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# The origin of ideas in the 'Paper for the People': research into how the Sunday Times chooses topics and commentators for its opinion pages

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## Abstract

The topics in the opinion pages of newspapers are the substance of much public debate and discussion. This research report focuses on the *Sunday Times*, one of South Africa's most influential newspapers, and seeks to understand how columnists and issues are chosen for its opinion and analysis pages. The research was conducted by interviewing decision-makers at the *Sunday Times*, observing them during their meetings and conducting a content analysis of the newspaper. The findings identify journalistic professional practice as a key element in the selection process, along with an awareness of, and to some extent, identification with, a national project of transformation in a post-repressive regime. The findings also point to how issues of transformation in South Africa affect how media decision-makers consider their own jobs and motivates them to make conscious efforts to push the media agenda forward in a way constructive to public discourse.