

Media, democracy and transformation since 1994: an assessment

A colloquium hosted by Rhodes university

Date: 16 – 17 October 2010

Venue: Grahamstown

Rhodes University will host a colloquium on media, democracy and transformation since South Africa's transition to democracy in 1994. The intention of the colloquium is to provide space for critical reflection that moves beyond immediate responses to the recent threats to media freedom, and provides researched responses to the range of issues raised in this public debate. However, the colloquium also intend to contribute to the current debate; hence its urgency. It will create a platform for academics, members of the industry, civil society and political parties to interact with one another on the basis of these research findings. The main findings will be released in time for National Media Freedom Day on October 19, which commemorates the closure of *The World* and other newspapers, and the banning of black consciousness organizations in 1977. Some of the other outputs could include:

- Feeding the results into the likely parliamentary investigation into the establishment of a statutory Media Appeals Tribunal (MAT).
- Feeding the results into the Press Council's own review of its procedures.
- Setting an agenda for research, advocacy and curriculum.
- Capitalising on the momentum of the 18 Journalism Schools having signed a joint statement condemning recent threats to media freedom, and translating this momentum into meaningful collaborations.
- Producing a timely special edition of *Ecquid Novi* journal.

The colloquium has secured support from the Open Society Foundation of South Africa and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung.

The event will consider the various roles played by the media since the transition to democracy and their strengths and weaknesses. Papers are invited that reflect on the normative role of the media in society, such as the social responsibility role to contribute to democracy-building, and status quo assessments of the performance of the media in terms of these normative roles. These papers, and responses to them will then be used to situate discussions of aspects of the media's performance that have evoked controversy recently, such as media accountability and self-regulation; media ownership, diversity and transformation; journalism and media studies and the 'development debate'; and the performance, independence and accountability of broadcasting, including public service broadcasting. Evidence based papers are sought on these issues.

The colloquium will focus on five key areas:

- **The role(s) of the media in post-apartheid South Africa**

Papers are invited on normative theories of the media and their relevance to post-apartheid media, normative indicators and the performance of the media in this regard, and the media's relationship to government and other centres of power.

- **Media accountability and self-regulation.**

Papers are invited on the theory and practice of media accountability, the adequacy or otherwise of existing media accountability systems, the performance of the media self-regulatory bodies (the Broadcast Complaints Commission of South Africa and the Press Council of South Africa) and the ethical trends emerging from their judgments.

- **Media ownership**

Papers are invited on the different models of ownership as indicators of media diversity, the extent of ownership transformation, the relationship(s) between ownership and content, and whether the print media represent the diversity of views in society.

Format

Two academic presenters will be selected for each panel, and their inputs will be confined to 15 minutes per presentation. Two representatives from industry, civil society and political parties will be invited as respondents.

Deadlines

Deadline for abstracts is now closed.

Deadline for papers: 11 October

Provisional agenda

Saturday 16 October

17.30 – 18.30 Keynote speech: Colin Sparks. Respondent: Pallo Jordan

18.30 – 19.15 Presentation of African Media Barometer. FES.

Sunday 17 October

9.00 – 10.30 The role(s) of the post-apartheid media. Gabriel Botma, Nicola Jones, Anthea Garman, Bevelyn Dube, Rod Amner. Respondent: Aubrey Matshiqi (tbc)

11.00 – 13.00 Media accountability and self-regulation. Reg Rumney, Guy Berger, Fanie Groenewald, Rod Amner, Vicky Bronstein, Ayesha Kajee, Robert Brand, Jane Duncan.

Respondents: Robert Nkuna (tbc), Patrick Craven (tbc), Lumko Mtimde.

14.00 – 15.30 Media accountability ctd.

16.00 - 17.30 Ownership and content. Reg Rumney, Mahmood Sangley, Margaret Renn.

Respondent: Ismail Vadi

17.30 – 18.30 Way forward

Contact

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