

**MEDIA, DEVELOPMENT AND
DEMOCRACY**

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STUDIES IN MEDIA AND
COMMUNICATIONS VOLUME 22

MEDIA, DEVELOPMENT AND DEMOCRACY

EDITOR

HELOISA PAIT

São Paulo State University Julio de Mesquita Filho, Brazil

ASSISTANT EDITOR

JULIANA LAET

Independent Scholar, Brazil

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

EPIGRAPH

Trazendo de países distantes nossas formas de convívio, nossas instituições, nossas idéias, e timbrando em manter tudo isso em ambiente muitas vezes desfavorável e hostil, somos ainda hoje uns desterrados em nossa terra.

Sergio Buarque de Hollanda, Raízes do Brasil

We have brought our forms of association, our institutions, and our ideas from distant countries, and though we take pride in maintaining all of them in an often unfavorable and hostile environment, we remain exiles in our own land.

Sergio Buarque de Hollanda, Roots of Brazil

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ABOUT THE EDITORS

Heloisa Pait, a Fulbright alumna, wrote her doctoral dissertation at the New School for Social Research, in New York, where she analyzed how soap opera writers and viewers attempted to make mass communication a meaningful activity. She teaches Sociology at the São Paulo State University *Julio de Mesquita Filho*, in Brazil, and she has written on the role of the media in public dialogue and public spaces. She received the Outstanding Author Contribution in the 2018 Emerald Literati Awards for her analysis of media use in the São Paulo street protests. In her paper “Liberalism Without a Press: 18th Century Minas Geraes and the Roots of Brazilian Development” she presents the idea of a modern oral public sphere. She has also written about Brazilian Jewish culture and she is associate researcher at the Center for Jewish Studies of the University of São Paulo. She writes extensively for the general public on culture and politics. Her fiction work has appeared in American and Brazilian publications, and she edits *Revista Pasma*, an online women’s magazine. Her current project involves the examination of the experience of individuals who navigate between different communicative cultures.

Juliana Laet is an independent scholar examining cultural and technological aspects of social media interactions. She wrote her master’s thesis at the São Paulo State University *Julio de Mesquita Filho*, examining the use of social media in the 2013 São Paulo street protests, where she developed the concept of “selvie,” a collective self-portrait belonging to the public sphere. She received the Outstanding Author Contribution Award in the 2018 Emerald Literati Awards for this work. She also works on cultural production, particularly of music events discussing gender and race in jazz. She currently works on social projects with vulnerable families in the city of Florianópolis, in Southern Brazil, and in the fight against COVID-19.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Paola Banchemo is Associate Professor of Journalism and Public Communications at the University of Alaska Anchorage. She has worked as a Journalist in Missouri, Kansas, Arizona, Mexico, and Alaska. She teaches Journalism and Strategic Communications courses and does research in climate change communication among other areas.

Suzanne Temwa Gondwe Harris is a Teaching Fellow in Media, Communications and International Development at the London School of Economics. She is a Researcher, Lecturer, and Founder of Changing the Face of Africa. Having spent more than 10 years working in media and human rights in Africa, Asia, and South America, her research interests are centered on coloniality, the intersections between media, race, international relations and development, decolonizing media studies, ethnic minority media, identity and representation, and critical race media literacy. Drawing from years of community-based research, she is currently investigating how the invisibilization of Blackness in Argentina is maintaining the hegemonic construction of Whiteness through media spaces.

Ângela Cristina Salgueiro Marques is Associate Professor at the Faculty of Philosophy and Humanities of the Federal University of Minas Gerais, in Brazil. Her doctoral thesis examined how impoverished and vulnerable Brazilian women reconstruct their lives based on everyday conversations, experiences, and meetings promoted in the context of the implementation of distributive social policies. Her research is supported by the Brazilian National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq), and she was a postdoctoral researcher at Stendhal University, Grenoble III, France. She is the Author of the books *Apelos Solidários*, with Angie Biondi; *Diálogos e Dissidências: M. Foucault e J. Rancière*, with Marco Aurélio Prado; and *Ética, Mídia e Comunicação* and *No caos da convivência*, both with Luis Mauro Sá Martino. She also edited the book *Vulnerabilidades, justiça e resistências nas interações comunicativas*. Her most recent research examines the relationship between aesthetics and politics, focusing on the role of media images in democratic public spheres, including everyday political conversation. She also writes books for children and young adults.

