Opportunities and Challenges to Building **Free Media** in the Middle East & Africa

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Part 1 – What is free media?

Part 2 – Challenges for free media

Part 3 – Opportunities for free media

The ethos of free media *is* media literacy.

"Free media" comes from the French term *médias libres*

- Radical media (Downing, 2000)
- Small media (Sreberny-Mohammadi & Mohammadi, 1994)
- Citizen's media (Rodriguez, 2001)
- Autonomous media (Langlois & Dubois, 2005)
- *Medios populares* in Spanish (Rodríguez, Ferron, & Shamas, 2014, p. 151)
- Community radio (Coyer, 2011; Rennie, 2006)
- *Radios associatives* (e-Joussour, 2018)
- Social movement media (Atton, 2003)
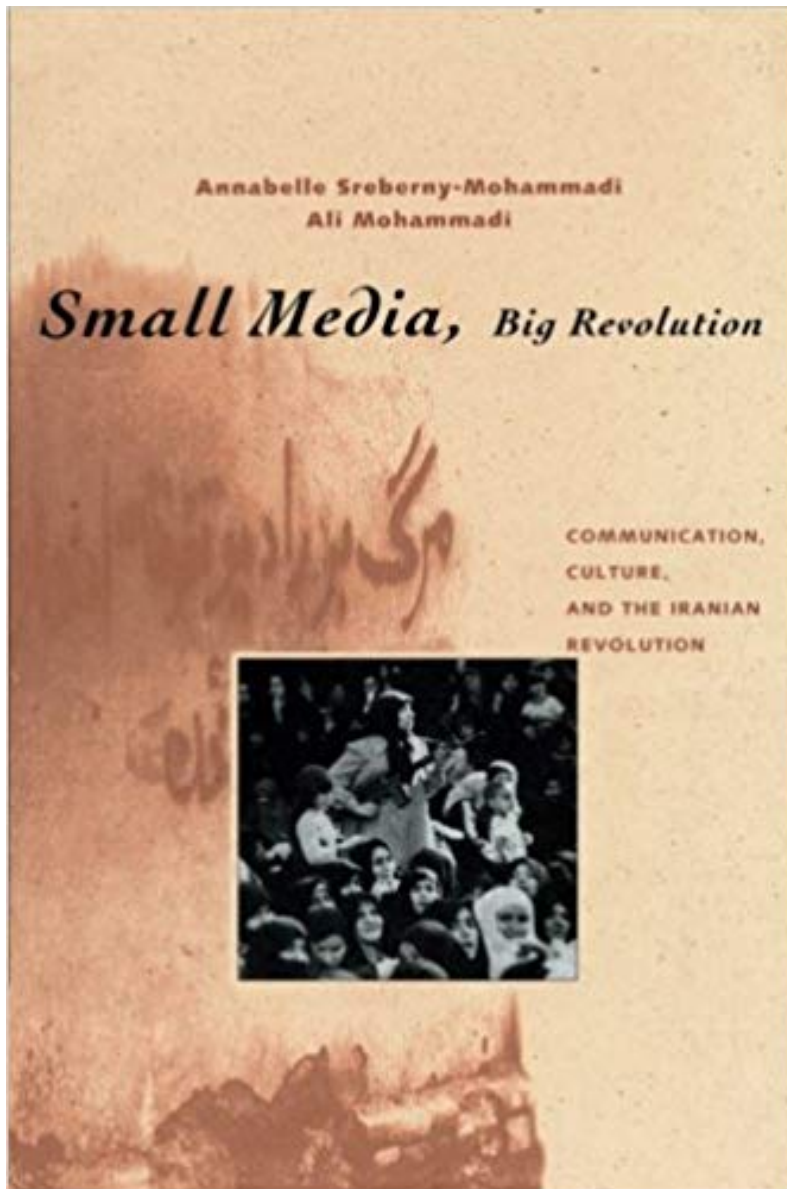
Free media are "participatory, public phenomena, controlled neither by states nor big corporations" (Sreberny-Mohammadi & Mohammadi, 1994)

Steve Buckley, the former president of the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (known by its French acronym AMARC for the *Association mondiale des radiodiffuseurs communautaires)*, acknowledges:

"There is **no single definition** of community broadcasting, and there are almost as many models as there are stations. Each … is a hybrid, a unique communication process shaped by its environment and the distinct culture, history, and reality of the community it serves" (Buckley et al., 2008, p. 207).

