Feb 22nd, 2016

Welcome to MeCoDEM's Bridging Dialogue!

We look forward to sharing our results on the **service delivery protests** with you.

Please find enclosed:

- list of speakers
- fact sheet "About MeCoDEM"
- summary of findings "Media coverage"
- summary of findings "Journalists' accounts"
- summary of findings "Activists' accounts"

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Banjac, Sandra:

Sandra Banjac studied Broadcast Journalism (Radio and Television) at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA), Edith Cowan University in Perth, Australia. Following a 2-year stint working in radio and TV, she went on to complete an MA in "Journalism and Media within Globalisation" at the universities of Aarhus, Amsterdam and Hamburg. Her thesis explored communication strategies between media and public relations on the topic of human trafficking. Shortly after completing her MA in 2010 she joined Media Monitoring Africa, a media and human rights research organisation in Johannesburg, South Africa, where she worked as a researcher for four years. Since September 2014, she is working as a research associate with the Work Package "Journalistic ethics and work practices in conflict societies" within the "Media, Conflict and Democratisation" (MeCoDEM) project.

Bosch, Tanja:

Tanja Bosch is a senior lecturer in media studies and production, and researcher in the Centre for Film and Media Studies, University of Cape Town, South Africa. She completed her MA in International Affairs while a Fulbright Scholar at Ohio University, where she also graduated with a PhD in Mass Communication, with a focus on community radio. Tanja teaches broadcast journalism, media theory and qualitative research methods. Her areas of research and publication include talk radio, community media, and youth and gendered uses of mobile media and online social networks.

Drefs, Ines:

Ines Drefs, M.A., analyses professional journalism in the social web with a special focus on International Public Broadcasting. She is a research associate with the EU-project "Media, Conflict and Democratisation" (MeCoDEM) and a member of the Graduate School Media and Communication at University of Hamburg. Drefs obtained an Erasmus Mundus M.A. in "Journalism and Media within Globalization: The European Perspective" from Aarhus University in Denmark, University of Amsterdam in the Netherlands and University of Hamburg in Germany. Her Master's thesis focused on Journalism Trainers' Role Perception in the Context of Development Media. Before pursuing her Ph.D. Drefs completed a traineeship in Corporate Communications at Jacobs University Bremen and worked in Online Communication.

Pointer, Rebecca:

Rebecca Pointer recently received her MA (Political Communication) with Distinction from the University of Cape Town, with her thesis examining the media frames newspapers used in 2013 to cover service delivery protests. She is a PhD candidate at the University of Cape Town, where she is exploring how protesting communities can improve media coverage of their issues. She has a background in research and development communications at the Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies, University of the Western Cape, at the Regional Network on Equity in Health in Southern Africa (EQUINET), at the Municipal Services Project (MSP), and at various Cape Town NGOs.

Thomass, Barbara:

Barbara Thomass is Professor for International Comparison of Media Systems at the Institute for Media Studies, Ruhr-University in Bochum, Germany. Her main fields of interests are international communication, media politics, media in transition countries, and media and journalism ethics. She is member of the Board of the ZDF, a national PSB, and head of the Akademie für Publizistik, an institution for further training of journalists in Germany. Earlier, she was a Lecturer and Researcher in communication science at the universities of Hamburg, Göttingen, Lüneburg and Bremen and at the universities in Vienna and Paris. She has worked with international organisations for several years in courses on journalism standards and ethics in different parts of Eastern and South Eastern Europe, West Africa and India. Prior to her academic career she worked as a journalist.

Wasserman, Herman:

Herman Wasserman is Professor of Media Studies and Director of the Centre for Film and Media Studies at the University of Cape Town, South Africa. He holds a doctorate from the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa, and worked as a journalist before starting an academic career. He has published widely on media in post-apartheid South Africa. His books include the monograph Tabloid Journalism in South Africa (Indiana University Press, 2010) and the edited collections Chinese Soft Power in Africa: Promotion and Perceptions (with Xiaoling Zhang and Winston Mano, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), Media Ethics and Justice in a Global Age (with Shakuntala Rao, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), Reporting China in Africa (Routledge, 2014), Press Freedom in Africa: Comparative Perspectives (Routledge, 2013), Popular Media, Democracy and Development in Africa (Routledge, 2011), Media Ethics Beyond Borders (with Stephen J. Ward, Routledge, 2010). He edits the journal African Journalism Studies.

About MeCoDEM

MeCoDEM began on 1 February 2014 and will run over three years. The project investigates the interplay of communication and democratisation conflicts in four countries, Egypt, Kenya, Serbia and South Africa, each of them representing unique aspects of transitional / post-transitional divisions. Based on a comparative case study design, the research covers constitutional conflicts, civic conflicts and conflicts surrounding accountability and good governance. These conflicts constitute arenas of dispute where the media interact with the communicative strategies of governments on the one hand, and political activists and political movements struggling for recognition on the other.

MeCoDEM is funded by the European Union within the EU's Seventh Framework Programme. With a budget of 2.2 million Euros, the project consortium includes eight partner institutions from six countries: University of Leeds (coordinating institution), University of Belgrade, University of Hamburg, University of Cape Town, University of Oxford, Stockholm University, Ruhr University Bochum and American University in Cairo

Summary of Findings on Print Media Coverage of Community Protests in South Africa

Voices were loud during the community protests. But what voices did the media pick up? MeCoDEM's local country team at University of Cape Town has conducted a content analysis to find out how service delivery protests were portrayed in the South African newspapers Business Day, Daily Sun, Mail and Guardian as well as New Age. The examination was based on a systematic and quantitative analysis of media text.

