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The power of publics: competing imaginaries of the radio audience in Kenya and Zambia

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PiMA Working Papers

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The project, jointly funded by the ESRC and DFID (ES/J018945/1), focuses on expressions of 'public opinion' in broadcast media via new information and communication technologies (ICT) such as mobile phones in Kenya and Zambia. PiMA examines the political implications of such interactions in the two African countries, with a view to drawing conclusions of wider significance to practitioners and policymakers.

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Abstract

With the liberalisation of the airwaves and the rising use of mobile phones since the 2000s, call- and text-in shows have become popular and lively features on broadcast media in Eastern Africa. Amidst expanding possibilities for listeners to speak and contribute to live radio broadcasts, new ways of imagining the position of the audience emerge. The audience is not simply comprised of passive listeners of publicly broadcast information, but actively engaged in contributing and reacting to what is aired. Yet the nature and political potential of the 'audience-public' is not straightforward. Interactive radio and TV shows are not just introducing specific audience members into the discussion, but who they are, what they represent, their influence and contribution to the space are uncertain. As audience members engage, those who manage and shape the broadcast must imagine, interpret and respond. Each participant in the discussion – whether listening, or involved in the station – producing, hosting, etc. – must come to terms with the nature of the interaction, Who is engaged? How should they respond? What are their reasons for being engaged and how might the introduction of this indeterminate audience-public relate to their intentions? Given the plurality of subjectivities, information, roles and intentions of those involved, the audience and why it matters can be imagined in multiple and competing ways. This paper interrogates how different actors involved in the radio broadcast imagine and respond to audience participation, and how these imaginaries become politically significant. This paper draws predominantly on interview and observation data on the perspectives of station hosts, guests and frequent callers of selected media houses and interactive broadcast shows in Zambia and Kenya. It examines the dynamic, plural and conflicting ways in which the audience is being reconstructed as an active 'public'. In so doing, it shows the centrality of the imagined audience in the construction of the broadcast as a 'public', specifically how the indeterminate audience becomes the basis for competing imaginaries about power, authority and belonging. The political significance of the 'audience-public', it is argued, lies in the very fact that multiple and competing imaginaries are at play, which are invested in by actors pursuing diverse ends and thereby create tangible political effects.

Introduction

In Zambia in 2011-2012, the Lusaka City Council sponsored a weekly call-in show on a popular private radio station, *Radio Phoenix*, named 'Let's Be Responsible'. *Radio Phoenix* was a pioneer of the interactive radio show format in Zambia during the early days of media liberalization in the 1990s. One of its shows, 'Let The People Talk' arguably set the standard for the format of such shows now popular across the country's media landscape. Increasingly, third parties such as government departments and donors have sought to seize the opportunities that they present. As its name suggests, with 'Let's Be Responsible', the Council sought to nurture popular subjectivities that might enable the state to impose market solutions to the provision of public goods in the city. Yet from early on in the series, the programme struggled to attract audience interest and participation. Competing views on the show and its value emerged as the intentions of the show's sponsor jarred with what the host presenter, knowing his audience well, thought might be an engaging format. Soon, the Council accepted the need to bring the show closer to the concerns of listeners in an effort to make it more popular. By freeing up the agenda and thus the airwaves, it inadvertently enabled the host and callers to 'Let's Be Responsible' to subvert the show's original intentions. As the show subsequently became a more direct, confrontational and uncertain encounter between (on one side) civil servants, councillors and finally the local Member of Parliament (MP), and (on the other side) the show host and its audience, who sought to call these authority figures to account across a range of alleged public goods failures across the city, it became something entirely different from its origins. On the final episode, a powerful local MP and local councillor participated as in-studio guests, and at one point responded to the confrontational opinions of an audience caller who claimed to represent the views of the wider audience. Contradicting this frequent – or 'serial' – caller's view of his role as representing a wider audience to demand accountability, the MP sought to use the show to establish her reputation and legitimacy by declaring a superior knowledge and understanding vis-à-vis the audience.

The brief illustration of 'Let's Be Responsible' reveals the interplay of competing ideas for what is the core concern of this article: the audience-public on interactive radio shows in Eastern Africa. Different actors took different views of the show's potentiality. How political actors imagined the audience directly related to why and how they engaged with the interactive shows; for example, the sponsor, Lusaka City Council was compelled to alter the openness and nature of the show as they became aware of a disjuncture between how they imagined the audience would participate, and what actually unfolded. Also, conflicting imaginaries of the audience were apparent among guests, hosts and audiences. The under-determined and unpredictable nature of the interactive show produced political effects that were contingent and unintended by those who convened the space.

The rapid growth in mobile phone usage and radio and TV studio call- and text-in capabilities has allowed for interactive broadcast shows such as 'Let's Be Responsible' to flourish. The relationship between the audience and public discussion appears transformed,

from more of a listening public, to one that also speaks and shares information publicly. In Eastern Africa, such interactive shows are highly popular, and promoted and sustained from varying quarters. For audiences, the interactive show is valued and entertaining; the shows attract a strong listenership (Abreu Lopes et al, 2015; Willems, 2012). For some donors, interactive broadcast shows are a means to realise normative views of development as empowerment and participation, grounded in a 'locally' popular and ubiquitous medium: the radio (Brisset-Foucault, 2016). For government departments, these shows can provide opportunities to inform and educate, and to project state authority in ways that enact the relationship between citizen and state. Political authority figures also engage with the shows, whether listening attentively when perceiving the voices heard as potential challenges to their authority, or as sponsors or studio guests, using the platform of interactive shows to engage with the electorate or vie for legitimacy with competitors (Mwesige, 2009; Simutanyi et al, 2015).

With expanding possibilities for listeners to speak and contribute to live radio and TV broadcasts, new ways of imagining the audience and its political significance emerge. However, the nature and political potential of this 'audience-public' is not straightforward. As audience members engage, those who manage and shape the broadcast must imagine, interpret and respond. Given the plurality of those involved, including the station host, invited guests and the producers, the nature and significance of the audience can be imagined in multiple and competing ways. Different ways of imagining the participating audience and why it matters come to the fore as hosts, guests and audience participants contribute to a live broadcast.

The uncertainties and potentialities of interactive radio show audiences as possible publics lay bare the limitations of conventional polarities that see them as never, or as always, publics. At one extreme, a dominant framing for understanding the nature and political significance of broadcast audiences comes from critiques of 20th century mass media, and sees them as passive consumers and objects of manufactured consent. "Radio stations," Habermas noted, "have turned the staging of panel discussions into a flourishing secondary business [where] discussion seems to be carefully cultivated [and] assumes the form of a consumer item" (Habermas, 1991, p.164). Such a monolithic empirical argument has been countered by claims in media studies (e.g. Silverstone, 2007) that audiences are *always* participants and indeed *always* publics because of their constitutive role in any broadcast media production. Yet such an overstated argument obscures the potential analytical value of distinguishing between a public and an audience. For example, fragmentation might affect the strength of a 'public' versus an 'audience' in opposing ways (Livingstone, 2005, p. 28).

