

Abstract

The dissertation tracks the media development and diversity policy positions of the South African government with a particular focus on the establishment of the Media Development and Diversity Agency. It tracks the reasons for the reduction in the Agency's funding and the curtailing of its mandate. The dissertation argues that a powerful coalition of forces including the commercial media sector and the Department of Finance (now National Treasury) impacted on the policy process to drive government thinking in a more market-driven direction. It explores the implications of this market thinking for the deepening of media development and diversity in the country. Further, the research looks at an alternative critical political economy of the media vision – firstly, in terms of how this vision was scuppered in the policy process, but also how it might be resurrected.

The critical political economy of the media school argues that development and diversity issues are not unproblematically served by the market and commercially driven media systems. Critical political economists of the media call for a number of state intervention including anti-monopoly legislation, subsidies for struggling more marginalised media sectors and so forth. Also, they call for the development of a core non-commodified, citizenship-orientated and inclusive public service media sector.