

Journalism beyond the Coup: Emerging Forms of Digital Journalism Practices in Post-Coup Zimbabwe

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Abstract

Utilizing a constellation of conceptual tenets drawn from critical digital technology theory, field theory and concepts of digital democracy, this article argues that the post-coup period in Zimbabwe has solidified digital journalism practices in three main ways. These are: (i) the consolidation of a digital leak journalism culture, (ii) an increasingly ferocious form of digital guerrilla journalism, and (iii) the rise in popularity, of small digital-based news platforms that, arguably, are increasingly eclipsing already established mainstream (digital) news platforms as sources of news. These practices' nascent roots have their genesis in the early 2000 period. In the post-coup context, they have assumed a new and wider meaning, and have become part of the mainstream. This solidification of digital journalism practices has consequently enabled journalists to "speak back" to power by providing robust forms of investigative journalism, and simultaneously avoiding being 'swallowed' by the state. While we admit to various gradations of digital journalism practices before the coup, we use the coup as our point of departure in order to factor in the incrementally disruptive and repressive political environment that has forced journalists to adopt digital journalism practices more than in any period of the country's history.

Keywords: Digital journalism, critical technology theory, digital democracy, field theory, Zimbabwe, leak journalism.