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MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION RESEARCH  
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# Media Governance

A Cosmopolitan Critique

*Edited by*  
Sarah Anne Ganter  
Hanan Badr



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Global Transformations in Media and  
Communication Research - A Palgrave and  
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Sarah Anne Ganter • Hanan Badr  
Editors

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*Editors*

Sarah Anne Ganter  
School of Communication  
Simon Fraser University  
Burnaby, BC, Canada

Hanan Badr  
Department of Communication Studies  
Paris Lodron University of Salzburg  
Salzburg, Austria

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We found ourselves in the midst of a global pandemic when working on this volume. Covid-19 caused us and our contributors, to work in conditions of constant alert, insecurity and often isolation from our loved ones. Working together on this book from across eleven different countries made the inequalities with which we live through this challenging time much more apparent than most of the everyday struggles that each of us endured. Therefore, we feel it is more so important to acknowledge our colleagues' endurance, collegiality and connectedness with this project, at times when they, their friends, family members and colleagues went through particularly challenging, hard and often confusing experiences. Working together during the past months has reinforced our sense of

scholarly community, as well as our commitment to the very purpose of this book which is calling for and helping shape an academic discourse that exists through exchange and in recognition of the often very different realities that shape our work. We want to thank all our contributors for letting us in on their struggles and being empathetic toward our own, and dedicating their time and energy to this project.

Finally, we thank our families, especially Juan and Enzo, Amr, Rana and Karim, as well as close friends who in these difficult times helped us remain healthy and cheered us up when we needed it the most.

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## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

**Ufuoma Akpojivi** is an associate professor at the Media Studies Department, University of the Witwatersrand. He holds a PhD in Communication Studies from the University of Leeds, UK. His research interests are in the areas of media policy, democratization, citizenship, new media, and activism authoring, with many academic articles published in these areas. He is a C2 rated researcher of the National Research Foundation (NRF) of South Africa.

**Afonso de Albuquerque** is a professor at the Graduate Program in Communication Studies, Fluminense Federal University, Brazil. His previous works have appeared in *Journalism*; *Journalism Studies*; *Media, Culture & Society*; and *Communication, Culture, and Critique*.

**Rasha Allam** is an assistant professor and associate chair of the Department Journalism and Mass Communication, School of Global Affairs and Public Policy at The American University in Cairo. Allam's research interests include Egyptian and Arab media management systems and business models, Arab broadcast, electronic and social media laws, policies and regulations. Allam's publications address several issues, such as constructive journalism in the Arab region, the use of analytics inside newsrooms, and the functionality of media business models.

**Sanjay Asthana** teaches at the School of Journalism and Strategic Media in Middle Tennessee State University, USA. His areas of interest are media and cultural studies, youth media education, international and global communication. He is the author of *Innovative Practices of Youth Participation in Media* (2006), *Youth Media Imaginaries from Around the World* (2012),

*Palestinian Youth Media and the Pedagogies of Estrangement* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), and *India's State-Run Media: Broadcasting, Power, and Narrative* (2019). Dr. Asthana is on a US Scholar Fulbright-Nehru Award to India, studying the 'Dialectic of Environment and Political Ecology.'

**Hanan Badr** is Full Professor and Chair for Public Spheres and Inequalities at the Department of Communication, University of Salzburg, Austria. Her work focuses on global inequalities and communication, comparing media systems, activism and digital public spheres, diversifying communication research, and how globalization and digitization transform journalism worldwide. Her work pushes epistemological approaches towards more inclusivity in communication studies. Hanan won awards including the Kluge Fellowship at the Library of Congress and the DAAD Scholarship Award and held positions in Cairo, Erfurt, Berlin, Beirut and Kuwait.

**Sarah Anne Ganter** is Assistant Professor of Communication and Cultural Policy in the School of Communication at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver. Her work is influenced by a cosmopolitan approach to academic work, integrating scholarly work from different cultural, linguistic and geographical academic settings. She has published widely on media governance, digital policy and regulation, and journalism, and analyzes media and digital policy transformations from a theoretical perspective that focuses on the dynamics and interactions shaping institutional fields.

**Rodrigo Gómez** is Professor in Communication Policies and Industries at the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana-Cuajimalpa. He is the chair of the Political Economy section of the International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR). His research is grounded in the critical political economy of communication, examining ownership and public policies in communication industries. He is co-editor (with Ben Birkinbine and Janet Wasko) of the series and book *Global Media Giants* (2017).