See: http://www.amarc.org/

راديو البلد ... صوت الناس والبلد

92.4
راديو البلد

Radio al-Balad members attending the global congress of AMARC held in Amman in 2006 defined community radio as "community owned and controlled, giving access to voices in the community and encouraging diversity, creativity and participation" (Aqrabawi, Zaidah, & Kuttab, 2006, p. 2).

Voice of the Valley (Sawt al-Aghwar), the region's only broadcaster (online, unlicensed)
VIDEO: https://vimeo.com/82848894 & **FULL MOVIE:** https://vimeo.com/69572214

Independent, local web radio

VIDEO: https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=97&v=8F1nWwnwOiU

SOURCE: https://www.radiobeirut.net/

Policies in the MENA region generally include "ambiguously worded, catch-all legal provisions" that promote:

- regime survival
- monopoly over power
- keeping media out of opposition control or influence
- preservation of national unity and national security
- prevalence of censorship (either direct or self-censorship)
- overlapping jurisdictions, open to inconsistent implementation, manipulation, and excessive abuse

See: Kraidy and Khalil, 2010; Amin, 2001; Buckley et al., 2008

Media policy in Jordan follows a "stop-go transition" (Sakr, 2001)

The development of media policy and radio
infrastructure has been shaped by:

- colonialism
- changing demographics
- the struggle for Palestinian liberation
- capitalism
- neoliberal economic development (Najjar, 2001)

A new Audiovisual Media Law was adopted in 2015:

- eliminates imprisonment for breaches of media law
- still no provision for community broadcasters
- "50% surcharge" for the "right to carry news and political programming"
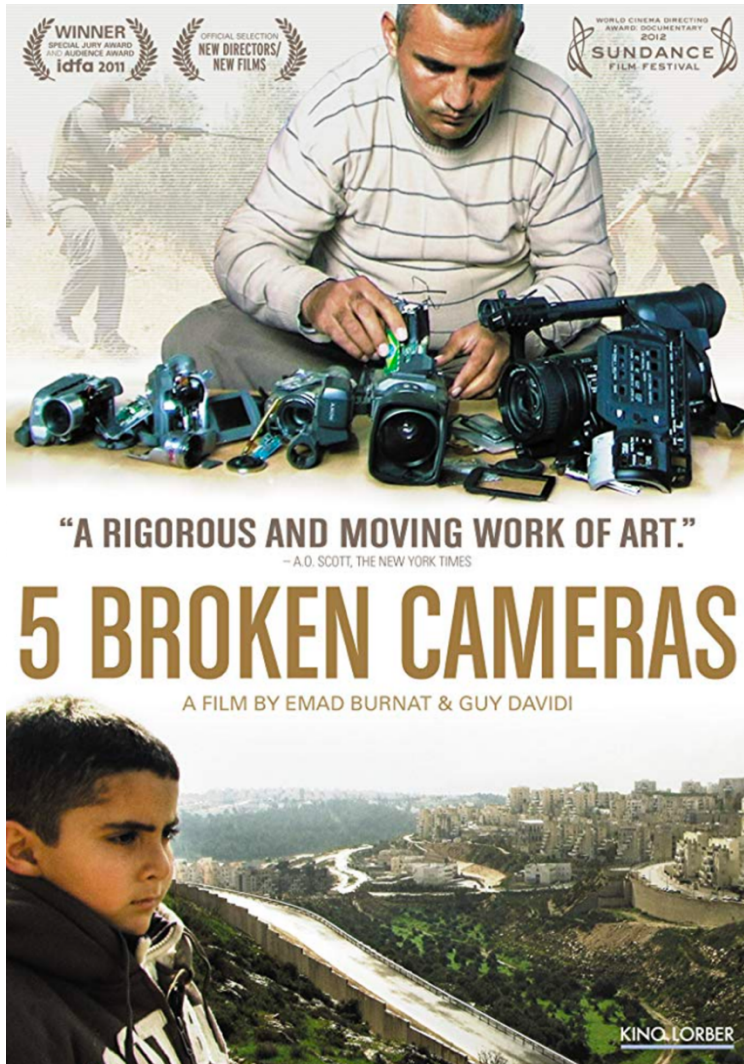 removed, but still charges $50,000 USD for a licence