Luis Mauro Sá Martino is Full Professor at Casper Líbero College, in São Paulo, Brazil and holds a PhD in the Social Sciences from the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo. His research interests are digital culture, religion and communication, epistemology of communication, political conversation, and democracy. He was a visiting researcher at the University of East Anglia, UK, and his research is supported by the Brazilian National Council for Scientific and

Technological Development (CNPq). He is the Author of *Teoria da Comunicação* [Communication Theory], *Ética, Mídia e Comunicação* [Ethics, media and communication] with Angela Marques, *Teoria das Mídias Digitais* [Digital Media Theory], and *The Mediatization of Religion*, published by Routledge.

Sandra Reimão is Associate Professor at the School of Arts, Sciences and Humanities of the University of São Paulo. Her research is supported by the prestigious Brazilian National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq). She is the Author of *Livros e televisão: correlações* [Books and television: correlations] and *Repressão e resistência: censura a livros na ditadura militar* [Repression and resistance: book censorship during the military dictatorship]. In addition to her work on the publishing industry under past authoritarian regimes, she is examining the present far-right Brazilian government policies. She asserts that “the vehemence with which authoritarian powers try to curtail the publication and circulation of books attests to the fear that despots and tyrants have of the power of printed ideas.”

Jeannine E. Relly is Professor in the School of Journalism at The University of Arizona with a courtesy appointment with the School of Government and Public Policy. She serves as Director of Global Initiatives for the Center for Border and Global Journalism and is an affiliated faculty member of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, the Center for Digital Society & Data Studies and the Human Rights Practice Program. Her research focuses on global and domestic influences on journalists and news media systems, government information policy, press-state relations, and democratic institutions, including freedom of expression and access to public information in countries that often are in conflict or in political or economic transition. Three projects have focused on collective action and the influence of global networks or social movements on freedom of expression and access to public information. She also has a line of research focused on formal and informal institutions related to democratic governance, including issues related to public corruption, whistleblower protection, and disinformation. Research and outreach projects with collaborators have been conducted in the Americas, the Middle East and North Africa, and Central and South Asia. She was a research fellow with Columbia University’s Tow Center for Digital Journalism in 2020. She also served as Head of the International Communication Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. Before joining the faculty, she worked for more than a dozen years as a journalist reporting in a number of American states, the Caribbean, and the Mexico–US borderlands.

Nipa Saha teaches Communicating Health and Sciences at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS). She completed her doctoral degree at the UTS School of Communication in 2019. She is a former recipient of the UTS IRS scholarship and a UTS research student fund. Previously, she held academic and research positions at Macquarie University, Sydney, and the University of Tsukuba,

Japan. Her proposed research project will investigate the recurring themes and frames found in fake news stories concerning COVID-19 on Facebook. This project will examine how people distinguish false content from real information, and review existing regulatory arrangements to tackle fake news on Facebook in Australia. Her research interests include news, advertising, communication, media regulation, history, marketing, and health.

Ron Schleifer is an Israeli expert on Information/Psychological Warfare and military–media relations. Over the course of his long career, he has been involved in both the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) and the academic arena, in Israel and abroad. His primary fields of research include Information/Psychological Warfare (PSYOP), global communications, deception, cyber-warfare, military–media interface, and national security. He is a senior lecturer at the Ariel University Center’s School of Communications. He continues to research the Israeli military establishment and other defense organizations through focused analysis of communications development. Working with both Israeli and foreign media outlets, he is a regular commentator on information warfare issues. In 2010, he won the Haikin Award for best book on strategy, *Psychological Warfare* (in Hebrew), at Haifa University. He is active in several professional societies, such as the Association for Study of Middle East and Africa (ASMEA), the Israel Studies Association, and the Israel Communication Society. In 2010, he founded the Ariel Research Center for Defense and Communication to promote original discussion on the strategic ramifications of Information/Psychological Warfare in the Israeli arena. He founded the Moldovan best book prize on defense issues in Israel. His recent book on PSYOP in the Arab–Israeli Conflict was published by Palgrave Macmillan and his forthcoming book deals with PSYOP in the age of the social media and the digital age.