**Dal Yong Jin** is a distinguished professor at Simon Fraser University, Canada. He completed his PhD in the Institute of Communications Research at the University of Illinois in 2005. Jin's major research and teaching interests are on digital platforms and digital games, globalization and media, transnational cultural studies, and the political economy of media and culture. Jin has published numerous books, journal articles, and book chapters. He is the founding book series editor of Routledge Research in Digital Media and Culture in Asia. He has been

directing the Transnational Culture and Digital Technology Lab since summer 2021.

**Hyejin Jo** is a PhD student in the School of Communication at Simon Fraser University, Canada. She has two MAs in Communication at SFU and Media & Communication at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, South Korea. Her research areas are critical media studies, cultural studies, and feminist political economy. She explores the intersections of popular culture, gender, and technologies. One key strand of her research focuses on a heteronormative start-up culture. She is working on a new project that engages critical theory and feminist approaches to the metaverse for technologies and power dynamics.

**Alejandro Linares** is a professor at the Universidad Nacional de Formosa (UNaF) and a researcher at Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas (CONICET) in Argentina. Linares holds a PhD from the University of Buenos Aires in Social Sciences.

**Lucineide Magalhães de Matos** is a PhD candidate at Communication Program, Fluminense Federal University.

**Trust Matsilele** is Lecturer in the Media and Communication Studies in the Department of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT). He is also a research fellow of the CPUT's Centre for Communication Studies. Matsilele holds a DLitt *et* Phil Communication Studies from University of Johannesburg. Matsilele is an interdisciplinary researcher with interest in digital humanities, intersection of artificial intelligence and journalism, cyber-protest cultures and the intersection of culture and technology. His monograph on social media and digital dissidence in Zimbabwe is set to be published in 2023.

**Bruce Mutsvaire** is a professor in the Department of Media and Culture Studies at Utrecht University in The Netherlands.

**Judith Pies** is a communication researcher and has been the head of the German research, training, and consultancy organization Medien | Kompetenz | International since 2018. She received her PhD from the University of Erfurt and worked as a researcher and lecturer at different universities. Her research focus is on the transformation of journalism, international media and communication, and media accountability. Outside of her academic career, she has worked as a project manager for international media projects and as a journalist.

**Preeti Raghunath** is Lecturer of Communication and Media Studies at Monash University Malaysia. She is the author of *Community Radio Policies in South Asia: A Deliberative Policy Ecology Approach*, published by Palgrave Macmillan, in 2020. She is exploring Southern theorising of media policy studies.

**Naomi Sakr** is Professor of Media Policy at the Communication and Media Research Institute (CAMRI) of the University of Westminster in the UK and author, co-author, editor or co-editor of eight books on Arab media.

**María Soledad Segura** is a professor at the Universidad Nacional de Córdoba (UNC) and a researcher at Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas (CONICET).

**Hong Shen** is a Systems Scientist in the Human-Computer Interaction Institute at Carnegie Mellon University (CMU). She received her PhD in Communications from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC). Her research focuses on global Internet industry and policy (with an emphasis on China) as well as the social and policy implications of digital platforms and algorithmic systems.

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# Introduction: Re-examining Media Governance Through Cosmopolitan Critique

*Sarah Anne Ganter and Hanan Badr*

The global pandemic that hit in 2020 has interrupted exchanges across borders in the social sciences and has exposed the multiple inequalities shaping academic work across gender, class, race, and geographies (Masiero et al. 2021; Badr and Elmaghraby 2021; Adjin-Tettey 2020). In this climate, even though it might be easier to remain in what Waisbord (2019) described as “silos” of academia, it is even more important to insist on and reinforce international perspectives and collaboration. Instead of reverting back to national-only outlooks, this book brings together eighteen researchers from the field of media and communication policy, media democratization, international communication, media structures, and

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S. A. Ganter (✉)

School of Communication, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, BC, Canada

e-mail: [sganter@sfu.ca](mailto:sganter@sfu.ca)

H. Badr

Department of Communication Studies, Paris Lodron University of Salzburg, Salzburg, Austria

e-mail: [hanan.badr@plus.ac.at](mailto:hanan.badr@plus.ac.at)

