwa was put forward by the party as a

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<sup>49</sup> B. Mutsvairo, 'Power and Participatory Politics', 35.

<sup>50</sup> M. Fisher, 'Why Mugabe just shouted "We are not gays" in his UN-speech', VOX. <https://www.vox.com/2015/9/28/9411391/why-robert-mugabe-just-shouted-we-are-not-gays-in-his-un-speech> (Accessed on May 21, 2019).

<sup>51</sup> The Guardian, 'Robert Mugabe's vast wealth exposed by lavish homes and decadent ways', <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/nov/17/robert-grace-mugabe-missing-millions-money-zimbabwe> (Accessed on May 21, 2019).

<sup>52</sup> G. York, 'Zimbabwe's clean slate: What brought Mugabe down, and why he didn't see it coming', *The Globe and Mail*, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/globe-in-zimbabwe-robert-mugabe-era-ends/article37015276/> (Accessed on May 21, 2019).

more suitable candidate for presidency.<sup>53</sup> In response, Robert Mugabe fired him on November 6, 2017. This did not have the desirable effect however, as Mnangagwa was able to mobilize support under the Zimbabwean army to stage a coup d'état. On November 17, tanks rolled into Harare and surrounded Mugabe in his residency. On the 21<sup>st</sup> of November, Robert Mugabe officially announced his resignation.<sup>54</sup>

Zimbabweans greeted Mugabe's step down with great enthusiasm. However, not much seems to have changed for the better after the 2017 coup – something the outbreak of the January-protests in 2019 illustrated. Mnangagwa has not brought change and Zimbabweans are still unhappy, oppressed and scared. Just after the protests happened, I attended the funeral of Zimbabwean singer Oliver 'Tuku' Mtukudzi. Whilst there, I personally witnessed the uneasy relationship Zimbabweans seem to have with their current political leaders.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Before his presidency, Mnangagwa fulfilled some significant roles under Mugabe's regime. In his time as minister of Public Safety, the Gukurahundi-killings took place. Mnangagwa accused the army of the conflict, yet it seems he was the one giving the orders. His built a reputation of being ruthless and cunning, which earned him the nickname 'The Crocodile'. Mnangagwa also played a big role in the 2008-elections, after which he became minister of Defense, minister of Justice and later vice-president.

<sup>54</sup> G. York, 'Zimbabwe's clean slate: What brought Mugabe down'.

<sup>55</sup> My blogs are archived on <http://innovativeresearchmethods.org/author/linde-rozemeijer94/>.

Finally, the journalists were also pushed into the garden and a line of police cars entered the street. Then two black cars, with soldiers on foot running next to them. The soldiers entered the garden, positioning themselves in half-a-moon, facing the crowd. Their big guns were loaded. I was surrounded by soldiers. Across the road, more soldiers were posted on the first floor of a half-built house, closely watching us. The president stepped out, greeting a few officials but showing little emotion. He quickly walked into the house and his speech was broadcasted from within. He made some jokes, only a small portion of the crowd outside laughed. After half an hour of waiting – watching soldiers and security forces in suits nervously walking up and down the garden – the president came out of the house, stepped into his car and sped off. The moment he was gone, the crowd relaxed; I myself was very relieved too. All I wanted to do was find my driver and go home. For me, the most memorable part of that afternoon was not the way in which Tuku was commemorated or the presence of the many peoples, it was the *nearly palpable* way the atmosphere changed for the worse when Mnangagwa and his entourage arrived.

(Blog entry on January 25, 2019 in Harare)

### *The Power of Social Networking Sites: Ensuing Democratic Change or Autocratic Stability?*

The tumultuous political history of Zimbabwe and its current oppressive climate undoubtedly form challenges for the countries' citizens. In addressing the role of social media (and its potentials) in these challenges, it is important to note that scholars have approached this issue from various perspectives. In these perspectives, the question of 'how social media can help Zimbabweans change their oppressed political surroundings' stands central.

For Rodwell Makombe and GT Agbede, the answer to this question lies in the ways social media can be used as a tool to challenge power. In their research on the role of 'memes'<sup>56</sup> in the downfall of Robert Mugabe, they conclude that "*memes are an effective means through which ordinary people can "resist" oppressive regimes. (...) Meme creation as a form of "resistance" may not have the same effect as direct, oppositional resistance; however, it is effective for those, particularly ordinary people, who wish to challenge the*

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<sup>56</sup> A meme is an image or video that is spread through the internet and is often humorous of nature.