Reported causes of conflict

Of 251 articles on service delivery, 35.1% were reported in the Daily Sun, 25.9% in New Age, 21.9% in Business Day and 17.1% in Mail and Guardian. As the cause the conflict Political Culture was mentioned in 88.8% of the articles. The second most frequently reported cause was Economic (79.7%) and then Political Institutions (70.9%). Judicial causes were only mentioned in 34.3% of the cases. Attributing the cause of the conflict to Identities and International causes were reported by 3.2% and 1.2% of the articles respectively.

Depiction of conflict party

Citizens (76.5%) were the most frequently reported conflict party. The next most frequently reported conflict party were sub-national/regional level state actors (7.6%). The conflict parties were most frequently described with regards to their behaviour (action-orientation was reported by 63.7% of the articles), and then whether they had integrity (12.4%) and if they were competent (12%).

Conflict parties were evaluated on four attributes: Integrity, Competence, Action-Orientation and Likeability. The evaluation was based on a five-point scale: 1 – Strongly positive, 2 – positive, 3 – balanced, 4 – negative, 5 – Strongly negative. Overall, conflict parties were positively portrayed with regards to Likeability (2.10), Integrity (2.74) and Action-Orientation (2.87), and portrayed in a mixed light with regards to Competence (3.11).

The four media outlets portrayed the conflict party "citizens" quite differently: Mail and Guardian portrayed the most negative evaluation (4.03), and their average portrayal differed by a complete 'point' on the five point scale from the remaining three media outlets. The remaining three media outlets portrayed the conflict party in a mixed light with both positive and negative evaluations. Of these three outlets, the Daily Sun portrayed the citizens the most positively (2.09), followed by the Business Day and New Age with 2.88 and 2.94 average evaluations respectively.

Suggested conflict resolution

The most frequently reported solutions related to institutional change (55,06 %; average preference = 2.18). The second most frequently reported solution was about compromise and cooperation (22,47%). 8,99 % of the cases reported a preference for a peaceful solution, and 7,87% of the cases said that the treatment would have to demonstrate some tolerance. The least frequently mentioned aspect of the solution was whether it would be gradual or fast. Of those articles that did report on this aspect, it appeared that treatment option would be gradual.

Summary of Findings on Journalists' Accounts of Covering Community Protests in South Africa

Are community protests newsworthy only if they are violent? What if violence has become a mere tool to press for media attention? MeCoDEM's local country teams at University of Cape Town and University of Hamburg (Germany) have identified specific challenges faced by journalists when reporting on community protests in South Africa. The following findings on work practices, journalistic roles and ethical dilemmas emerged through in-depth interviews with 25 professional journalists.

Work Practices: how journalists select topics and what processes do they engage in when investigating and constructing stories on community protests

Beyond being newsworthy, stories on community protests are selected if they display violence, as well as if they offer journalists an opportunity to highlight the "human element" by focusing on the voices of those affected. While constructing a story, journalists emphasise importance of establishing rapport through low-key and casual engagement with protestors, and avoiding 'parachute journalism' by building relationships with communities over extended periods of time. Journalist face several challenges, the biggest being time constraints to do follow-up stories and unpack the complexity of community protests, beyond covering the violence of the event.

Journalistic Roles: what journalists perceive to be their role in reporting community protests

Aside from being an 'informer' who transmits news in an objective way, journalists most frequently see themselves as 'teachers' with the role to explain the complexity of community protests as well as to enlighten citizens and foster education among particular populations, such as "suburban middle class people". Journalists also understand their role to be 'agents of social change' who want to "capture the voices of the voiceless" as well as "have an impact" and "effect change".

Ethical considerations and dilemmas: what guides journalists in reporting community protests and what challenges do they encounter

While journalists strive to be 'objective' in their reporting, they also emphasise being 'human first, then journalist'. Here they face the challenge of exercising detachment when reporting on protests in communities where they have formed relationships with residents and "feel a certain compassion (…) for people's plights". A prominent ethical dilemma is that of 'manufacturing news' where the mere presence of journalists at community protests invites violent reactions from protesters in order to receive news coverage.

Summary of Findings on Activists' Accounts of Community Protests in South Africa

Community protests in South Africa have received a lot of media attention. But did activists find this useful to their struggle or whether it gave voice to their issues? MeCoDEM's local country team at the University of Cape Town conducted 28 interviews with community activists and NGO workers to unpack what is driving protest, how communities are communicating about their issues and what their perceptions are of media uptake of their struggles. The study involved a qualitative analysis, which identified commonalities across the interviews and differences between them.

Activists' understanding of causes of conflict

The 28 participants reported with consistency that the cause of the troubles was slow or unfair service delivery, poor government participatory process and communication, and poverty and joblessness.

Encouraging participation

With regard to how activists organised and encouraged participation in their activities and protests, there was a marked difference between community activists and NGO activists, with the former focusing on word of mouth, using loud hailers and sometimes SMS or WhatsApp; whereas NGO activists used emails, the web and social media more frequently.

Getting media attention

When it comes to getting their message across in the media, community activists found it was difficult to get their voices across, and felt that they only received media attention if they burnt things or blockaded roads. NGO workers felt the media uptake of their messages was more positive, with press releases often leading to interviews or stories citing the NGO workers as expert voices.