Most importantly, these two equally extreme arguments can only co-exist because of a more fundamental truth, namely that both audiences and publics are elusive, under-determined and not completely knowable. They are conducive neither to fixed empirical statements nor to exhaustive normative definitions. Whatever their empirical characteristics, the crucial quality of both publics and audiences is that they are imagined. What matters is *how* audiences are imagined by those who constitute, convene or seek to engage with them *as* publics.

When and whether an audience might be considered a public, why and with what analytical benefit, thus remains debatable. Seeking to deepen understanding of the nature and significance of the audience-public through the interactive broadcast in East Africa, this paper's contribution to existing scholarship lies at the nexus of two turns in the literature concerning understanding and approaches to, first, 'audiences', and second, 'publics'. The well-established shift in how African audiences are approached in media and popular culture scholarship insists upon not assuming audiences to be passive, silent or mere consumers of a performance, but rather to understand audiences as comprising agents who are self-consciously addressees, and thus as participants, who make possible, constitute and produce broadcast shows (Barber, 1997; Chignall, 2009; Dayan, 2005; Spitulnik, 2002; Schulz, 1999; Mwesige, 2009; Livingstone, 2005).

Second, critical social and cultural studies has succeeded in demanding a shift from conceptualising *the* public to recognising multiple publics and counter-publics (Calhoun, 1992; Fraser, 1990). These multiple publics are distinguishable through various bases of diversity, from physical spaces and formalised institutions to the circulation of texts, diffuse and dispersed constellation of acts by a penumbra of actors oriented towards a world-in-the-making (Warner, 2002).

We draw upon, combine and extend these moves in arguing for a fuller understanding of how the 'audience-public' comes to matter in politically salient ways during interactive shows. On the one hand, we acknowledge the agency of audiences but insist that of equal or greater importance is how other actors – whether show hosts, guests, authority figures or audience members themselves – imagine and thus address audiences in distinct ways. On the other hand, we agree with the need to unearth multiple,

competing publics in all of their plurality, but we go further, following the political thought of Hannah Arendt in locating the very power, and thus political significance, of audience-publics in their evasiveness and indeterminacy. It is these qualities that allow for audience-publics to be imagined, convened and invested in by different actors, thus affording them even more power and significance.

By considering the nature and potentialities of the audience-public that materialises through interactive broadcasts, this article reveals how the political significance of these shows lies precisely in their under-determined yet accessible nature. In so doing, it makes the argument that new 'publics', however fragmented, ephemeral and power-penetrated, are being constituted and interconnected in interactive broadcast shows because of the underdetermined nature of the audience. Invested in by dominant political authority, as well as by those who play self-regarding roles of 'mediator', 'representative' or 'educator', these new public spaces, however compromised, retrieve the potential of politics. These imagined audience-publics provide for the reconfiguration of political relations between authorities and citizens by increasing the salience of opinion, argument and persuasion even if not within ordered and mutually agreed deliberative processes.

To develop this argument, this article draws on interview and observation data on the perspectives of station hosts, guests and listeners in Zambia and Kenya, collected within the 'Politics and Interactive Media in Africa' (PiMA) research project. PiMA was a collaborative project conducted by researchers from the University of Cambridge, University of Nairobi and University of Zambia. Research was conducted in Kenya and Zambia on a diverse selection of media house case studies, and employed a multitude of methodologies (household surveys, focus groups, interviews, field observations and behavioural records of SMS activity with stations). PiMA investigated the social and political significance of new opportunities for voice, debate and claim-making in the mediated public realm, created by the intersection of prodigious growth in mobile telephony access and the burgeoning broadcast media landscape. Within this context, this article examines the dynamic, plural and conflicting ways in which the audience is being reconstructed as an active 'public' in Kenya and Zambia. We draw on interview and observation-based data pertaining to the experiences and perceptions of active participants in the interactive broadcast, including producers, hosts and panellists, show guests, and participating audience members. The article is based primarily on the more extensive and in-depth research conducted around *Radio Phoenix* and *Breeze FM* in Zambia, and *Radio Nam Lolwe*, *Radio Citizen* and *Koch FM* in Kenya, with supplementary insights and references made to the other stations researched.¹ Given the qualitative nature of the research, this is not intended to provide a comparison between countries, stations or shows. Instead, it looks across the shows to draw out patterns and particularities in the dynamics and processes around how the audience is being imagined and engaged.

Drawing on an empirical study of broadcast radio and TV in Kenya and Zambia, the remainder of this paper is structured as follows: The next section further details the conceptual approach to audiences and publics that underpins and frames this study, indicating how the two are identified and locating their potential political significance. From here it turns to the empirical case of concern, examining the presence and nature of imaginaries that underpin and come to the fore through various actors' engagement in the interactive radio broadcast in Kenya and Zambia. It interrogates the ways that hosts, producers, guests and audience callers interact with the show, imagining the audience and investing it with meaning. In so doing, it draws out the ways that the audience is being imagined across the shows as an authority figure, a citizen and/or a subject. This paper then turns to consider the interplay between the imagined audience and the reality of citizen-state relations and authority in Kenya and Zambia, and how these imaginings constitute ideas of authority, representation and citizenship. It concludes with some reflections on what this approach to the power of the audience-public implies for further study into the power of publics through mediated channels in Eastern Africa.

Audiences, publics and the audience-public on interactive radio

The audience of an interactive show as a form of a public, and its political significance, does not appear straightforward. In the case of 'Let's be Responsible', for example, why the MP engaged, and how she imagined the audience, differed from the view of the participating caller, who was interested in speaking on behalf of a wider audience, and from the host, who was sought to maintain an interested audience.

¹ Annex Table 1 lists the stations examined for this paper, which span state-owned, commercial and community stations in Kenya and Zambia, across rural and urban, and national and regional broadcasts. In Kenya this is based on observations in 2013 and 2014, which occurred after the 2013 General Elections, as well as 62 key informant and group interviews with audience members, panellists and hosts, show guests, and frequent or 'serial' callers to the interactive shows. Fieldwork in Zambia included 115 interviews with station personnel, guests, audience members and donors, as well as station observations conducted through multiple site visits between September 2011 and August 2013.