*system without disclosing their identity and putting themselves at risk. Since internet memes represent a piece of the world as perceived by the meme-producer, they are a powerful means by which ordinary people resist oppression. In view of this, memes can be conceptualized as couriers of ordinary people's views and concerns.*"<sup>57</sup>

Wendy Willems argues that it is not only SNS that can be used to demand political change; it is also the adaptation of mobile phones. She mentions a case of post-apartheid movements in South Africa, concluding that "(...) while post-apartheid social movements (...) often adopted similar media strategies to their predecessors, the Internet and cellphones publicized their struggles to broader, international audiences and enabled the movements to communicate more frequently with their members and constituencies."<sup>58</sup>

In the case of the main opposition-movement in Zimbabwe, the 'MDC', usage of SNS could also help the organization and creation of political change. One could argue that social media like the 'MDC' Facebook-page or a MDC-WhatsApp group play a role in informing Zimbabweans and creating online-communities. Additionally, SNS could form a platform where opposition-supporters can communicate and organize potential mobilization. In this case, SNS would create a 'democratized online-space'. This topic will be elaborated further in 'Chapter 4: Online and Offline'.

However, it is not only 'the peoples' who are discovering the potential powers of social media. SNS have increasingly become an effective tool in the hands of autocratic regimes, as "it can be argued that the Internet is likely to construct a non-open society that shares similarities to the Orwellian social structure (Orwell 1949), by enabling new surveillance methods that empower both governmental agencies and corporations to constantly watch and monitor the citizens."<sup>59</sup> In addition, non-democratic regimes are starting to use SNS to suppress online discourse, to shape contours of public discussion and to undermine the opposition.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> R. Makombe & G. Agbede, 'Challenging power through social media: a review of selected memes of Robert Mugabe's fall', *Communicare* 35:2 (2016), 39 -54.

<sup>58</sup> W. Willems, Willems, 'Social movement media, post-apartheid (South Africa)'. In: *Downing, John D. H., (ed.) Encyclopedia of social movement media.* (2011) Sage, London, UK, pp. 492-495.

<sup>59</sup> K. Kyriakopoulou, 'Authoritarian States', 19.

<sup>60</sup> S. Gunitsky, 'Corrupting the Cyber-Commons', 42.

In his research on the role of SNS in regime-durability, Seva Gunitsky presents four mechanisms that link social media to what he calls ‘*autocratic resilience*’, namely; *counter mobilization, elite coordination, preference divulgence and discourse framing*.<sup>61</sup> I argue these four mechanisms are also at play in the reaction of the Zimbabwean government to the January-protests.

As for counter mobilization, the reaction of the Zimbabwean government was incredibly swift. Just a few hours after the protests that broke out on the 14<sup>th</sup> of January, social media was shut off. People started using VPN’s to bypass the blockage. Again, the Zimbabwean government noticed nearly immediately and consequently shut down the internet in the country. This decision was effective, as it cut people off from receiving news and organizing themselves to protest. The immediate reaction also exposes the fact that the Zimbabwean government is indeed monitoring its citizens. Another counter-mobilization strategy was observed in the immediate deployment of army and police; tanks and personnel were heavily present in the streets of Harare and Bulawayo. Their violent beat-downs on

“In the days after the internet-shutdown, I noticed a change. People became less outspoken than they had been in the past days during the protests. We do not know if the protests are still going on, as no news is spread via WhatsApp or Twitter. The streets of Harare are empty; it is very weird to see. Life seems to have come to a halt. Newspapers are publishing too slowly, everybody is inside their houses; waiting for news. Markets and shops are closed against looting – even the supermarkets. Army tanks and police officers on every street corner. “

(Harare, January 22nd 2019 – Personal Notes)

protesters scared people into staying in their homes, thus leading to the protests dying down relatively quick.

As for ‘elite coordination’ and ‘preference indulgence’, Gunitsky explains the following: (...) *like flawed elections, social media acts as a reliable and relatively costless tool for gauging and pre-empting public grievances, which otherwise remain hidden or falsified, and in doing so prevents them from escalating into active protests. The informational role of social media*

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<sup>61</sup> S. Gunitsky, ‘Corrupting the Cyber-Commons’, 42.

also helps resolve the principal-agent problem inherent in coordinating the interests of central and local elites. Operating in an opaque institutional environment, local elites have incentives to misrepresent regime efficiency and popularity to central authorities, and social media offers a way to resolve this information asymmetry by allowing citizens to call attention to local problems. The informational role of social media thus also operates through two mechanisms—preference divulgence of public grievances and elite coordination within the governing apparatus.”<sup>62</sup> The protests in Zimbabwe did escalate into unrests on the ground. However, because of the effective counter mobilization of government, they also ended quite soon. After the internet was turned on again, people indeed took to social media to reflect on the tumultuous past days. Remarkably, most of the reflections were humorous of nature. For example, the hashtag ‘#WhileTheInternetWasOff’ trended on Twitter. Users like ‘@KazembeJnr’ and ‘@Dardzamsona’ posted light-hearted messages such as “[#WhileTheInternetWasOff](#) I discovered that my battery can last more than 72 hours.” and “[#WhileTheInternetWasOff](#) I realized that you need 1257 licks to finish a Stumbo lollipop”.<sup>63</sup>