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media economics to question, revisit, renew, and advance the concept of media governance under the light of a cosmopolitan critique. The notion of a cosmopolitan critique refers to the idea of academic cosmopolitanism, which derives from scholarship advocating for intellectual exchange across borders to open scholarship up to often under-represented realities (Waisbord 2015, 2016; Ganter and Ortega 2019; Badr et al. 2020; Ganter 2020; Badr and Ganter 2021). An important goal of academic cosmopolitanism is epistemic transformation (Walsh 2002) through dialogue between scholars, which is intended to achieve the inclusion of wider conceptual, theoretical, and empirical perspectives in the spirit of talking *with* rather than *about* realities that are often invisible on major academic publishing platforms (Ganter and Ortega 2019). In the spirit of academic cosmopolitanism, regardless of the challenges posed by the global pandemic, in this book, we work together across five continents to establish the need to foster a cosmopolitan critique to open the field up to more diverse scholarship on media governance.

### SELECTED PUZZLE SETS

Media governance has achieved considerable influence in media and communication studies as a descriptive term, an analytical approach, or as a normative concept (Donges 2007). The field has developed based on political and academic definitions and recommendations around what concerns media governance analytically, ideologically, and practically. Politically originated terms, such as “good governance” (Woods 1999), have led to the hegemonic use of governance as something “ideal” or “good.” However, as a field of study, media governance requires a critical lens through which to generate knowledge around frameworks of rules and practices that influence the behavior of individuals, organizations, and firms, and shape societal understandings of media and communication at large, which means that the study of the complex patterns behind the interactions shaping regulatory structures and rules of behavior are equally important (Ganter 2016, p. 78). Accordingly, Hamelink and Nordenstreng (2007) describe media governance as a mixture of processes and practices that determine institutional settings and rules delimiting the performance of new and traditional media.

It has been emphasized how the field is broad, with room for many perspectives (Puppis 2010). Kleinsteuber and Nehls (2011) distinguished between the governance of traditional media and the governance of new media, while most scholars speak of media governance (Donges 2007;

Puppis 2007, 2010; Raboy 2002, 2004). With the increasing digitalization of the media overall, an array of new terms have emerged: “Internet governance,” “governance by things,” “governance of/by platforms,” “governance by algorithms,” or “platform governance.” These terms belong to media governance but in the literature are seldom put into perspective with the field. In this volume, we treat media governance as a term including the converging momentum that challenges clear-cut binary distinctions between the governance of “new” and “traditional” media. Therefore, the contributions to this volume address a variety of media governance related to issues ranging from traditional media to social media governance.

Media governance has been criticized for being a buzzword, too broad of a concept, or an ideologically coined term (Ginosar 2014; Karppinen and Moe 2013). The critique established thus far refers to the broad scope of media governance and its applications, and its related conceptual challenges and ambiguities (Ginosar 2014), as well as to implicit normative consequences and ideological connotations (e.g., Karppinen and Moe 2013). This hints at the need for further examinations, discussions, and delineations according to new perspectives and contexts, which, to date, have been widely ignored when discussing media governance and its conceptual values and limitations.

In light of these critiques, media governance, as a subfield of media policy studies, has never moved beyond its adolescence. The “governance turn” (Jessop 2000) was introduced from policy studies in media and communication studies. As such, it mainly surfaced in North America and Europe, and as José (2007) has rightly pointed out, the use of governance in its original form is part of a dominant narrative in itself. In other contexts, the “governance turn” did not take place at all, or at least not to the same extent. For instance, Latin American scholars often prefer the more static term of “governability” (*gobernabilidad*) rather than looking at the process-oriented “governance” perspective (*gobernanza*). While the latter examines the governing role of the state, civil society, and the market, and their respective interactions, the former examines the quality of governance (Kooiman and Bavinck 2013). Others frankly admitted their preference by dismissing *governance* as an antiquated concept early on (Camou 1995).