The first important turn in the literature concerns how we conceptualise audiences. Audiences form a crucial but ambiguous aspect of the radio broadcast. The broadcast only exists as possibly 'public' in nature in relation to its audience. How we conceptualise the audience relative to the show is closely tied to the nature of the performance, and its situation within the wider context of the media house and wider socio-political dynamics (Barber, 1997). As Barber noted early on in the African context, performances constitute audiences (what she terms 'addressivity') but

equally important, however, is the fact that audiences themselves, by choosing to participate, constitute themselves as members of a collectivity. They may thus be active participants in the emergence of new alignments. (Barber, 1997, p. 355)

Audiences constitute the 'meaning' of performances in differing ways, but the basic premise for investigating this is that audience reception and consumption of media are also 'production'. By illuminating how the audience becomes repositioned as a co-convener of the broadcast, this literature enables us to analyse the audience as it actively constitutes the broadcast within the context of the show. However, in the process of drawing attention to the audience as 'co-convener', it also invokes questions about how the space is convened in the first place in relation to the show and the audience.

The audience's position and contribution to the broadcast appear even more significant with the rising popularity of interactive radio and TV shows. As noted at the onset of this paper, these interactive shows often utilise changing communication technology (e.g. mobile phones, social media) and enable audience members to participate in discussion on air. As Barber notes,

Changes in the ways of being an audience can also be described in terms of the technology and communication ... [but] ... ways of being an audience are made possible only by existing ways of being in society. (Barber, 1997, p. 347-8)

The media can change the way of being an audience and thus ways of being in society, thereby shaping ideas and practices of citizenship, of political agency and of public connection. Looking to interactive radio and TV, an interest in how audience participation co-constitutes the broadcast as public has drawn attention to the logic and structure of the show and media house (e.g. Bosch, 2013; Moyo, 2013; Willems, 2012).

The growing inclusion of this 'new' and 'different' voice in interactive shows compels a reconsideration of who and what constitutes the broadcast audience, and its relation to broadcast production and to public discussion. By becoming vocal on the air, the audience is more explicitly repositioned from passively listening and absorbing the broadcast to actively constituting it, situated amongst the actors who convene and shape the broadcast as a public. The 'audience' interacts with the host in the studio, responding to and helping to shape the nature and tone of the broadcast as a shared 'public' space or dialogue (Schulz, 1999). Participation in interactive shows is thus not only about the 'vocal minority' (Mwesige, 2009). For example, Mwesige (2009) argues that the 'silent majority' listenership are actively involved in constituting and giving 'meaning' to the content of interactive shows, and thus in their production. For Dayan (2005), if this aspect is given explicit regard by media actors, then 'meaning-making audiences' that can be publics are possible.

This paper agrees with these lines of analysis, but it argues that this reconsideration of the audience and its political significance is not merely confined to researchers, it actively occurs in the imaginations and motivations of others involved in the broadcast (e.g. hosts, guests, political authority figures, regular callers). As audiences have come to matter, the audience has been arguably understood in a way that is too monolithic and homogenous. The audience is ever present, but never fully knowable. It demands imagination. The fact of audience participation also requires other actors engaged to interpret and respond to the citizen as active participant. The possibility and potentiality of the audience as commanding agency or as passive receivers, as understood by actors shaping the broadcast, matter greatly to the process of how audiences co-constitute the broadcast. Participation is not solely defined through the act itself (indeed all listeners are latent - and potentially active - participants), but also the ways in which other actors respond. For instance, a politician might access the views of 'vocal' participants as 'public opinion' or by engaging with and instrumentalising audience voice to augment one's authority (Mwesige, 2009).

Turning now to critical work on publics (Calhoun, 1992; Fraser, 1990; Warner, 2002), these authors point to multiple contested publics rather than 'the' public or 'the' public sphere. This work provides scope for identifying manifestations and reflections of 'publics' in diverse spaces in which ideas circulate and are contested. There may be a dominant public or idea of it, but its assertion of being 'the' public is a product of real political work to create it as so. The exclusionary nature of dominant publics, both as matters

of material access and socio-cultural barriers to meaningful participation, requires serious critical examination, but not at the expense of revealing and recognising alternate contesting publics, or counter publics. As we de-institutionalise and dislocate our idea of 'a' or 'the' public, we adopt a more constructivist approach, and focus upon their more contingent, ephemeral, co-constituted and imagined qualities. For Warner (2002), it is self-creation and self-organisation in the circulation of texts, even in audio or visual form, that distinguishes a public. They are a cultural form, enabled through discourse. They are also a relation among strangers that is enacted and transformed through the address of public speech. Listeners, who recognise themselves as addressees, co-constitute publics with speakers and mediators. All are participants in creating the public. An orientation towards a common world-in-the-making distinguishes such public address from mere gossip. Warner's definition of publics underscores their elusiveness; they are made possible at a point in time by the intersection of a diffuse multiplicity of actions and relations by a dispersed set of actors.

From here, the indeterminate nature of what it means to be 'public' arguably can in fact be seen to be the basis of why and how they are politically significant. This position aligns with Hannah Arendt's view of publics and why they are powerful, in which she sees the potentiality of publics in their capacity for unpredictability. The power of publics lies in people's collective capacity to reshape a common world between them in the act of speaking as part of a public community of strangers (Arendt, 1958, p. 184; Arendt, 2005, p. 106). The indeterminate and evasive nature of publics provides scope for participants to relate to others in new and different ways. This is crucial to our argument, namely that how actors orient to the *possibilities* of a public 'out there', as they imagine it to be, constitutes and reshapes what that public, if at all it does, comes to be.

This approach to conceptualising publics, which recognises and emphasises their uncertainties, provides a means to unpack how mediated audience participation through interactive broadcasts are public and their political significance as such. An expansive and flexible view of what constitutes a public or publics provides scope for conceptualising the interactive broadcast as a public, despite its mediated form. The reality of interactive shows as complex and uncertain spaces, in which different actors engage from different aims and designs, suggests the need for a more subtle, empirically grounded and conceptually flexible approach to understanding when, how and in what ways an 'audience-public' might arise in the particular context of interactive broadcast radio.

These shifts in approaches to audiences and publics in Africa thus require us to consider carefully how and why audience participation intersects with the idea of the audience-public. This means not presupposing the emancipatory potential of mere audience participation (and then dismissing this potential if participation appears biased or limited) but considering the audience-public within the context within which it is convened. As individuals from within the audience speak on the air, they must make sense of their positioning relative to the host and the show. By implication, not only the audience members but also the others who speak on the air (e.g. host, in-studio guest) must engage in the same process of imagining those involved in the dialogue, including the audience. If audience reception of media is also 'production', we can see how the possibility of the 'audience-public' can arise. But importantly, the *ideas of who this audience is*, this audience that is receiving and thus producing the performance, matter to how other actors – hosts, guests and frequent 'serial' callers – orient towards the space.