See: https://ar.unesco.org/sites/default/files/updatedjordan.avl-analysis.16-05-18ls.pdf

الثورة التونسية ليست للبيع و لا للمساومة

POST-REVOLUTION: Decree Law 2011-116 recognizes and defines community as broadcasters who are "specialized, local, non-profit and serving the public interest" (Internews, 2011).

JANUARY 2018: International NGOs calls for Tunisian government to withdraw draft broadcasting bill that threatens freedom of expression.

See: http://www.globalmediapolicy.net/sites/default/files/Tunisia%20Media%20Law%20Review.pdf &
https://tunisia.mom-rsf.org/en/media/radio/

"A RIGOROUS AND MOVING WORK OF ART."
— A.O. SCOTT, THE NEW YORK TIMES

5 BROKEN CAMERAS

A FILM BY EMAD BURNAT & GUY DAVIDI

KINO LORBER

Community media under occupation:

- no licensing, in West Bank and Gaza unauthorized Palestinian-owned media only

- radio and television stations not allowed for Palestinian citizens living in Israel

- IDF attacks Palestinian media on a daily basis, journalists attacked, equipment destroyed

- Palestinians publish newspapers and websites (www.IMEMC.org), share news via social media

- Facebook approves 98% percent of request by Israel to suppress Palestinian posts and accounts

VIDEO: https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2125423/videoplayer/vi1061791513?ref_=tt_ov_vi

Palestinian imprisoned for nearly 3 years, after publishing poem on social media:

"Resist, my people, resist them.

In Jerusalem, I dressed my wounds and breathed my sorrows

And carried the soul in my palm

For an Arab Palestine.

I will not succumb to the peaceful solution,

Never lower my flags

Until I evict them from my land."

- Excerpts from Resist, My People, Resist Them by Dareen Tatour

See: http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/Israel-Palestinian-poet-Dareen-Tatour-imprisonment-Facebook-free-speech-poetry

See: https://archive.org/details/RFP2018

On Tuesday May 15th, 2018, the 70th anniversary of the ongoing Palestinian Nakbah and resistance to Israeli Apartheid, Radio Free Palestine launched at Midnight (Eastern Standard Time) to air 24 hours of programming from radio stations and producers across 5 continents.

AUDIO EXCERPT – Radio Free Palestine (3mins - MP3)

Swaziland has a population of 1.3 million, but only has state-owned radio.

January 2018: "Swazi editor Zweli Martin Dlamini has fled to South Africa after he received death threats, following a story he wrote about Swaziland's absolute monarch King Mswati III's alleged shady dealings in the telecommunications industry...."