Dmitry Strovsky is a Journalist and has a PhD in Political Science. For the first few years after he graduated from University he worked as a Journalist for the local newspaper in Russia and over the next 25 years as a Teacher and then Professor at the Faculty of Journalism at Ural Federal University in Ekaterinburg, Russia. He has authored and edited several books and over 150 articles in Russian and English on the historical and contemporary evolution of Russian mass media and the relationship between politics and media there. He has contributed to internationally known journals, including *European Journal of Communication*, *Russian Journal of Communication*, *The Journal of the Middle East and Africa*, *Studies in Media and Communications*, and *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs*. He is also coeditor of scholarly publications in Israel, Russia, and India. He has been invited numerous times to lecture at universities in the USA, Finland, Sweden, Poland, China and the Czech Republic, and has participated in numerous international conferences and workshops. From 2012 to 2016, he took part in a large-scale research project “Media Systems in Flux: The Challenge of BRICS Countries,” funded by the Academy of Finland. He is currently a research associate at Ariel University’s Research Center for Defense and Communication in Israel, and also a visiting professor of the School of International Studies at Sichuan University, in Chengdu, China.

Maggy Zanger is a Journalism Trainer and Professor of practice at The University of Arizona School of Journalism and an affiliated faculty member of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, the Human Rights Practice Program, and the Center for Border and Global Journalism. Her teaching and research focus is on global journalism and the Middle East in particular, with an emphasis on Iraq, the Kurds, and conflict and crises reporting. She taught Journalism at the American University in Cairo for four years and started and grew a program to train Iraqi youth in evidence-based and ethical journalism, starting centers in Baghdad and Sulaimani, Iraq, for London-based Institute for War and Peace Reporting. As Country Director she was fully responsible for developing, organizing, and teaching short-term workshops. At The University of Arizona, she served as Project Director of a State Department funded partnership with Nangarhar University in Jalalabad, Afghanistan, to assist in developing a professional undergraduate journalism department. She has led and been involved in trainings in Turkey, India, and Dubai.

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I also wish to thank my family for their support, encouragement, and intellectual exchange, my brother Felipe Pait, my sister-in-law Susanna Stern, as well as my beloved nieces Rosa Stern Pait and Hannah Stern Pait, whom I already see as colleagues in the difficult task of interpreting the world. The idea for this research angle started in 2017, when I took my cousins Mick Stern and Naomi Rosenblau on a trip to the historic towns of Minas Gerais. My efforts to explain Brazil to this curious pair of travelers, who posed to me the most basic and excruciatingly difficult questions, resulted in the chapter “Liberalism Without a Press: 18th Century Minas Gerais and the Roots of Brazilian Development,” previously

published in this very same series, which was the seed of the present volume. I cannot thank Mick and Naomi enough for teaching me so much about the arts, about life, and about friendship.

Heloisa Pait
São Paulo, Brazil
May, 2021

OVERLAPPING COMMUNICATIVE MESHES: PLURAL PERSPECTIVES ON MEDIA AND DEVELOPMENT

Heloisa Pait

The chapters of this book present fascinating examples of the diverse ways media was introduced in developing countries and the role it plays today. We will learn about censorship in Brazil, advertisement regulation in Australia, the late introduction of the media to Malawi, the challenges faced by journalists in the Iraqi Kurdistan, the liberating role of face-to-face conversations among Brazilian women, and the deep roots of media control in Russia. Even when questioning the liberal media paradigm, the authors have in their horizon – and contrast with the concrete cases they are analyzing – a situation where the media is plural, journalists work unimpeded, there is a balanced dialogue with global media, the public is educated and free to choose, while government supports the national conversation with sound regulation.