Within these wider discussions of how the audience-public unfolds through the interactive broadcast, a constructivist view of publics accompanied by Arendt's view of the intrinsic significance of publics in their uncertainties provides a framework through which to interrogate the potentiality of the shows. By applying this perspective of publics to an analysis of how and why different actors engage in interactive shows in Kenya and Zambia, this paper explains how they become powerful as publics in their indeterminacy. The nature and potential of the audience-public through interactive broadcasts in East Africa is messy; they involve the engagement and experiences of hosts, politicians and guests, and audience participants. They take place within the mediated environment of the radio station, and its wider socioeconomic, political and regulatory environment. Thus, this paper begins its empirical enquiry into the nature and significance of the audience-public by embracing their contingent and complex forms, and how this shapes their 'public' nature and associated political significance.

The interactive broadcast show in Kenya and Zambia

As indicated at the onset of this paper, the interactive broadcast show has become increasingly popular in Eastern Africa. There is a general interest in the shows among audiences, and awareness among audience members of who participated in interactive broadcast shows (Abreu Lopes et al, 2015). Broadcast media has long occupied a central role in the circulation and publication of ideas throughout Eastern Africa. The ubiquity and popularity of the radio has meant that who speaks on air, and which ideas are publicised, have become interwoven into public ideas of authority and citizen-state relations. And, while historically controlled

and dominated by powerholders, whether colonial overlords or state ministries in independent Africa, competing voices were always present, proliferating in the context of the Second World War (Brennan, 2015). While broadcast implies the publication of ideas of a few to an indiscriminate and wide-reaching audience, this assumed silent and passive role of the audience obscures a history of, and increasing opportunities for, audience participation in content production on air. Participation of the audience in content production on the radio broadcast thus precedes newer communication technologies, evident in letter writing, event announcements and song requests (Willems, 2012). That being so, contemporary interactive broadcast shows, across a range of subjects from politics and current affairs to social discussions, development topics and music shows, have become highly popular phenomena on the back of rapid changes in communications and media liberalisation in recent decades. As suggested in the case of the show, 'Let's Be Responsible', on Zambia's *Radio Phoenix*, they are a forum that is invested in by different authorities and donors to educate and shape public information. They are also forums that politicians engage with, often as guests in the studio. On one side, as different actors engage with the interactive show, wider concerns have materialised about their regulation, incitement, politicisation and propaganda, for example, in Kenya linked to the potential for the expression of hate speech and inciting violence. On the other side, they are projected to potentially constitute a popular, widespread and accessible forum for information flows.

The popularity of interactive shows, and the investment by different actors, indicates a perceived value of the show. However, ideas about the show's value are not necessarily consistent across those who engage. The audience of the interactive show remains uncertain and underdetermined; who exactly listens and speaks, in what capacity, and with what effect remains open to interpretation. While the popularity of the shows in Eastern Africa underpins their relevance as a public space, how and why they matter to different participants depends on how this public scope is imagined.

Various actors contribute to the production of the live discussion broadcast on air. The radio host speaks to capture the attention of her listeners. Station producers design a mix of content to appeal to an imagined audience base. Advertisers and funders similarly design content to appeal to an imagined listenership. The diversity of actors who participate in structuring and implementing the radio show do so from their own views on who they are speaking to and/or with. The uncertainty of the audience opens up scope for these actors to imagine different forms and significance of the audience. Thus, as a *social space*, what are the ways and divergences in which the audience is imagined? And, as different actors engage through different views of the audience, how might the nature and presence of multiple imaginaries shape the political possibilities of the show?

The audience as the authority figure

For some hosts and callers involved in the radio show, the political significance of interactive radio show begins from the view that the broadcast reaches the ears of those in positions of formal authority. Different explanations as to why they are convinced political authorities are listening are put forward, but with the same outcome: the interactive show is a conversation that political authority figures cannot ignore. A female host of an interactive show from the public broadcaster, *ZNBC*, in Zambia claimed that the president and his advisors were aware of what was said on air in their interactive political shows.² In Kenya, similarly, an active male member of a fan club of *Radio Nam Lolwe* in western Kenya commented:

You know, you can have trouble with seeing the big and important people who have led us, and this is a problem. You cannot see them. You cannot speak to them. Even when trying to call them, you cannot get the number to call him/her. Now, you know, even the big and important people that we elected, the politicians, listen to radio. Now, if you talk on the radio, if you offer your views, he will listen. Now, that is the first thing that helps.³

Another serial caller from Lusaka, Zambia, who seeks out politicians directly and through journalists, explained his particular certainty that the politician must be listening to the interactive broadcast show. He suggested a politician risked appearing unresponsive to public issues if they did not pay attention to the broadcast. Such perceptions could result in a loss of support from

2 Interview with ZNBC host (R), 9 December 2012.

3 Original comment was made in Kiswahili and translated by the authors. Original text: "Unajua unaweza kuwa na shida na kuona wakuu wetu wenye walitupeleka na inakuwa shida. Huwezi waona huwezi ongea nao. Hata simu yao huwezi pata namba yake upigie yeye. Sasa unajua hata wakuu wetu tuliwapeleka wanasiasa wanasikianga redio. Sasa ukiongea kwa redio, ukitoa maoni yako, utasikiza sasa hiyo ni kitu ya kwanza inasaidia". Interview with male member of a Radio Nam Lolwe Fan Club (D), 13 September 2013.

those in higher positions of authority and from the electorate.⁴ Therefore, even if practically a political leader might not be able to listen to the live broadcast, he imagined others would ensure the message reaches her/him. Comparing the efficacy of different ways of attracting the attention of political leaders, he commented:

Because if I go to the media, I think it is a shortcut. The MP or the minister will look at it, [saying], "Oh, there is this issue in my constituency"⁵

The imagined presence of the authority figure as the audience has mixed effects on how participants in the interactive show speak and engage on air. It plays a key role in some participants' views of leaders' responsibilities to citizens, and how these responsibilities are met. This view reflects a particular perception of citizen-state relations in which authority figures resist listening to citizens, and citizens wish to be heard by those in positions of authority.⁶ For some serial callers, democratic representation requires authority figures to interact with the people they represent, but they suggest the tendency of political leaders is to resist such interactions. Therefore, democratic representation requires activities that compel political leaders to engage. People must seek out leaders and make them aware of realities on the ground.⁷ The broadcast becomes valuable because it is imagined to ensure communication from citizens to political leaders:

People are very willing to be heard on the radio because I think they want to have audience with their area member of Parliament though this is a general complaint in Zambia that once elected they are hardly seen in their area so it's like people already they are around not to get excuses so when they see them they speak their minds off.⁸

Thank God that all these radio effect, eh all these radio stations, they are being listened to by even government officials because what you say today, you hear them complaining.⁹

Surveilled publics: The audience as authority figure silently monitoring and constraining dialogue

The perception of the audience as the authority figure can also be silencing or restraining. Imagining the audience includes the listening authority figure can lead to self-censorship or wariness among hosts. Such restraint was acknowledged by hosts of private radio stations, for example, voiced among hosts of the private/community broadcaster, *Koch FM* in Korogocho, Nairobi,¹⁰ the private station, *Radio Phoenix*, in Lusaka, Zambia, and *Breeze FM* in Chipata, Zambia.

