

CALL FOR PAPERS

Ownership Structures and Managerial Challenges in the African Media and Telecommunications Sectors

November 8-9, 2018 - University of Neuchâtel, Switzerland

General information and format of the conference

The second conference on media development and sustainability addresses ownership structures and managerial practices within the telecommunications and media sectors in Africa. The conference seeks to not only advance research in the field but also to stimulate a constructive dialogue between practitioners and academics. Therefore, it dedicates **one day to an academic workshop** and **one day to professional contributions**.

The advertised event builds on the first conference on media development and sustainability that took place in 2015 at the University of Neuchâtel. Bringing together both academic researchers and media professionals in order to discuss possible interdependences between the challenges of raising African media and the investment strategies of Western media outlets in Africa turned out to be an extremely fruitful and stimulating experience, hence this invitation to continue this endeavor.

Objectives of the conference

The conference aims at **investigating the impact of varying foreign ownership and managerial practices on** (a) **media and telecommunications policies**, and (b) **democratic and economic development in African countries**.

Free and independent information media are fundamental for both the economic and democratic development of societies. However, how can free and independent information be ensured? Media are being shaped by internet-based and mobile communications technologies, which allow a dramatic reduction of content production and distribution costs. On one hand, this helps media outlets to overcome financial constraints, develop and thus improve access to information, on the other hand, internet service providers and mobile operators have become the true gatekeepers of information. Considering that many African countries are governed by authoritarian rulers, questions such as the following naturally arise:

- What impact do varying ownership structures have on the provision of internet and mobile communication services? What role does foreign ownership play within this context?
- Does foreign ownership of telecommunication companies affect media and telecommunication policies? If yes, to what extent and how?
- What are the managerial practices that foreign companies adopt to successfully implement their investment strategies in the African telecommunication sector, and thus ensure the provision of internet and mobile communication services?
- What is the impact of these practices for media development in Africa?
- How do these practices contribute to the development of African human capital, for instance in terms of digital competences?

Overall, we seek to understand how and under which conditions foreign investors can contribute to the African telecommunication sector as well as media and telecom policies, beyond the mere financing of media infrastructure. Further, we aim at shedding light on how foreign investment can help to achieve the related UN sustainable development goals, thus contribute to the democratic and economic development of the African continent.

Proposed research topics and submission guidelines

We are particularly interested in theory-based and empirically sound submissions related to the conference theme. With a view to telecommunications and media in African countries, research topics include but are not limited to:

- ownership structures/ foreign direct investment (FDI) and political and economic developments
- ownership structures/ FDI strategies and effects on sectoral development, including investment in advanced services needed by digital media players and diffusion of social media, gaming etc.
- ownership structures/ FDI strategies and local/indigenous language media development
- ownership structures/ FDI strategies and human resource management practices
- ownership structures/ FDI strategies and human capital development
- ownership structures/ FDI strategies and managerial and digital competence development
- managerial and organizational challenges of FDI
- ownership structures/ FDI strategies and convergence.

To enrich the debate we further welcome contributions by practitioners that describe, analyze and explain specific cases/experiences related to the above mentioned domains.

After the conference authors of selected submissions will have the opportunity to submit their full manuscript for publication as part of a special issue of a journal or in an edited conference volume.

Timeline

- Please send your **abstract** (max. 500 word) describing the main research question, theoretical framework, research method, expected outcomes and relation with the topics addressed in this call to cinzia.dalzotto@unine.ch by **June 10, 2018**.
- Notifications of acceptance will be sent out on June 30, 2018.
- Full papers will be due by September 30, 2018.

Conference organization and contact

Conference organizers

Cinzia Dal Zotto with Aicha Hammami and Hatem Gabsi, Enterprise Institute, University of Neuchâtel

Conference program committee

- Cinzia Dal Zotto, Aicha Hammami and Hatem Gabsi, University of Neuchâtel
- Tina Freyburg, Lisa Garbe and Veronique Wavre, University of St. Gallen.

Sponsors

- University of Neuchâtel, Switzerland
- Swiss Network for International Studies, Geneva, Switzerland

Contact

If you have any questions, please contact cinzia.dalzotto@unine.ch or aicha.hammami@unine.ch

Conference website

<http://www.unine.ch/africamedia/home.html>