The presence of the Zimbabwean state was also noticeable in the aftermath of the protests. In the days following the unrests, the situation slowly died down. Life was returning to normal; the streets were no longer empty, shops were open and people were picking up their daily routines. The fuel queues were gone, as prices had gone up so much many Zimbabweans could not afford to fill up their cars anymore. Due to the internet-shutdown, little information about what had happened during the protests was coming through. It was only in the days and weeks after that it became somewhat clear what had ensued. Many people were missing - lost in the chaos of the unrests or reportedly kidnapped by soldiers. The crackdown on protesters had also been extreme. Participants of the protests were put in jail, some of them still children. The ZANU PF secret service was reportedly hunting down members of the opposition, who were forced to go into hiding. Zimbabweans were systematically taken out of their houses and severely beaten.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> S. Gunitsky, ‘Corrupting the Cyber-Commons’, 43.

<sup>63</sup> <https://twitter.com/search?q=%23whiletheinternetwasoff&src=typd> (Accessed on May 22, 2019).

<sup>64</sup> A ‘SkyNews’-report was published on the events that happened during the January-protests. A video shows a man on the streets being put in handcuffs after being arrested by a police officer, a soldier and a secret agent in civilian clothes. Then the man gestures that his handcuffs are too tight, the agent hits him hard in the face. Later in the video, the man is put in the grass and hit several times by the police officer and the secret agent. People see it happening, nobody intervenes. The video can be found here: <https://news.sky.com/video/security-officials-seen-beating-man-in-zimbabwe-11619874>.

The last mechanism of ‘discourse framing’ can be found in the way the Zimbabwean government framed the nature and outcome of the protests. This was mainly done via the ‘Zimbabwe Broadcasting Company (ZBC)’ and via ZBC-News, both of them state-owned. The discourse-strategy went as followed. Right after the internet was shut down, ZBC television stations and radio stations started broadcasting state-favorable messages. At first, no coverage of the protests was done. After a day or two, the news concentrated on the damage that had been done to public property by ‘hooligan-protesters’.<sup>65</sup> Finally, attention was put on the ways these protesters would be punished with high jail-sentences. This approach to framing a different discourse, namely that of blaming the protesters, proved effective; many Zimbabweans were now too fearful of police-beatings and jail time to protest again soon.

Summarizing, the January-protests had little effect on Zimbabwe’s socio-political society due to the nature of its political regime and autocratic resilience. By quickly shutting down the internet, the regime successfully prevented further mobilization, organization and outcome of information. ‘The four mechanisms of autocratic resilience’ were present throughout and after the protests, proving the Zimbabwean government has discovered the powers of using social media for their own purposes. In combination with a set of repressive media-laws<sup>66</sup>, Zimbabwe’s political space seems to be further negatively impacted. A potential for democratizing the country via social media seems far away.

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<sup>65</sup> A clear example of this ‘alternative discourse framing’ can be found in an article published by ‘The Herald’, a state-owned newspaper. Link: <https://www.herald.co.zw/zim-ignores-protest-push/> (Accessed on May 22, 2019).

<sup>66</sup> B. Mutsvairo, ‘Power and Participatory Politics’, 36.

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## Chapter Four: Online and Offline

This chapter focusses on the relation between ‘the online’ and ‘the offline’. It starts with a literary review in which the potential of ‘online mobilization leading to offline protests’ stands central. I consequently argue for a more practical approach of viewing ‘the online’ and ‘the offline’ in the context of Zimbabwe’s socio-political society. I will then introduce the term ‘virtual space’ and will attempt to explain that this space cannot be viewed as ‘democratic’ or ‘democratizing’ in the case of Zimbabwe, as its online virtual space is in fact decreasing. Lastly, I will discuss my view on the theory of a ‘technology and society-debate’, applying it to Zimbabwe. Concluding the chapter, I will argue that a successful ‘online’ does not necessarily lead to a successful ‘offline’ and that it is partly due to this discrepancy, that the potential of reaching democratization via social media in Zimbabwe so far, has been held back. Additional fieldwork-notes will be presented throughout the chapter; including the results of a short survey I conducted with NewsDay, in which we asked users on Facebook how they themselves viewed the road to (online and offline) democratization in Zimbabwe.