These examples indicate that media governance has considerable limitations despite its conceptual breadth and openness, as a narrow set of contexts has shaped our understanding of media governance. In a systematic

review of the literature in the timeframe between 2002 and 2019, we identified 153 scholars using media governance terminologies in journal articles, books, and book chapters published during that time (we considered work published in English, Spanish, Portuguese, and French). The geographical distribution shows that 45.75% of those scholars work at universities in Europe, 30.72% in North America, and 7.19% in Oceania, and this leaves a total of 16.34% of scholars having used media governance as a perspective in their published work from universities in the Global South. The literature review also reveals that scholars working from within and on countries such as Canada, the USA, Germany, the UK, and Switzerland have been particularly dominant in shaping our understanding of media governance. While media governance as a concept has mainly been criticized in the past by European scholars (e.g., Karppinen and Moe 2013), there is a lack of insight into the usability, value, and significance of media governance as a perspective in research in Global South contexts. The consequences of this gap in the knowledge making in media governance as a field have not been addressed sufficiently in the literature.

As media governance has mainly been defined by Western scholars, more recent literature using the concept from within the Global South (e.g., Bhuiya 2014; Kim 2018; Opperman 2018) is adopting it without revisiting its value as much as its shortcomings. With this edited volume, we aim at triggering a critical dialogue between scholars who work in and on overlooked geographical, socio-economic, and political contexts and the traditional literature and conceptualizations, which mainly stem from scholars working in Central Europe and North America. Media governance, in the end, might take on different meanings and interpretations depending on the lived experiences of scholars, media regulators, policy-makers, media workers, media organizations, and citizens. This should be reflected in the ways in which we conceptually work with media governance approaches.

### ACADEMIC COSMOPOLITANISM

Calls for cosmopolitanism in media and communication studies have become as varied as they are pressing and are repeatedly vocalized. While the idea of a field that thrives through dialogue and multiple perspectives has existed for some time (Boczkowski and Siles 2014; Waisbord 2016), it has only recently been shaped through a sense of collectivity that strives for an implementation toward cosmopolitan media and communication

studies (Ganter and Ortega 2019; Waisbord 2019; Badr et al. 2020; Badr and Ganter 2021). As a research stream, academic cosmopolitanism has emerged out of a variety of calls for de-Westernization (Curran and Park 2000; Lee 2015; Miike 2006; Wang 2011) and the unmasking of communication as a predominantly white discipline (Chakravartty et al. 2018; Hirji et al. 2020) that reproduces academic provincialism and contributes to the asymmetries and invisibilities of entire research terrains and scholarly voices.

Given the many years in which calls for meta-change in our field have repeatedly vaporized, academic cosmopolitanism increasingly recognizes that to maneuver calls for de-Westernization into calls for action what is needed, is the recognition that this is a common cause that all academics should engage with. The cosmopolitan outlook, as Beck asserted, is “simultaneously skeptical, disillusional, and self-critical” (2006, p. 3). In academia, this has transpired into calls for theoretical and methodological openness, an epistemic transformation, and an examination of the structural reasons for the invisibility of some voices. All of this has represented the idea of an academic cosmopolitanism beyond the notion of exchanges across borders or a lived global experience. However, to date, the application of this critique as a next step has been missing. By offering a cosmopolitan critique of media governance as a field of study, we hope to start moving from envisioning to enacting academic cosmopolitanism. A cosmopolitan critique hereby aims at the theoretical and methodological foundations of the field by revealing difference, distinction, misinterpretations, and paradoxes through including the truths of others and examining their consequences for the current limited conceptualizations. Through enacting a cosmopolitan critique in this volume, we hope to provide a new sense of community beyond the established, disentangled field we have. Academic cosmopolitanism, in this sense, does not strive for universalism, but for a respectful and inclusive differentiation that transpires at the level of theory and method; only in that way can we “shift the geopolitics of critical knowledge,” as Walsh (2007, p. 225) put it, and allow for more selection among the different puzzle sets available in the field of study.

## THE ORGANIZATION OF THIS BOOK

Through this volume, we want to offer an open and well-measured critique, which will help us to improve this conceptual lens through the perspectives of scholars working beyond Western contexts. Literature on

media governance often emphasizes more instrumental evaluations attached to efficiency, output, and performance. The contributions in this book give more prominence to considerations around hegemony, power, sovereignty, and identity, which belong to an often-neglected vocabulary within the media governance literature. With that, the chapters advance our critical knowledge about theoretical developments and the epistemic transformation of media governance in the spirit of academic cosmopolitanism. As such, the book presents a map that critically navigates the concept. The contributors discuss the shortcomings, opportunities, alternatives, and new approaches that they identify through their work for the established media governance canon. The chapters point to the relevance, translatability, adaptability, political concerns, and other conceptual shortcomings and merits of media governance as a descriptive term, analytical framework, and normative concept when looking beyond Western contexts.