In many ways, the issues raised by media development coincide with the issues addressed by development economists since the 1940s, when development emerged as a tool for progress or domination. Or, if we want a neutral term, as a tool for the reconstruction of the ties between developed nations emerging from World War II, which needed strong allies, and the world at large. What kind of ties would unite developed nations and the so-called “Third World”? Who would the brokers of this union be, and on whose terms? Who would benefit from it, and when? What would be the final outcome of the pact? In this introduction, we will engage in a dialogue with some of the literature on development and media development. We will then suggest an encompassing way to look at global media, using the image of overlapping geodesic structures. We will finally introduce each of the book chapters, which tell stories that are both specific and universal.

Economists used technical language, but they were also interested in the social and political questions above. Raúl Prebisch, the Argentinian economist working for the United Nations agency CEPAL (Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe), examined in the late 1940s the role of the deterioration of the

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terms of trade between developed and developing nations in accessing the chances of development of the latter without State investments. Celso Furtado, the Brazilian economist who played a crucial role in national and international development agencies, stressed in the 1950s the importance of examining the historical specificity of each developing nation in order to understand its particular path toward development or stagnation. Fernando Henrique Cardoso, the Brazilian sociologist turned president, focused in the 1970s on the alliances forged between social groups in developing and developed countries that fostered both development – through credit, investments, and technological transfers – and dependency.

Do all countries go through the same phases in their economic growth? Is it possible, or even desirable, to copy the “center” of this system? How can peripheral countries take advantage of the tremendous technological advances available in the postwar period and, at the same time, escape the trap of subordination and dependency? Media development has been part of this quest, this reconfiguration of the ties between center and periphery. “Who knows when we will need them again?” policy-makers in the West must have thought about those other countries, with their land for military bases, their resources for commerce and war efforts, or their simple integration into a solid cultural and ideological system.

Let us look now at how media analysts contributed to this broad effort to make sense of national media differences. Daniel Lerner, in his landmark work “The Passing of Traditional Society,” examines the profound transformations of the Middle East in light of the introduction of electronic media. Published in 1958, at the height of the Cold War, many have criticized the book for its Eurocentric assumptions. But it’s difficult to deny the beauty of his description of the various ways in which urbanization, the availability of media, and the expansion of literacy reinforce each other to allow for the possibility of a modern mentality. Lerner gives a blueprint for media development as an intrinsic element of social, economic, cultural, and ideological integration into the Western world. Initially, “By drawing people from their rural communities, cities create the demand for impersonal communication. By promoting literacy and media, cities supply this demand.” In a second phase, “literacy operates as the pivotal agent in the transition to a fully participant society.” Finally, “It is this interplay of new desires and satisfactions which characterizes the third phase of modernization, namely *media participation*.”

In a certain way, the very success of development and media development in particular undermine the teleological component of Lerner’s theory – the idea that modernization will bring us all to a common frame of mind. With more and diverse voices in the global conversation – in our cities, in the media, in the universities – let alone in international bodies that welcomed newly independent nations in the postwar decades, it is difficult to sustain the idea that we are all, and even more that we should be, turning ourselves into the modern, empathic, urban man celebrated in “The Passing...” All the issues that emerged from the late 1960s on regarding gender, race, and cultural differences, philosophical, and cultural critiques of progress and modernity, and the very results of development’s high environmental cost and persistent social inequality make us suspicious of the idea of a nation trying to jump to the stage where another, more “advanced,” nation is.

Daniel Hallin and Paolo Mancini's two works "Comparing Media Systems," one focusing on advanced economies, published in 2004, and the other on developing nations, published in 2012, intend to fill the gap. They look at media configurations as a product of cultures and institutions, particularly political cultures, and not as a necessary result of a universal path toward development. They craft a typology of media systems in which the liberal model is a possible one, but allow for other models, where State action is more perceptible and acceptable – seen as a necessary part of the economic and political landscape in society's quest for equity and justice. In the second book they introduce a series of chapters that expand the scope of analysis to include developing countries, much like in this present book.

Their focus is to show the media as a result of different ecosystems of cultures and institutions. The media is not, as it was for Lerner, a variable in a moving scheme. The question of how one country might go from one stage of development to another, which fascinated developmentalists, is not at the center of their attention. Their focus has the advantage of recognizing differences in media systems, but the disadvantage of looking at those systems as separated entities, and not paying as much attention to the ways in which they converse with each other or even transform each other. In other words, the authors present a plurality of media systems, validating other forms beyond the Western liberal model. But how these forms connect and influence each other?