In their extensive research on 14 million tweets and data of 16 countries, Zachary C. Steinert-Threlkeld et al. discuss the correlation of online SNS and the ‘offline’ Arab Spring. They find that “(...) *increased coordination of messages on Twitter using specific hashtags is associated with increased protests the following day.*”<sup>67</sup> Their results also show “*that traditional actors like the media and elites are not driving the results. These results indicate social media activity correlates with subsequent large-scale decentralized coordination of protests, with important implications for the future balance of power between citizens and their states.*”<sup>68</sup> The Arab Spring is not the only case study in which ‘the online’ has led to protests and actions on the ground. In Chili, research was recently done on youth protests and social media-usage in environmental- and educational-issues. The study concludes the following; “(...) *there is a positive relationship between the use of both Facebook and Twitter and participation in student demonstrations and street marches (...). Controlling for ideology, political interest, social capital and traditional media, people with an active account in these online media are more likely to protest.*”<sup>69</sup> The same trend can be observed in Singapore,

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<sup>67</sup> Z.C. Steinert-Threlkeld et al., ‘Online Social Networks and Offline Protest’, *EPJ Data Science* 4:19 (2011), 1-9.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>69</sup> A. Scherman et al., ‘Student and Environmental Protests in Chile: The Role of Social Media’, *Politics* 35:2 (2015), 151-171.



where the ‘White Paper-protests’ broke out in January 2013. Protesting high housing-prices and immigration-policies, frustrated Singaporeans mobilized and organized their protests via SNS.<sup>70</sup> The research shows “(...) *how social media can serve to mobilize thousands to participate in a protest when organizers and individuals sufficiently engage the motivation and agency frames. It almost appears that so long as there are enough postings amplifying collective efficacy, benefits of participation and participation numbers, turnout at a protest can expect to be successful.*”<sup>71</sup>

Summarizing, the literature above emphasizes the mobilizing, decentralizing and organizing role of ‘the online’, which in all three studies also leads to offline-action. One can consequently argue that if these processes or the results of the protests are successful, a form of democratization has been achieved. Before examining if this can also be said for Zimbabwe, the term ‘virtual space’ needs to be introduced. This online-space can be defined as “*an online environment in which participants interact*” or as “*the world that is created as a result of digitalization and is not real. There are no geographical boundaries in this world and individuals can interact with other individuals without passing any physical themes and with the identity they desire.*”<sup>72</sup> The theory of virtual space used in the context of this thesis centers on the conception that the internet creates a new space for Zimbabweans to communicate, influence and educate themselves and each other. Additionally, this virtual space could potentially form a zone for organization and mobilization to occur. Keeping the basic principles of ‘democracy’ in mind – equality<sup>73</sup> and liberty – one can argue that the creation of a virtual space in Zimbabwe and the freedom to discuss all possible subjects in and through this space can be viewed as a form of democratization. Further on in this chapter however, I will argue that this is currently not the case for Zimbabwe.

Having discussed the favorable effects of social media on political regimes in the Arabia, Asia and South America, it must be noted that these processes and their ‘successes’ do not automatically apply to Zimbabwe. Already discussed in Chapter Two and Three, this can be explained through the country’s different history, political framework and society.

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<sup>70</sup> D. Goh & N. Pang, ‘Protesting the Singapore-Government: The Role of Collective Action Frames in Social Media Mobilization’, *International Communication Association Annual Conference* (2014).

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, 18.

<sup>72</sup> Both definitions derived from IGI Global, via <https://www.igi-global.com/dictionary/virtual-space/31800> (Accessed on May 29, 2019).

<sup>73</sup> As for the principle of equality, ‘Chapter Two: The Digital Divide’ has already shown that many Zimbabweans do not have equal access to virtual space via Internet.

Thus in the case of Zimbabwe, it is my opinion that we must also view the relation of ‘the online/offline’ and the usage of virtual space from a different perspective: that of practicality. In the concept of virtual space a certain utopian undertone can be observed, as it highlights the possibilities of individuals limitlessly producing, transferring and using information.<sup>74</sup> It is my impression that, in the current socio-political situation of Zimbabwe, the emphasis must be put more on the practical usage of virtual space than on a theoretical one. In Zimbabwe, everyday life is becoming increasingly difficult. Issues like corruption, mismanagement and Zimbabwe’s current economic situation result in troubles accessing basic commodities. The output of fuel, transport and cash are unreliable, so Zimbabweans use social media and its contacts to get these supplies. Thus, social media is in this case not to converse and organize; it is used to survive - making its adaptation more practical-oriented.