The cosmopolitan critique of the field of media governance is the immanent theme across the twelve contributions in this book. We organized the chapters into three parts. The first part addresses the epistemological and ontological flaws in the use and adaptation of media governance. The second part opens pathways for critique and provides a thorough understanding of the ambivalences that scholars encounter when working with or addressing media governance as a field of study. The third part highlights the shortcomings in terms of geographical narrowness and tensions in the use of media governance conceptualizations. It offers new conceptual ideas to enhance media governance studies in the spirit of openness and by taking advantage of the existing broad conceptualization of media governance.

## PART I. CONCEPTS AND EPISTEMOLOGY

At the outset of this volume, **Sanjay Asthana** explains the need to get past the dominant conception of media governance and calls for a sustained examination of media governance in relation to different communication means and for the reshaping of sovereignty, power, and agency in the Global South. He argues that media governance as a composite disables both words in terms of their potential to enhance social change and concludes his critique with a suggestion for “cosmopolitan media and information commons.”

**Naomi Sakr** discovers in Chap. 3 the value of using media governance diagnostically to unravel informal mechanisms and practices of the authoritarian systems of the Arab Middle East. With that, she emphasizes the common ground between governance theory and observable processes affecting Arab media, while also explaining why media governance is not a prominently used concept in Middle Eastern studies.

In Chap. 4, **Rodrigo Gómez** offers a critique of media governance studies through a historical account of media policy studies in Latin America and the alternatives established for the field in the region. He examines the link between the intellectual environment, the rise of National Communication Policies (NCP) and normative constituencies, all situated in what he describes as “socio-economic contradictions calling for societal change.” With that Gómez delineates the intersections and differences of Media Governance with the Political Economy of Communication (PEC) tradition. In Chap. 5, **Judith Pies** analyses the challenges media governance studies face in transnational projects that include countries with very different socio-economic and political realities. Drawing from her experience in a comparative project on media accountability in the Arab countries, she calls for the inclusion of informal and less institutionalized practices to acknowledge contexts that range outside of liberal democracies and pluralistic media systems.

## PART II. CRITIQUE AND AMBIVALENCE: ASSESSING MEDIA GOVERNANCE

In Chap. 6, **Ufuoma Akpojivi** examines regulatory structures and the governance of cosmopolitan media in Nigeria to provide empirical evidence and enhance the theorization of cosmopolitan media governance from within the Nigerian context. He argues that attempts to localize international standards counter-act attempts to facilitate inclusivity, participation, empowerment, and cultural diversity in the governance of cosmopolitan media. **Afonso de Albuquerque** and **Lucineide Magalhães de Matos** unfold their critique of media governance in Chap. 7 by analyzing how what they call a “media governance logic” led to a change in media regulation in Brazil and served as justification for political bias against left-wing alternative media. Using the case of moral panic caused by fake news, they develop a critique that deciphers the neoliberal political nature of media governance. **Rasha Allam** offers in Chap. 8, rare conceptual

knowledge of media governance frameworks from the Egyptian context through statements from media and scholarly colleagues working in the country. Through a detailed examination of recent regulatory developments, she questions the value of imported governance models, drawing from challenges in sustaining media independence as a core value in media governance in transitional countries such as Egypt. In Chap. 9, **Hyejin Jo** and **Dal Yong Jin** unmask the utopian nature of media governance as a concept in a local media scape, such as South Korea. Using the PEC approach, they make clear where and to what extent media governance as a concept lacks refinement and fails to acknowledge local challenges that exist within the local mediascape.

### PART III. CONCEPTUAL INNOVATIONS AND NEW PERSPECTIVES

**Hong Shen** connects media governance and international communication in Chap. 10. In her contribution, she traces China's participation in global Internet policy-making and calls for reconsidering the role of the state in global Internet governance. Sheng thus offers an insight into alternatives to the existing US-led, market-oriented Internet governance regimes and questions whether a new multilateralism—as is often called for—will be conceivable. In Chap. 11, **María Soledad Segura** and **Alejandro Linares** analyze the creation of participatory institutions created in Latin America between 2000 and 2015 and conclude that the participatory policies they identify differ from the multi-stakeholder governance model that they argue consolidates existing inequalities. Through their analysis, they delineate the differences between the participatory and multi-stakeholder governance models and show how academic conceptualizations can protect existing inequalities. In Chap. 12, **Trust Matsilele** and **Bruce Mutsvairo** create a rare link between social media governance and political communication. In their empirical study, they situate Twitter use during the South Africa 2019 elections within the context of emerging social media governance mechanisms. Showing that Twitter had been the most reliable platform for smaller parties for campaign purposes, Matsilele and Mutsvairo also examine the consequences that the new laws, such as the Protection of Private Information Act, could potentially unfold for the dissemination of information via social emails among political opponents, which might be interpreted as a punishable offense. In Chap. 13 **Preeti**