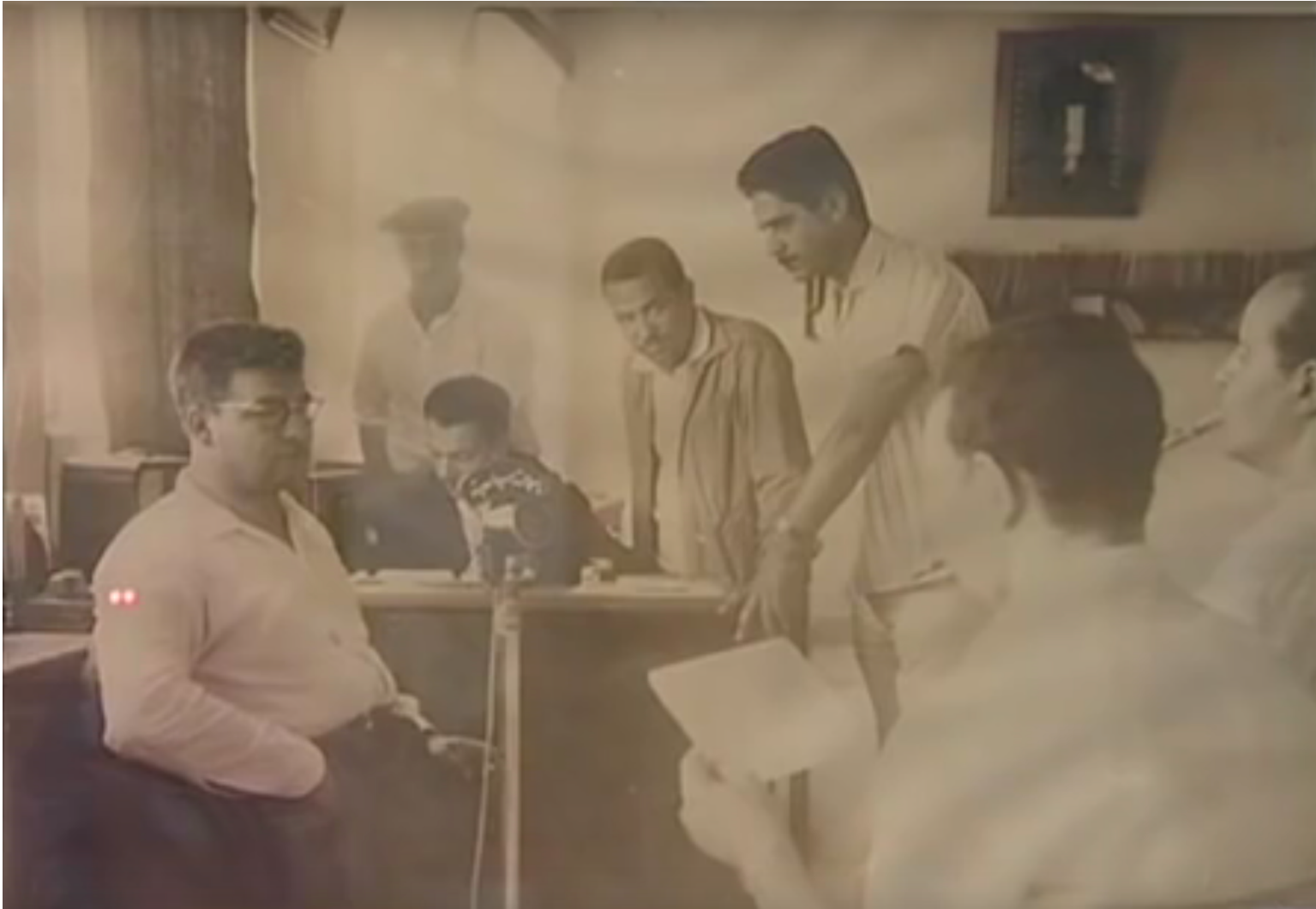See: https://www.iol.co.za/news/africa/swazi-editor-flees-over-story-on-king-mswatis-shady-dealings-12702920

Advocating for community radio licensing since 1999.

State may license five community radio stations in 2018, but only with temporary licenses.

See: https://www.facebook.com/Lubombo-Community-Radio-459724457418077/

SOURCE: Radio algérienne, "Ici, la voix de l'Algérie combattante" (in French and Arabic - LINK)
See: Franz Fanon, "This Is the Voice of Algeria" from A Dying Colonialism (first published in French in 1959, LINK)

From independence until 1990, all media state owned. Today, there are privately-owned newspapers and television, but no community radio stations are licensed to broadcast.

Radio Raj launched in May 2016 - https://raj-dz.com/radioraj/

Media still dominated by state despite opening of private ownership in 2006.

SOURCE: http://maroc.mom-rsf.org/en/

Web radios are organizing editorial charters and ethical guidelines.