The nature and effects of the imagined audience as the surveilling authority figure was aptly illustrated through the figure of Gogo (Grandfather) Breeze on *Breeze FM*, broadcast from the sleepy town of Chipata, Eastern Province, Zambia. Gogo Breeze constitutes an authoritative figure vis-à-vis his audience. He has several shows on *Breeze FM*, among them a phone-in programme in which he selects a subject for people to call in and discuss, concluding with his summary and views on the subject. While he himself takes an authoritative view vis-à-vis his audience and audience participants, he also conveyed there were political interests and authorities that restricted what could and should be said on the broadcast:

For example, the topic of tonight, I did not want them to mention people's names because it is dangerous, because you can easily be accused. You never know some people may be recording. So if they have recorded and have heard that you have spoken this, it goes to court, you can be implicated.¹¹

4 Interview with Zambian serial caller (B), 10 December 2012.

5 Ibid.

6 Interview with Breeze FM host (O), 21 March 2012.

7 Interview with Zambian serial caller (P), 18 December 2012; Interview with Zambian serial caller (B), 10 December 2012.

8 Interview with Yatsani FM station manager (N), 4 December 2013.

9 Interview with Zambian serial caller (E), 13 December 2012.

10 Interview with Koch FM presenter (D), 18 November 2013.

11 Interview with Breeze FM host (G), n.d.

In Kenya, restraint in what was said online was bound up with experiences of post-election violence in 2007-2008, in which radio broadcasts were seen to have incited violence. As such there were particularly acute concerns about the need for restraint among hosts in Kenya about what could be said on air.

Also voicing this, one male host from *Koch FM*, stated:

Radio is not a joke and you cannot entertain friends on radio at the expense of the nation, That day someone I know calls and begins saying bad things on radio like inciting one tribe against the other, I cannot allow such, I have to stop him and warn all my listeners that we must remain sensible.¹²

Imagining the audience as including authority figures has diverging effects on how hosts and callers act and speak within the broadcast. One on side, it provides for interactions that individuals perceive to be empowering the citizen to activate a relationship with political authorities in a particular way, in which authority are confronted with citizens' voices. On the other side, the imagined listening authority figure brings wider power inequalities into the broadcast; their imagined presence implicitly restricts what people are willing to say on air.

Represented citizens

Further complicating this picture, different positions within the broadcast lead some hosts to claim a particular role for themselves between citizen and authority figure. Some hosts and panellists viewed themselves as representatives of citizens to the authority figure or political leader, imagined as listening in to the broadcast. The interactive radio show allows for audience members to contribute to the broadcast and be heard by the imagined, listening authority figure. Alongside, the host would single out his/her own voice as privileged. Focusing on his/her own voice on air, rather than that of the participating caller or texter, the host would explain that he/she could represent the views of ordinary citizens in what they would say on air. Thereby, they would mediate between the citizen and political authorities. The host's role was not to enable the 'citizen' to speak directly to the audience, but to speak for them, using the position within the studio, facilitating the show, to voice the interests of the 'voiceless' and the 'common citizen'.¹³ For instance, when a Zambian show host was asked whether the radio station could change the way a locality is governed, she replied,

"Yes because it is giving a voice to the community and its standing between the people in authority and community. If the people have a challenge they relay it to the radio and us in turn relay the information to the relevant authorities in an area."¹⁴

The host assumes the role of a representative of silent citizens, speaking to a listening authority figure.

This view of their advantaged position to speak on air gives some hosts a sense of responsibility to err on the side of privileging the views of the citizen. Because the host imagines he/she has the ear of the authority figure, the show, specifically via his or her role as host, is a means to circumvent a divide or power imbalance between the citizen and the authority figure. For instance, two hosts, one from a regional radio station in western Kenya and another from the national private television broadcaster, *Citizen TV*, asserted respectively:

We are always told to be fair, and to balance what we say, but you know at times, you may not really balance this thing. But, we try to be fair. Like when we were talking about the land issue; it affects everybody and so by telling the government to come up with a proper framework to help this people who are suffering, I was just trying to be real and not blaming the government.¹⁵

Sometimes you have to take a stand but based on facts. Sometimes you have to sort of support a cause, especially if it is not a controversial issue like during the Westgate attack [a terrorist attack on a shopping mall in Nairobi in September 2013].¹⁶

12 Interview with Koch FM presenter (M), 11 November 2013.

13 Interview with Radio Nam Lolwe presenter (V), 7 April 2014; Interview with Radio Nam Lolwe host (L), 5 September 2013.

14 Interview with Yatsani FM host (B), 19 December 2012.

15 Interview with Radio Nam Lolwe host (J), 5 September 2013.

16 Interview with Citizen TV host (J), 17 October 2013.

This is tied to a perception that the interactive broadcast show, and the host specifically, can successfully compel the authority figure to act in the interest of the citizen. Returning to a female host on *Yatsani FM* in Zambia, she explains:

Interviewer: Can a radio station change the way a compound is governed?

Respondent: Yes, because it is giving a voice to the community and its standing between the people in authority and community. If the people have a challenge they relay it to the radio and us in turn relay the information to the relevant authorities in an area.¹⁷

Similarly, some serial callers construct an image of the audience relative to themselves as a political actor, in which they also play an intermediary role between citizens and authority figures through the interactive broadcast. Their views of the wider audience are tied to ideas of their own agency, interests and position in relation to political authorities. Some serial callers single themselves out from other citizens because of their participation on-air. They are situated within the audience, calling in from hidden locations within the scope of the broadcast, but distinct because of their voices on air. Serial callers interviewed identified as an “activist” or a “trouble shooter”,¹⁸ contrasting themselves from others in the audience who are classified as silent, passive or less articulate. Similar to the host, some would imagine themselves as intermediaries between authority figures, the media and ‘ordinary’ people, speaking about issues of public concern.¹⁹ Personal characteristics, such as interest and passion for governance, and self-confidence, are identified as enabling the caller to use the media to “amplify the voices of the silent people”.²⁰ The ability to speak and be heard by those in positions of authority motivates some serial callers’ ongoing participation:

I still have hope you know you cannot, you know these people, they have their own plans, they have got their own priorities but to men when you continue emphasising one day I think they will be able to listen to me you know it’s the question of having that kind of patience and you need to continue.²¹

This view that hosts or callers represent and articulate the views of citizens to government authorities suggests a particular view of democratic representation. One radio host from a regional station in western Kenya commented that he might even surpass elected officials, at ward and MP levels, as a representative of the interests of the citizen.²²

In summary, imaginaries of the audience as political leaders both silence and encourage the voice of callers and hosts, depending on how power relations between the two are imagined to be affected through the show. It can compel the caller to seek out an audience of the leader, speaking and perceiving that those in positions of authority are listening. It can also compel the host to act in diverging ways: claiming to represent the ‘people’ to the leader, censoring what they say to be within the bounds of what is politically admissible, or facilitating opportunities for audience members to speak.