In addition to this more practical perspective on virtual space, the effectivity of organizing protests online can be questioned, again using the protests of January 2019 as an example. Although the protests seemed to have been organized via WhatsApp and ‘the online’ indeed had a mobilizing effect, the protests cannot be deemed a success. This is partly due to a certain disconnect between online issues and offline expectations and a ‘willingness’ to participate in offline-protests.<sup>75</sup> The disconnect between ‘the online’ and ‘the offline’ can be found in the nature of the originally planned ‘National Stay-Away’ and the offline actions and outcome of the protests. Already mentioned in the introductory chapter, the main issues of discontent under protesters were the price-hikes in basic commodities and in fuel. To protest these issues, an online campaign was started in which people were urged to stay away from work for a few days, beginning on the 14<sup>th</sup> of January. The nature of this strike was peaceful and passive. The actual outcome however, was not. People started to mobilize on the streets and block roads as the day began, first in Bulawayo. The news of these small upheavals then spread, via Twitter and WhatsApp, to Harare – were the first upheavals started in the slums surrounding the city-center. Soon, the crowds grew bigger and restless. Stones were thrown at passing government-owned busses. In the following hours, the protests grew more violent as the busses and cars were set on fire and police buildings were attacked. The violence reached its peak as police and army were deployed, both using teargas and

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<sup>74</sup> W. Afzal, ‘Virtual Space’, *Management of Information Organizations*, (2012).

<sup>75</sup> S. Mantingwina, ‘Social Media Communicative Action and the Interplay with National Security: The Case of Facebook and Political Participation in Zimbabwe’, *African Journalism Studies*, 39:1 (2018), 48-68.

real-ammunition to suppress the unrests. The swift and aggressive deployment of police and army was effective. The protests died down at the end of the day and rendered Zimbabweans inside for the following week. The online idea of a ‘stay-away’ to peacefully protest the Zimbabwean government had turned into un-organized offline violence. In addition to this disconnect, a ‘willingness’ to participate in offline protests must also be considered. ‘Why Zimbabweans Won’t Rebel’ by Eldred Masunungure shows that Zimbabwean citizens are often unwilling to engage in offline-activities that risk a clash with authorities.<sup>76</sup> In the case of the January-protests in Harare, most protesters came from the slums around the city-center. One can possibly argue that their situation was most dire, so the threshold of participating in the protests was maybe lower than other groups of Zimbabwean society. Indeed, no persons in my direct surroundings during my stay in Zimbabwe - my host family, NewsDay or acquaintances - had participated in the protests on the streets. They remained at home. In the end, it seems that the use of social media in political participation in Zimbabwe – as in the case of the January-protests – “has largely failed to inspire tangible forms of political outcomes”<sup>77</sup> It can thus be argued that online-action might then be better viewed, as Evgeny Morozov calls it, as ‘slacktivism’.<sup>78</sup> In his words, the term can be defined as “an apt term to describe feel-good online activism that has zero political or social impact. It gives those who participate in “slacktivist” campaigns an illusion of having a meaningful impact on the world without demanding anything more than joining a Facebook group.”<sup>79</sup> In my opinion, the term must be applied to the case of Zimbabwe with a definite nuance, but I am of the assumption that social media in current Zimbabwe does not have the power to change the country’s political outcome.

A second theory that plays a role the online-offline dynamic in Zimbabwe is that of a ‘technology-society’ debate. The first aspect of this debate relates to the role of social media in Zimbabwe’s society. The debate centers on the relation between society and technology, which I have argued is of a more practical nature. Zimbabweans use social media as a tool to survive, as the country’s current society is lacking in reliable institutions. The second aspect

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<sup>76</sup> E. Masunungure, ‘Why Zimbabwean’s Won’t Rebel: Part 1’, Kubutana.Net, [http://archive.kubatana.net/html/archive/opin/060922em.asp?sector=LAB&year=2006&range\\_start=31](http://archive.kubatana.net/html/archive/opin/060922em.asp?sector=LAB&year=2006&range_start=31) (Accessed on June 1, 2019).

<sup>77</sup> S. Matingwina, ‘Social Media Communicative Action’, 61.

<sup>78</sup> E. Morozov, ‘The Brave New World of Slacktivism’, FP (2009) , <https://foreignpolicy.com/2009/05/19/the-brave-new-world-of-slacktivism/> (Accessed on June 1, 2019).

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

to this theory concentrates on the value of technology in societies. In the framework of this thesis, this is the value of SNS in Zimbabwe's socio-political society. As I have already concluded above, it seems that social media as a tool for political participation and change is not effective.