See: https://soundcloud.com/user-988637275

See: https://www.e-joussour.net/

See: https://soundcloud.com/user-135404206

17 NOVEMBRE 2016

RADIO CLIMAT EST DIFFUSÉE DANS 18 PAYS
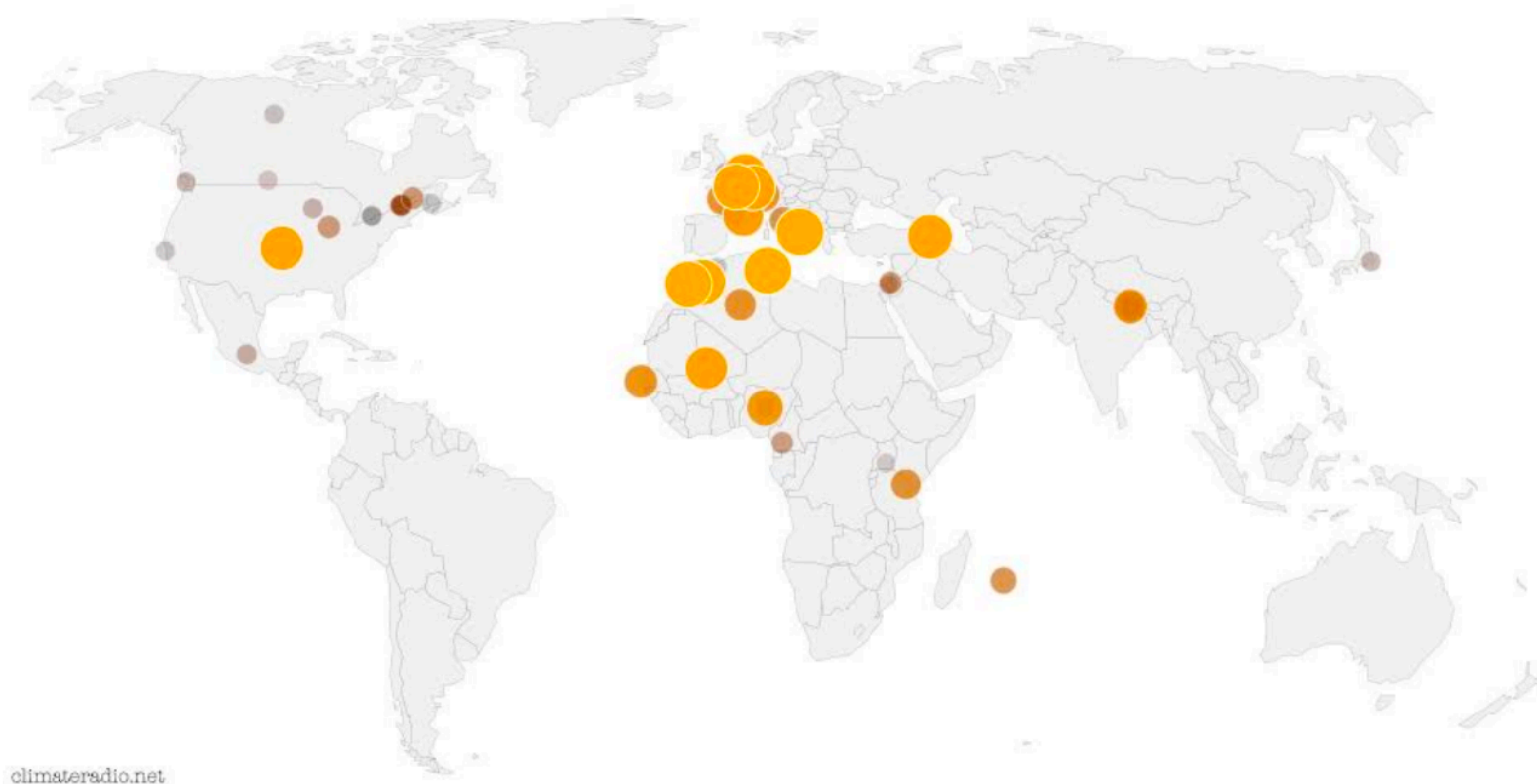
climateradio.net

VIDEO: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tH2gcyyhD6U

SOURCE: https://climateradio.net/

30 years of autonomous, independent community radio
and more recently multi-media centers

SOURCE: http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002160/216039f.pdf