The audience as the vocal citizen

While the host and the caller are found to imagine the broadcast audience as the authority figure, what about the authority figure who sits in the studio and speaks as part of the show? How does he or she imagine the audience? In both Kenya and Zambia, public figures, including community headmen/women, MPs, civil society leaders, chiefs and ward representatives, participate in interactive broadcast shows as guests in the studio. Not all interactive shows examined were structured around a guest. For example, shows that emphasise the knowledge and experience of the host tend to focus on interactions between host and ordinary citizen, such as ‘Fireside Chat’ centred on the figure of Gogo (Grandfather) Breeze in rural Chipata, Zambia, discussed in the following section. Those emphasising citizens’ voices, such as ‘Let the People Talk’ (*Radio Phoenix*, Zambia) or ‘Issue of the Day’ (*Breeze FM*, Zambia), can emphasise time or quantity of calls or SMS shared on the air. Still, the in-studio guest was a common feature among the

17 Interview with Yatsani FM host (B), 19 December 2012.

18 Interview with Zambian serial caller (RO), 21 December 2012; Interview with Zambian serial caller (P), 18 December 2012; Interview with Zambian serial caller (E), 13 December 2012.

19 Interview with male member of a Radio Nam Lolwe Fan Club (D), 13 September 2013; Interview with Koch FM serial caller (C), 25 November 2013.

20 Interview with Zambian serial caller (RO), 21 December 2012. Similar comments were made in interview with Zambian serial caller (I), 21 December 2012; and interview with serial texter to Citizen TV (J), 1 December 2013.

21 Interview with Zambian serial caller (RA), 19 December 2012.

22 Interview with Radio Nam Lolwe host (J), 5 September 2013.

interactive shows studied, with the presence of an authority figure – whether from government, civil society, the church, judiciary, etc – accompanying a particular topic or issue on most shows examined. The political or professional guest in the studio provides an opportunity for the individual to converse with the host, and to respond to contributions from audience members, constituting a distinguishable participant in the public discussion who must also contend with the uncertain and also vocal audience. *Muvi TV's* 'The Assignment' (Zambia), 'The Podium' on *Yatsani FM* (Zambia), and 'Cheche/Power Breakfast' on *Citizen TV* (Kenya) include an in-studio guest as a key element of the show's structure and focus.

In positioning a person in-studio, the authority figure is distinguished from the wider audience. The guest's location in the studio provides for a particular set of concerns and imaginings of the audience. For some, the choice to participate on the air in the studio is driven by a view of the voice of the audience on air as comprised of citizens who are open and candid. The anonymous location of the audience member supports a view that those who call- or text-in to the interactive show are relatively free of constraints. As individuals, hidden within the broadcast audience, they might speak openly to the studio guest without fear of reprisal. One Zambian MP, who would participate on interactive shows on public and private radio broadcasters, commented,

It [the radio] protects them [callers]. They can really mouth off and tell you how they really feel.²³

By imagining that those they speak with through the interactive show are open and vocal, some guests explain that they participate in-studio to hear 'honest' opinions and respond. The audience caller or texter is a source of knowledge. Engaging with such voices can be valuable to maintaining one's legitimacy. One public relations officer from the Lusaka City Council explained:

If we don't get the negative part of the concerns then we will be assuming that we are doing well and things are not well. So we would rather they come and explain.²⁴

Similarly, two ward-level representatives in Zambia suggested in a joint interview:

We may think we are doing the right thing and yet we are not doing the right thing. When people call we need to accommodate those criticisms and those some are praises, some are criticisms. We need to accept everything that comes so that we are built from there.²⁵

The audience as the uninformed citizen

This relatively positive and interested view of the citizen-as-audience member contrasts with another narrative that materialised among both hosts and in-studio guests. Rather than engaging to be informed by listening to the audience member, the view is taken that the contribution of the audience caller reveals how they are *uninformed* and in need of education. The authority figure in the studio listens to the audience caller or texter to ascertain what she/he does not know, and to correct and educate. The live broadcast facilitates an immediate exchange between 'uninformed caller' and the 'informed studio guest', enabling the guest who chooses to engage to quickly address any concerns or questions raised.²⁶ For example, two elected representatives from western Kenya, an MP and a Member of a County Assembly, upon participating in an interactive show on *Radio Nam Lolwe*, commented:

I learnt that the audience need information, information is lacking somehow, and there are small things that they want to know yet we deny them.²⁷

Hosts, too, may consider themselves to play an important pedagogical role. To return to *Breeze FM* in Chipata, Zambia, and the charismatic host, Gogo (Grandfather) Breeze, his 'Fireside Chat' show is structured around the wise and superior knowledge of the host. Gogo Breeze intends to educate the audience and inform them of what is in their interest through the structure of the show.

23 Interview with Zambian MP (E), 20 December 2012.

24 Interview with Public Relations Officer, Lusaka City Council (K), 17 December 2012.

25 Joint interview with two Zambian ward level Councillors (C & N), 20 December 2012.

26 Interview with Kenyan MP (O), 17 September 2013.

27 Joint interview with Kenyan MP and Member of the County Assembly (C & P), 2 November 2013.

The show allows for discussion, but concludes with an affirmation of Gogo Breeze's knowledge:

We give them [our listeners] a subject just like I have done this evening. I tell them this is the subject let's talk on this one. Then people ring the station and then we interact. At the end I give my final remarks of the findings and so on just as I have done, like that. So the people out there will take that fact. The grandfather has spoken we must take this and we have to follow this.²⁸

People are told to follow a better way of living. You know as a grandfather your work is to educate them. It is life that you have passed through yourself.²⁹

When the audience and the audience caller is imagined as under-informed, the value of the show for the guest and/or host becomes tied to its educative role and its ability to help form particular types of citizens. A station manager for *Millennium Radio*, a commercial broadcaster operating from Lusaka, states:

We want to voice out the development, [and] educate our listeners to think in a certain way. For example, if maybe there is something that is affecting you, what have you as a listener done about it? Cause we have seen certain people who would say we want the government to do this, but certain things if you don't report to the authorities. There is no way the government is going to know so the idea is to educate our listeners to always do something to ensure that development comes on their way. So there is no way you are going to blame it all on the politicians, blame it all on the authorities.³⁰

This imagining of the audience aligns within a view of the function of public discussion as shaping citizens through public dialogue. One guest from the legal sector in Kenya commented that the interactive broadcast was a means through which they are fulfilling their mandate as lawyers, "performing part of task which is to educate the public and advise the public on matters related to law".³¹ Similarly, another guest on several local broadcasters in Eastern Province, an MP in Zambia, explained:

People need to know. It's actually a mandate for us as government to educate people about every policy that we come up with, and people should also provide an insight.³²

Through the interactive show, the indeterminacy of the audience allows for the authority figure and the citizen to be imagined as part of one audience, albeit in varying ways. Depending on who the intended and imagined audience is, the directionality and aim of one's participation shifts. An authority figure, imagining the audience as either informed or uninformed, listens and responds to audience callers and texters in different ways. Hosts and callers who imagine the audience includes figures in formal positions of authority will both be vocal as representatives of silent citizens and also constrained, cognizant of wider power inequalities.