Returning to the concept of 'virtual space' in Zimbabwe, I have made the following two observations regarding its democratizing potentials. First, the online virtual space in Zimbabwe is decreasing. Instead of the internet creating an open space in which (anonymous) opinions can be shared, numerous examples are found of arrests happening in Zimbabwe after a critical Twitter-post or WhatsApp-message. The arrests vary from journalists who have published regime-critical articles<sup>80</sup> to online-activists.<sup>81</sup> Secondly, free-expression on SNS in Zimbabwe is becoming increasingly regulated by strict social media-laws. The 'Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA)', the 'Broadcasting Services Act (BSA)', the 'Censorship and Entertainment Controls Act (CECA)' and the 'Official Secrets Act (OSA)' all give the Zimbabwean government the right to monitor and regulate Zimbabwe's virtual space.<sup>82</sup>

Having discussed the lack of impact social media seems to have on political change in Zimbabwe, it is interesting to see how Zimbabweans themselves see the road to 'democratization' of the country's political society. The following inquiry was conducted via NewsDay's Facebook-page. The article is called '*Solutions to Zim-crisis: Zimbo's speak out*' and the question that was posted was '*What do you think will solve the problems of the country of Zimbabwe?*'<sup>83</sup> Most of the comments talk about the necessity of removing ZANU-PP and about the importance of listening to 'the people'. One comment however, discusses the following: "*The challenges facing Zimbabwe are becoming more and more difficult to solve every day. A country is made out of people which makes it a nation. We talk*

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<sup>80</sup> A list of journalists that have been arrested by the Zimbabwean government, legally or illegally. List published by MISA-Zimbabwe. <http://zimbabwe.misa.org/media-violations-victories/detained/> (Accessed on June 1, 2019).

<sup>81</sup> 'Activist O'Donovan charged for attempting to overthrow Zimbabwean government using Twitter', *TechZim* (5 November 2017) <https://www.techzim.co.zw/2017/11/odonovan-charged-overthrow-zimbabwean-government-twitter/> (Accessed on June 1, 2019).

<sup>82</sup> MISA-Zimbabwe, 'Media Regulation', *MISA-ZIM*, <http://zimbabwe.misa.org/issues-we-address/media-regulation/> (Accessed on June 1, 2019).

<sup>83</sup> L. Rozemeijer & R. Magweta, 'Solutions to the Zim-crisis: Zimbo's speak out', *NewsDay* (January 11, 2019), <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2019/01/solutions-to-zim-crisis-zimbos-speak-out/> (Accessed on June 1, 2019).

*so much of how Mugabe and his Zanu have destroyed the economy, but the reality is that it goes further than this. Actually, the greatest thing they have destroyed in the mindset of the people. It is this mindset that builds a nation. [To rebuild this mindset is to rebuild the nation.]”<sup>84</sup>* I wanted to present this comment here as it discards the concepts of online/offline-protests, of politics and of ZANU-PF. It just focusses on a possible way forward for Zimbabwe, to which I will later add in Chapter 6. The entire inquiry can be found on the NewsDay-webpage or via the referenced link.

In this chapter I have brought forward the argument that a certain disconnect between ‘the online’ and ‘the offline’ can be viewed as one of the reasons that democratization via SNS has not yet happened in Zimbabwe’s current socio-political society. Additional concepts as ‘willingness’ to participate in offline-protests and a discrepancy between the online stay-away and the offline protests in January 2019 were also explained through this disconnect. The chapter also discusses the idea of virtual space and argues that this space is decreasing due to state-monitoring and invasive media-laws. The argument is made that SNS in Zimbabwe must be viewed as more practically oriented and that - in the framework of a technology-society debate - social media in Zimbabwe is used as a ‘tool’ for everyday-life. The chapter concludes that both core-aspects of ‘democratization’ (liberty and equality) are not currently present in Zimbabwe, be it in the online world or in the offline one.

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid, user @Samson Mutyavaviri.

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## Chapter Five: The Zimbabwean Media-Landscape

The last analytic chapter of this thesis focusses on the context of Zimbabwe's media-landscape. What does this media landscape look like and how is its news constructed? What do Zimbabwean citizens read and how does this news influence their perception of Zimbabwean socio-political society? These questions stand central as I view the country's media-landscape as the final reason why democratization via SNS has not successfully happened yet. It can be argued that the influence of state-owned newspapers and news-stations, propaganda and a certain lack of factors regarding 'qualitative journalism' create a framework in Zimbabwe in which citizens do not know what to believe and on what to base their facts. Consequently, I argue that social media does not fill this 'gap' in Zimbabwean society and that this context of 'misinformation' holds back potential processes of democratization. The chapter gives examples of the differences in news coverage by Zimbabwean newspapers, as I present primary data in the form of news-articles surrounding the January-protests - illustrating the politically colored contrasts. As their arguments partly overlap with mine, the studies of Chris Paterson<sup>85</sup> and Hayes Mawindi Mabweazara<sup>86</sup> on the influence of social media on journalism in Zimbabwe stand somewhat central in this chapter - as both authors warn for the downfalls of SNS-journalism. Adding to their findings, this chapter builds up to the conclusion that aspects like the quality and biasedness of news, relying heavily on social media for information, and propaganda lead to misinformation under Zimbabwean citizens. This negatively effects the formation of a strong Zimbabwean civil

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<sup>85</sup> C. Paterson, 'Journalism and Social Media in the African Context', *Ecquid Novi: African Journalism Studies* 34:1 (2013), 1-6.

