

Momentum

Journalism & Tech Task Force

What can South Africa's experience teach Brazil at this moment? We spoke with Michael Markovitz*, a South African researcher and one of the leading voices in debates on digital competition, platforms, and the sustainability of journalism in the Global South.

* Michael Markovitz is a faculty member at the Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS), in Johannesburg, and founding director of the Media Leadership Think Tank (MLTT). Recognized as one of South Africa's leading experts on media and technology policy, he has spent decades contributing to debates on digital platforms, competition, and the sustainability of journalism.



Momentum: The Brazilian CADE's decision seems to mark an important shift in the country's debate: the idea that the problem is not only Google's use of journalistic content, but also the way platforms have come to "manage the architecture of informational intermediation" and concentrate power over visibility, attention, and monetization. South Africa has already gone through part of this process. Looking back, what would you say were the two most important lessons from this political and institutional trajectory and what do you believe Brazil can learn from this experience at this moment?

Michael Markovitz: Brazil has a significantly larger media market than South Africa and may have considerably more leverage with the platforms, both economically and geopolitically, than the Commission had when it conducted the [MDPMI](#). That context matters when drawing lessons, because what was pragmatic in South Africa may not be the ceiling for CADE.

Three lessons stand out:

1. First, the design and delivery timing of remedies are inseparable. The Commission chose a negotiated settlement over remedies it knew would trigger appeals and years of litigation during which nothing would flow to publishers. Delayed justice through prolonged competition proceedings serves no one, least of all newsrooms under financial pressure. Brazil's greater leverage may allow CADE to push harder, but the principle holds: remedies designed for actual, timely implementation outperform ambitious ones that stall in indefinite litigation.
2. Second, these inquiries are only as strong as the participation that informs them. South Africa's South African National Editors' Forum (SANEF) – led civil society and publisher coalition (which included the Media Leadership Think Tank (MLTT)) shaped the inquiry's framing, scope and findings in material ways. Broad alliance-building matters. We showed that when civil society engages substantively with a technical competition inquiry, professional, skilled representation in competition law, economic regulation, and media policy can make a decisive difference. Submissions that propose concrete solutions in the right technical language are the ones that move a competition authority.
3. Third, solve the eligibility problem early and anchor it to something legitimate. The Commission tied financial remedy eligibility to membership of South Africa's independent self-regulatory bodies, the Press Council and BCCSA, cutting through what could have been definitional disputes about who qualifies as a legitimate news publisher. Brazil's regulatory architecture differs, but the principle holds: find your equivalent mechanism early, try and anchor it to credible accountability structures, and don't let terminology battles delay relief to publishers.

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Momentum: The Brazilian case is unfolding precisely at a moment when AI Overviews and generative systems are deepening zero-click dynamics and attention retention within platforms and chatbots themselves. In South Africa, where do you see this agenda heading now, and what do you believe should be the next steps for countries like ours dealing with these growing dynamics of platform dependency?

Michael Markovitz: The MDPMI was deliberately cautious on AI compensation. When the Commission finalised its report in November 2025, generative AI and zero-click dynamics were evolving faster than any single national regulator could confidently address, and significant international litigation and legislation were still unresolved. The Commission imposed enforceable content controls and EU-equivalent opt-out parity, but stopped short of a compensation framework for AI summaries. I think that was a conscious, proportionate call given the timing.

South Africa's path forward is further complicated by a Copyright Amendment Bill that was referred by the President to the Constitutional Court in 2024. SA's top court heard the matter in May 2025 and has yet to hand down judgment. The key unresolved issues include fair use definitions and fair and equitable remuneration provisions. In my view, any comprehensive response to zero-click and AI Overviews could require competition law and copyright law working in concert. Until that ruling comes, South Africa has a significant policy and legislative gap.

The international picture has since sharpened a this year. On 12 May 2026, the Court of Justice of the European Union confirmed that member states may provide publishers with a right to fair remuneration for online use of their publications, explicitly linking this to media freedom and pluralism. That ruling, combined with the CADE investigation now underway, means Brazil could be in a position to develop a compensation framework for AI summaries and the use of journalistic content in generative AI outputs that South Africa could not yet reach.

Momentum: An important part of recent debates in South Africa has helped shift discussions about platforms away from a purely technical perspective toward broader questions of democracy, economic harm, and the redistribution of power. Thinking about countries like Brazil and South Africa, what would a truly transformative agenda for journalism look like in the context of digital competition and artificial intelligence?

Michael Markovitz: In my view, there are several key elements to any truly transformative agenda for journalism. At the core sits recognition of journalism as a public good, not just in policy rhetoric but in law and, where possible, in constitutional frameworks. This isn't about keeping newspapers afloat for their own sake. It's about the direct link between sustainable, accountable journalism and the health of democracy. Platforms have built extraordinarily valuable AI systems trained substantially on credible, fact-checked, well-researched and investigated content. If that content disappears because the economic model that produces it collapses, the information ecosystem doesn't just become more toxic. It imperils democracy.

A transformative agenda must also pursue fair compensation and the redistribution of the value platforms extract from journalism. Two legal frameworks are essential, though they operate differently. Competition law can address market power and structural imbalances, though as the MDPMI showed, there are real limits to what it can achieve alone. Copyright law provides a longer-standing basis for fair and ongoing remuneration for the use of content. While journalism is still excluded at the WIPO level, the recent European precedent demonstrated that copyright frameworks can provide protections that competition law may not. Both are needed.

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The most underestimated element is collective power. Individual national processes, however well-designed, are insufficient on their own against platforms of this scale. The CTRL+J Alliance, bringing together the Media Leadership Think Tank in South Africa, Momentum – Journalism and Tech Task Force in Brazil and AMSI in Indonesia, grew from tricontinental conferences across Latin America, Africa and Asia-Pacific. It represents exactly the kind of Global South coalition that can share evidence, align analytical frameworks and build the solidarity needed to shift the terms of engagement with platforms and multilateral bodies.