The audience as both subject and citizen

Thus far, the guest is found to imagine the audience of the interactive show and their engagement as part of efforts to augment and shape their legitimacy. By perceiving the audience member to be uninformed, the show is a platform to educate and make informed citizens. In contrast, by imagining the audience member as knowledgeable and vocal, the show is a means to test one's legitimacy. These competing concerns – to educate or become informed by the anonymous audience member – give way to a fundamental tension between imaginings of the audience as either subject or citizen. The concreteness and tangibility of the studio and its participants contrast with the evasive nature of audience of the broadcast. Contests over legitimation in front of the unknowable audience 'out there' play out in complex ways: as demonstrations of patronage and power, and also as assertions of relative legitimacy and credibility vis-à-vis political opponents. On the one side, the audience is imagined as needy and gullible mass subjects, who must marvel at their patron's largesse. Commenting on how a Zambian MP appears on call-in shows, another MP commented:

28 There are other bases from which a host might arrive at a similar use of the interactive space: to enable discussion that can educate and inform the listener. One, another host on Breeze FM, locates his experience/knowledge in research and personal study (interview with Breeze FM host (P) n.d.), while another, in his innate leadership quality (interview with Breeze FM host (S), n.d.).

29 Interview with Breeze FM host (G), n.d. His name on air is 'Gogo [grandfather] Breeze'.

30 Interview with Millennium Radio host (C), 16 August 2013.

31 Interview with chair of the Law Society of Kenya (E), 28 October 2013.

32 Interview with Minister for Eastern Province, Zambia (M), 25 July 2013.

He will use the ... call-in radio as a way to make ... make people assume that every development programme that happens is in the gift of the 'big man' right. Either it happens because I decided it happens or it doesn't happen because I decided it doesn't happen.³³

On the other side, a desire for legitimacy invites active judgement and the agency of audiences as citizens, especially when authority figures vie for support. The contest for authority is discussed on two fronts: convincing people of their legitimacy through speech and presence, and "combat[ing] opposition using issues to flame misinform people."³⁴ Some authority figures described the show as a public conversation *between* political opponents that occurs in the public eye.³⁵ Also, the focus on political contest can result in some suspicious as to the motivations and positioning of the vocal audience members, re-interpreting callers as political opponents attempting to discredit them:

So I just want to inspire them to be using the radio. And, opponents do sponsor. I got that clearly because there is a time I was on radio and somebody asked me a very nasty question to put me down, and I knew that that is a question my opponent is likely to ask.³⁶

To summarise, the indeterminate nature of the audience of the broadcast allows it to be imagined in multiple ways, enabling those who engage to invest it with specific meanings. As unravelled thus far, as a result of this potentiality, the interactive shows examined in Kenya and Zambia realise competing views of citizen-state relations, and authorities and their legitimacy. For some hosts and callers, the interactive show challenges a broken and inactive form of political representation, by claiming the attention of government officials and articulating citizen views to an unseen but listening political leader. For some within the studio, both political figures as guests and some hosts, the interactive show is a space to affect the legitimacy of authority and citizen-state relations, by listening to the knowledgeable caller, educating the uninformed citizen, or by performing a contest of legitimacy to either subjects or citizens.

Between imagination and reality, and back again: competing ideas about authority and citizenship through the audience-public

The indeterminacy of the audience contributes to the interactive show as a contested and politically powerful space, within which relations between citizen and authority, mediator and convener, representative and educator, play out. Different imaginaries of the nature of the audience as a public come to a head through the interactive broadcast show. As a public discussion, the broadcast is unequal and entangled with different forms of authority. This is a space that involves authorities, both formal and informal. Political leaders will speak on air, using the public space to affirm the legitimacy of their authority and address dissent. It is a space that is mediated and structured, and that operates according to forms of privilege and inequality. The ideas and intentions of the host and the in-studio guest, or the caller with the time and resources to call-in are privileged on air.

As different imaginaries underpin individuals' participation, the show becomes a space that reflects how different actors see, and how they wish to see, themselves in relation to the audience. Competing imaginaries and experiences among hosts, guests and serial callers reveal tensions between those engaged, concerning their ideas of value, agency and voice relative to the audience differ. For example, hosts can attempt to limit the commercialisation or political manipulation of the show's proceedings, focusing on maintaining the interest and at times 'views' of the 'ordinary' citizen. Authority figures might be cautious in how they engage, suspicious of the host's control over the course of the on-air discussion,³⁷ potentially even distorting the audience's voices. Individuals can be resentful and resistant to the ways that others' actions and underlying perceptions contradict their own views and investment in the broadcast. For example, Eric Mutua, then-Chairman of the Law Society of Kenya, who appeared several times as a guest on *Citizen TV*, critiqued the host's intervention between the audience member and the show guest:

33 Interview with Zambian MP (D), 18 December 2012.

34 Interview with Minister for Eastern Province, Zambia (M), 25 July 2013.

35 Interview with Kenyan Senator (B), n.d.

36 Joint interview with Kenyan MP and Member of the County Assembly (C & P), 2 November 2013.

37 Interview with Minister of Health, Zambia (J), 6 February 2013; Joint interview with representatives from Southern African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes and FODEP (B & M), 18 December 2012; Interview with President of the MMD Party, Zambia (N), 24 July 2013; Interview with Zambian MP (E), 20 December 2012.

The interactive is good but is limited, I think there is limited time to interact with the public. It is basically the host who direct how the debate goes, so I don't think that in terms of the interaction there is much.³⁸

As the show unfolds, it becomes a space that people invest with meaning, motivating their participation, as well as a space in which ideas about public relations and authority are being realised and challenged.

By unravelling the imaginaries bound up with people's participation in the interactive broadcast, this paper has illustrated thus far how the potentiality of the audience as public lies in its indeterminacy. The audience-public is powerful because of what is evasive and unknown: this allows for people to invest the public discussion with meaning, attempting to realise and contest different ideas about what it means to be part of a community with strangers. The indeterminacy of the audience provides scope for different ideas of citizen-state relations, authority and public life to materialise.