VIDEO (in French): *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lvZcWCMyewE*
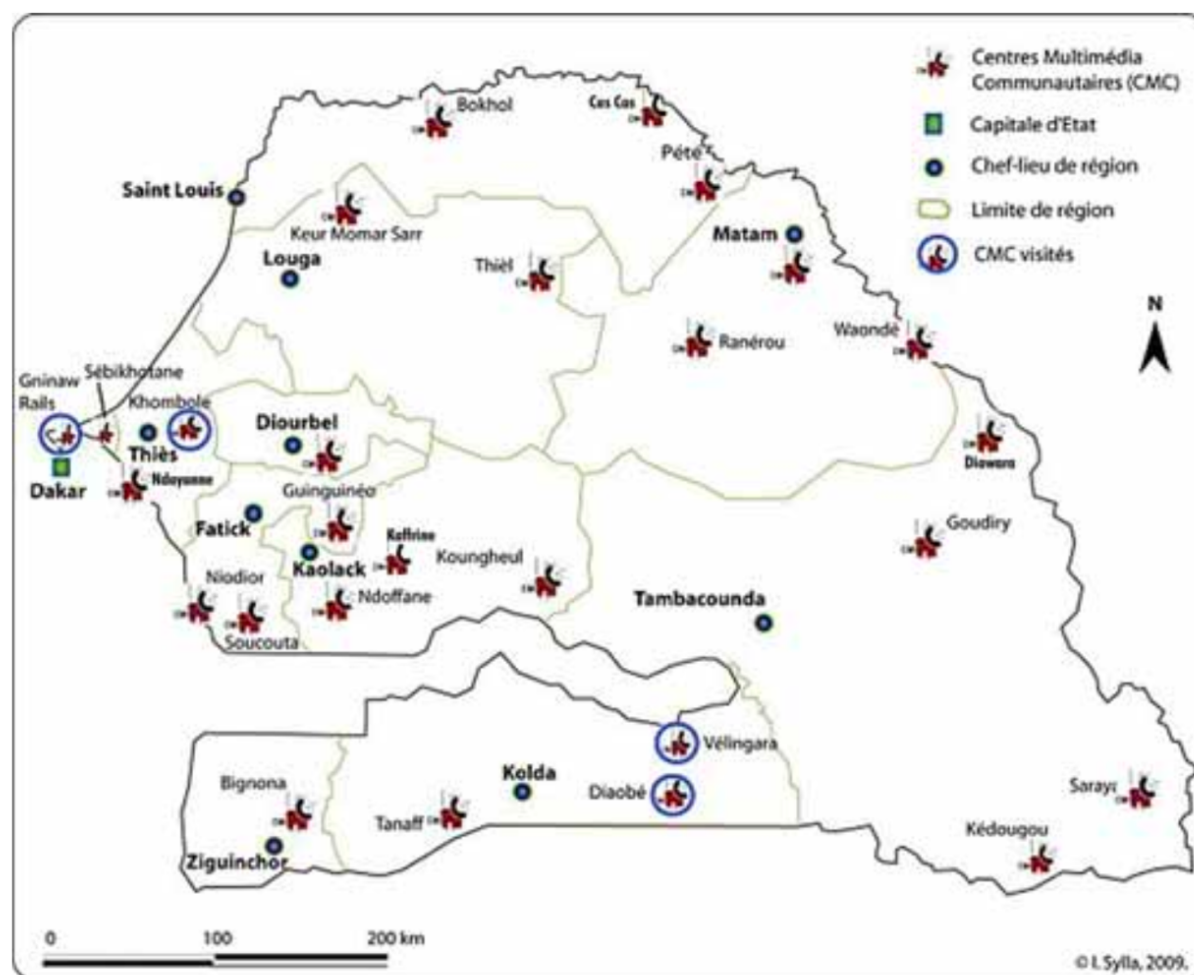
CMC'S offer:

- access to media production, radio and television, and internet
- reduce digital access costs (i.e. Internet bill) for citizens
- improve life through appropriation of communication technology
- reduce poverty by promoting development, including e-commerce
- raise awareness about sustainable development and rights
- education about climate change and protection of the environment

- What is your definition of free media **now**?

- Compare your response to the first definition you wrote.

- What changed or stayed the same about your definition?

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THANK YOU, MERCI, SHUKRAN !