<sup>86</sup> H.M. Mabweazara, 'New Technologies and Print Journalism Practice in Zimbabwe: An Ethnographic Study', (2010), 1-273.

society and exposes the contradictions between the country's democratic and authoritarian impulses.

An existing body of literature shows that the interplay between social media and journalism in relation to civil society includes several positive aspects. In addition to its audience being bigger, it can be argued that news via social media reaches this audience quicker than printed newspapers. Social media thus *“offers an opportunity for journalists to reach beyond their typical source networks of elite or otherwise affiliated sources, as well as to build a personal brand and following and to disseminate information to their network.”*<sup>87</sup> Social media can also be seen as a slightly cheaper version to access news. Instead of buying a newspaper every day - with which one only accesses the views, ideas and translations of that particular brand – one can buy a data-bundle and, in theory, access every news site on the web. However, the arguments made in ‘Chapter Two: The Digital Divide’ have illustrated that in practice this does not apply to a majority of Zimbabweans.

The concept of ‘citizen journalism’ has also been hailed as an effective way of utilizing SNS in bottom-up, citizen-driven processes. ‘Citizen journalism’ *“(…) refers to a range of web-based practices whereby ‘ordinary’ users engage in journalistic practices. ‘Citizen journalism’ includes practices such as current affairs-based blogging, photo and video sharing, and posting eyewitness commentary on current events.”*<sup>88</sup> In the Zimbabwean case, Last Moyo’s findings have already been discussed in ‘Chapter Two: The Digital Divide’, in which he states that it is this *“(…) digitization [that] has occasioned new counter-hegemonic spaces and new forms of journalism that are deinstitutionalized and deprofessionalized (…)”*.<sup>89</sup>

There are downsides however, to the usage of social media in (citizen) journalism. Chris Paterson aptly discusses these negative effects in his research on ‘citizen journalism’ in the bigger context of Africa over recent years. He concludes the following regarding the process of using social media as a news source: *“(…) with useful new professional–amateur collaborations in news production there is also a concern about the tendency in poorly resourced newsrooms to rely heavily on information which appears to hang invitingly in*

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<sup>87</sup> N. Diakopoulos, M. De Choudhury & M. Naaman, ‘Finding and Accessing Social Media Information Sources in the Context of Journalism’, *Social Computing: Business and Beyond* (2012), 2451-2460.

<sup>88</sup> L. Goode, ‘Social News, Citizen Journalism and Democracy’, *New Media and Society* 11:8 (2009), 1287-1305.

<sup>89</sup> L. Moyo, ‘Blogging Down a Dictatorship’, 745.

*cyberspace, seeming to urge journalists to employ it as 'news', with little or no verification.*"<sup>90</sup>

In that same line of thought, Hayes Mawindi Mabweazara has conducted his research using an ethnographic approach to case studies of six Zimbabwean newsrooms.<sup>91</sup> He speaks of social media creating 'armchair journalists', who do not go into the field anymore to find and fact-check stories. Instead, they sit behind their desks and build their stories off the internet.<sup>92</sup>

In addition, he finds that there are "*ethical challenges of plagiarism and the failure to verify Internet content. These problems raised questions of news accuracy and credibility that newsrooms had to contend with. Although plagiarism has always been an ethical problem in Zimbabwean newsroom, newsroom observations confirmed that the Internet made plagiarism increasingly simple and tempting.*"<sup>93</sup> Mabweazara's findings correlate with experiences I had during my internship. Asking around about the workings of Zimbabwean newspapers, specifically NewsDay, I received the following answer from a source:

"The NewsDay-stories are greatly decaffeinated. There is no nuance like you pointed out... increasingly there are becoming rubble rousers ore than an informative institution. Predators at times... just get story from someone's twitter account and report it (verbatim) as headline news! Even their reportage on sport, it is weak. No thoughtful reporting and analysis. When in Harare, I now hardly buy a copy of it. I think they need a new genre of reporters... not knowing the composition of their current crop of reporters but I am tempted to think they have junior, straight from college reporters. But that is Zim these days... you live with mediocrity."