Competing imaginaries of the audience-public across the stations and shows examined in Zambia and Kenya became a basis through which different ideas of citizen-state relations and relations of authority play out. The power of the audience-public arguably lies in the way that different actors imagine the audience and act upon this imaginary, but, in so doing, co-constitute its unruly potentiality.

First, imaginaries of the host, caller and political guest reveal contesting views of the *proximity* of the leader and the 'citizen' through the show. Through one narrative the authority figure and the 'citizen' are part of one audience, sometimes speaking and sometimes silent, but co-present in a distributed public. In another view, the mediation of the space by the station and the host can separate the two, sometimes physically, with one located in-studio, but also in process, by mediating the discussion.

Second, the *directionality* of voice assumed shifts depending how the audience and the audience participant are perceived. Sometimes the host or caller is imagined as a representative of the people, speaking to the authority figure, who is either in the studio or part of an indeterminate audience. At other times the host and the authority figure construct the space as educative, speaking to and shaping the wider public through the broadcast discussion.

These differences give way to contrasting views about the *instrumental versus intrinsic* value of the broadcast. For some, the discussion, aired to an indiscriminate audience, is a platform to bolster one's position of authority or to distinguish oneself from a wider anonymous public. In other cases, the interactive show is imagined to realise a particular ideal of democracy centred on public discussion and legitimacy, for instance, premised upon the articulation of citizens' ongoing concerns and the responsiveness of elected leaders. Also, the interactive show's intrinsic value is imagined simply in the articulation of citizens' voice, and the public recognition and value of voice, irrespective of its effect on government and governance.

At the same time, as the audience is imagined and acted upon in different ways, varying views of *representation* come to the fore. Who represents whom? Different actors claim representative roles through what they express on air. There is the authority figure occupying a formal position of authority, sometimes elected. There is the host, who sometimes identifies with interests of the audience as ordinary citizens, representing their imagined interests to those in formal positions of authority. There is also the caller, who distinguishes herself from the wider community, speaking at times, as if to represent silent community members' interests.

As these varied expressions unfold, suspicions and hesitations materialise between guests, callers and hosts, about how other contributors to the broadcast are affecting its potentiality. Actors often looking to the others who speak as the source of the constraint. Specifically, we found the authority figure to be sometimes suspicious of the mediation of the host; the host and caller both identifying constraints posed by the political context beyond the show.

The very presence of competing imaginaries, and how they inform people's participation, makes the interactive broadcast a space in which relations of authority are being enacted and contested. Different perceptions of the relative proximity between citizen and authority figure, who represents who and upon what basis, and who has voice through public discussion all materialise through the interactive broadcast. In both Kenya and Zambia, the 'audience-public' is interwoven with relations of authority. It

38 Interview with chair of the Law Society of Kenya (E), 28 October 2013.

is imagined to include both citizens and authority figures in varying configurations, whether as part of one audience, as linked through an intermediary on air, or as citizens speaking to authority figures, and vice versa. The presence of in-studio guests, as well as the uncertainty of the audience, allows for the authority figures and citizens to be included in the scope of the public. Thus, the audience-public does not appear to be separate or external to formal relations of authority. Rather it is a public that is interwoven with relations of authority, as citizens and authority figures participate in the same public discussion, thereby affecting the proximity, representativeness, agency and legitimacy of citizen-state relations and political authorities.

Conclusions

As mentioned at the onset, there is a turn in the study of how audiences are significant towards looking at how audiences create the content and create publics with some agentive capacity. Yet while this shift has been important, the pendulum has potentially swung too far. As this paper shows, the very fact of making the move to unpack the significance of the audience's participation requires rethinking the contributions of other dominant actors in this space. As we do this, the binary of audience as mass media audience versus the political authority or the media house appears inappropriate. The audience, as it is engaging and as it is being imagined, is not monolithic. It is more significant to think of the space in its entirety and the multiple imaginaries at play, taking them together in a more complex way.

The indeterminacy of the audience, its scope and who participates, makes it contestable. This provides scope for different actors to invest different ideas about the audience as part of the public discussion, and why it matters. Given this, across the different types of actors engaged in the broadcast, the audience of the interactive show in Kenya and Zambia is being imagined in different ways. It might be the listening political figure, or the political figure might step into the studio, separating herself from the indiscriminate audience, imagining instead the audience as an uninformed or an educated member of the electorate. How these roles unfold provides a repository for imagining ongoing and future broadcasts. The space is complex and variable in how it has and continues to play out, as well as how it is imagined by the actors taking part. Reality becomes a source of the imaginaries through which multiple actors imagine and engage with the broadcast and the audience, investing it with meaning through the scope provided by the underdetermined nature of the participating audience.

Annex

Table 1. Media houses and interactive broadcast shows examined

Station	Country	Shows examined	Ownership	Scale	Medium
Breeze FM	Zambia	Political hour; Issue of the day; A woman can do it; Fire side stories; Idioms and Questions; Welcoming visitors	Private/ Community	Regional (Eastern Province)	Radio
Radio Nam Lolwe	Kenya	Yie Lolwe	Private	Regional	Radio
Radio Phoenix	Zambia	Let's be responsible; Let the people talk; Face the Media	Private	Regional	Radio
Muvi TV	Zambia	The Assignment	Private	National	TV
Radio Citizen	Kenya	Jambo Kenya	Private	National	Radio
Citizen TV	Kenya	Power Breakfast; Cheche	Private	National	TV
Koch FM	Kenya	Breakfast/morning show	Private/Community	Regional	Radio
Yatsani	Zambia	The Podium	Religious/Community	Regional	Radio
ZNBC	Zambia	Talking Point Rosemary and Company; Delivery in Zambia; National Watch; Kwacha Good Morning Zambia	State	National	Radio & TV
Feel Free FM	Zambia		Private	Regional	Radio
Millennium	Zambia		Private	Regional	Radio

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Interview with *Yatsani FM* host (B), 19 December 2012.

Interview with *Yatsani FM* station manager (N), 4 December 2013.

Interview with Zambian MP (D), 18 December 2012.

Interview with Zambian MP (E), 20 December 2012.

Interview with Zambian serial caller (B), 10 December 2012.

Interview with Zambian serial caller (E), 13 December 2012.

Interview with Zambian serial caller (I), 21 December 2012.

Interview with Zambian serial caller (P), 18 December 2012.

Interview with Zambian serial caller (RA), 19 December 2012.

Interview with Zambian serial caller (RO), 21 December 2012.

Interview with *ZNBC* host (R), 9 December 2012.

Joint interview with Kenyan MP and Member of the County Assembly (C & P), 2 November 2013.

Joint interview with representatives from Southern African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes and FODEP (B & M), 18 December 2012.

Joint interview with two Zambian ward level Councillors (C & N), 20 December 2012.

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