**Raghunath** juxtaposes media governance with the deliberative policy ecology approach to investigate media policy from a perspective that considers what she terms “voice parity.” She suggests “sustainable media governance” as a decolonial approach to scholarship and praxes. Her chapter therefore proffers clear suggestions what theorization from the Global South could look like in the field of media governance.

Based on these rich contributions, in our concluding chapter, we draw a roadmap for a cosmopolitan research agenda and incorporate the idea of the cosmopolitan critique as a methodology in media governance. By covering the three parts I Concepts and Epistemology, II Critique and Ambivalence: Assessing Media Governance, and finally III Conceptual Innovations and New Perspectives, the book decenters our knowledge on media governance. A conclusion by the editors ties the chapters together and further advances the argumentation toward cosmopolitan critique as a methodological approach.

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PART I

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Concepts and Epistemology



## CHAPTER 2

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# Sovereignty, Power, and Agency in Neoliberal Configurations of Media and Governance in the Global South

*Sanjay Asthana*

## INTRODUCTION

In much of the postcolonial world, economic globalization has precipitated the rise of neoliberal forms of governance that has impacted broadcasting and media policy-making in a variety of ways. The ongoing developments are also leading to new kinds of alliances between state and private—national, regional, as well as transnational—corporations in

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Webpage. <https://www.mtsu.edu/faculty/sanjay-asthana> and Twitter handle. @SanjayxAsthana

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S. Asthana (✉)  
School of Journalism and Strategic Media, Middle Tennessee State University,  
Murfreesboro, TN, USA  
e-mail: [Sanjay.Asthana@mtsu.edu](mailto:Sanjay.Asthana@mtsu.edu)

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regulating and controlling the media. This chapter examines the discourse and practices of neoliberal governance in the global South, focusing specifically on the ways in which it has been deployed by governments, international agencies, supranational organization, and private corporations. The conjugation of ‘governance’ with ‘media’ into a composite meta-category has displaced the social commitments inscribed in media and communication policy-making practices with technical jargon and semantics which has profound implications for sovereignty.<sup>1</sup> Although scholarship has explored the ‘unbundling’ and ‘disaggregation’ of sovereignty into multiple components of power, and have pointed out that nation-states reassert their authority through a range of political, legal, and economic strategies (Sassen 2006), what is missing from such studies is a sustained examination of neoliberal governance in relation to media, information and communication technologies (ICTs), the Internet, and the concomitant reshaping of sovereignty, power, and agency in the global South.

First, through a brief discussion of colonial and postcolonial histories of media, I identify and trace several key themes around communication technologies and media that operated in the state-market-capital nexus. Second, I explore the discourses of sovereignty, power, and agency through a brief discussion of the early developments and institutionalization of telegraph and radio in the colonial period; the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) and the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) debates, and the subsequent liberalization and privatization of telecommunications and media infrastructures and systems. In the concluding section, I explore the idea of a ‘cosmopolitan media and information commons’ as a way to get past the dominant conception of media governance. My analytic approach draws theoretical insights from the two influential accounts of neoliberalism, Marxist and Foucauldian, postcolonial studies, and the Third World Approaches to International Law (TWAIL; e.g. Eslava 2019; Gathii 2019). It is worth

<sup>1</sup>The neoliberal deployment of ‘policy transfer’ discourses in the name of trade liberalization and marketization of audio-visual industries in the South have displaced media and communications policy-making with the newly minted ‘media governance’. See Sarikakis and Ganter (2014) for an excellent discussion of such policy transfer mechanisms in Mercosur, an economic and political bloc comprising Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Venezuela. For an excellent account of how the neoliberal turn has effected regional trade agreements such as Mercosur within the ‘good [market] governance’ discourse in the South, see Gathii (2011).