Regarding news coverage during the protests, I noted the following:

"Doing the live-blog and covering the protests on the 14<sup>th</sup> of February (before the internet shut-down), the thing that stood out most to me was how quickly information spread over Twitter and WhatsApp. It seems people desperately want the protests to grow, as they are rapidly sharing and covering incidents that were happening. Every few seconds a new tweet appears with another piece of information: "Roadblock near Mbare", "Bus on fire outside Bulawayo". I assume some of it is not based on facts, but people do not care. They just want things to change and they want quick 'news'. I found it interesting to notice how slow newspapers actually were and how fast social media was. When the newspapers were printed the following day with news about the protests, most of this information was already 'old'. It is also interesting to see how the newsroom [of NewsDay] uses Twitter as a news source. For the liveblog, a large part of the information came from tweets. The news is not checked. A few reporters were sent into the field, but most of the information was taken off social media." (January 15, 2019 in Harare – Personal notes)



The interplay between social media and journalism in Zimbabwe thus creates opportunities such as bigger networks and direct news, but comes with downfalls regarding ethics and quality of news as well. The emphasis however, must not only be on the role of social media but also on the nature of Zimbabwe's media-landscape. Mabweazara's encompassing description of this media-landscape reads: *"The Zimbabwean press today is characterized by a marked polarity between the state controlled 'public press' and the 'private press'. The former functions as a means to spread government policy and quash dissenting voices while the latter gives space to dissenting voices and subjects' government policy to heavy scrutiny and criticism. (...) '[t]he state media is unapologetic in its support for the ruling ZANU PF government while the private press seems to have signed a pact with the opposition to "hear no evil", "speak no evil" and "see no evil" regarding its affairs'. The conflicting editorial thrusts characterizing these two broad sectors of the press mirror the political and ideological power struggles pervading public discourse in Zimbabwe. As a result, 'news reporting has become too predictable and readers are forced to read all the newspapers available in order to get the truth'."*<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> H.M. Mabweazara, 'New Journalism and Print Technologies', 5.

- Waarmee wordt deze media gevoed? *Waarmee wordt media gevoed? Fake news en propaganda.aantonen*
- *Inhoud van news, wat lezen mensen eigenlijk? Voorbeeld geven van krantenartikelen? Kijken naar voorbeelden van ze op een goede manier invoegen in de tekst? Bijlage oid?*
- *Wat doet dit met zimbabwe?*

*Conclusie: kwaliteit en medialandschap politiek gekleurd, veel propaganda. State owned is enorm biased.*

- *Heeft dus geen effect op political upheavel want men weet niet waar ze hun feiten op moeten baseren en feiten vaak onjuist want gebaseerd op social media. Ook erg sensationalistische en kwaliteit soms te wensen over*

*Chapter 6: toekomst en conclusie:*

- *er is een potentie maar de randvoorwaarden moeten veranderen.*
  - *Het is geen wapen.*
  - *Maar: social media is meer kennis van zaken buiten zimbabwe, en dus wel wat meer space, maar zimbabweanen kunnen het niet gebruiken, de potentie tot space. Het wordt ze afgenomen, maar herdoor worden ze wel BEWUST van de onderdrukking. Dus niet zozeer space, as wel het besef van het ontbreken daarvan.*
    - *Zal dit leiden tot meer political agency?*
  - *Observaties toevoegen; zimbabweanen ontzetten hungry for news,*
    - *goe dgeschoold zimbabweanen political*
    - *everyday life is getting more and more difficult,*
      - *mdc gaat het niet veranderen,*
    - *het land heeft zoveel potentie (voorzichtig zeggen)*
    - *Postieve noemen: diaspora kan een grote rol spelen.*
  - *Talking to a colleague at the offices of NewsDay, she told me Zimbabweans were tired. " Tired of the violence and scared the government. The whole Zimbabwean system is corrupt and broken. Zimbabweans don't want ZANU PF anymore; we don't want Emmerson Mnangagwa. We don't even want MDC. We want new people and new ideas, that is the only thing that will save Zimbabwe." <sup>1</sup>*
    - *Mensen verlangen naar mugabe: nieuwe storming: fieldnote*
- *Gebeurd steeds meer in Africa, voorbeelden geven, er is du seen bigger context.: democracy in gevaar in Africa? Toekomst?*

Furthermore, in the era of continuous globalising processes, the principles of collaboration, freedom and openness constitute some of the basic raw materials necessary for building up a sustainable global economy. It has been assumed that even governments that are repressive regarding Internet freedom will eventually become fairer "players". This is precisely because the Internet is a necessary precondition of sustained and strong economic development. Does this mean that even repressive governments will eventually follow the "liberal" paradigm? In other words, can globalisation require the aforementioned states to start rethinking their strict Internet policies just because the opposite may have costly economic impacts?

<https://rd.springer.com/content/pdf/10.2478%2Fs13374-011-0003-y.pdf>

*way forward volgens misa:* <http://zimbabwe.misa.org/2019/05/03/zimbabwe-way-forward-in-2019/>

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*inbinden*

Foto voorblad: © Reuters A man uses a mobile phone as he crosses the street in Harare, Zimbabwe November 17, 2017.

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