The present situation of media development, both in developing and developed nations, demands from us an array of theoretical approaches, given its complexity, which often seems overwhelming – the object of our study moves faster than our gaze, with impacts beyond what our hearing can catch. We must recognize the specificity of local historical, cultural, and political conditions, like Furtado, in economics, and Hallin and Mancini, in media studies. And at the same time, we need to look at the dynamic of the media as it evolves together with urbanization, literacy, and at least political complexity, if not democratization. This dynamic can and should be presented in more abstract forms, much like it has been done in the field of economics. Paul Krugman, the Nobel Prize winner economist, has pointed out that after a few decades when development was relegated to case-specific historical examination, formalization of development models was resumed in the 1980s with impressive results. It was now possible to understand, for instance, why in the initial stages of the process of globalization wages in peripheral countries went down, but with time the same occurred in the central economies, which seemed paradoxical without the formal model.

However, looking at this dynamic is not an easy task. Most media studies deal with one particular media form, whether television, radio, various internet platforms, or the book industry. When such studies look at the media ecology in its entirety, they tend to be largely anthropological, focusing, appropriately, on the meaning and experience of participants of this media configuration, a much needed angle. We could draw on the more encompassing field of political economy of the media, putting aside, however, the often a priori criticism of the media industry and focusing on the more subtle and dramatic challenges which appear within the system. The impressive endeavors of global media studies, such

as proposed by Elihu Katz and Saskia Sassen, opened our eyes to the various ways in which media creates common experiences and, at the same time, allow for different interpretations by different audiences. The Toronto school, likewise, provides broad and piercing analysis of the productive element of media forms, regardless of the environment where they land. These are powerful lenses through which we look at major global transformations, but we still need an encompassing model through which we can understand the role of the media in fostering ties between countries with different social and economic configurations.

In the heyday of development, when Lerner and Prebisch were writing, it was easy to talk about a “traditional” sector and a “developed” sector. These sectors were or at least appeared to be coherent packages that included degrees of urbanization, use of technology, levels of instruction, and degrees of personal freedom. Now, both economically and culturally, we would not be able to clearly classify a particular community or activity in that way. Should a remote indigenous community in the Amazon, connected through commerce and the media to global markets and world politics, be classified as traditional or modern? Should cattle raising in the same Amazon, producing for multinational meat processing industries, be considered a modern or traditional sector? We must, however, find a way to define social actors and their communicative tools, environments and communities if we want to be able to present a comprehensive look at global communication. In other words, while Lerner presented a path that would eventually lead us all to a target point of democratic development, what we see today is a mosaic of different forms of economic, political, and communicative life coexisting and intermingling nationally and internationally.

In media studies, much like in development theory, we tend to see, malgré all our attempts to decenter Western history, a linear path of media innovations, from writing to the alphabet, from the alphabet to the book, in rolls and then in codex, and then in printing. And from there to the telegraph, photograph, gramophone, photocopying, and then radio, television, the tape recorder, and so on until the spectacular entrance of digital communication and the internet. Jürgen Habermas’ powerful narrative about the rise and decline of the bourgeois public sphere, for instance, presupposes the simultaneous development of literacy and printing that, in the eighteenth century, culminated in very gendered modern sensibilities: the male public independent conversation and the female subjectivity oriented to an audience. What would have happened if the printing press were not there? Or if people were not allowed to learn how to read and write? Or if they were literate and had the press, but the economy never took off? Habermas was studying a particular social, economic, and communicative environment that was indeed so powerful that it became paradigmatic, in practice and in theory. Of the many possible configurations involving media reach, economic growth, and cultural values and political institutions, a singular one was crystalized in our minds and nations.

Countries wanted to emulate this configuration, investing heavily in education to produce impressive rates of literacy first among the urban middle classes, but soon including workers, women, former slaves in the United States, and traditional communities all over the world. When in a hurry, developing countries

opted to stimulate investments in radio and television that could connect their citizens while catching up with literacy and economic development that might eventually support a strong press and book industry. These were not always “backwards” nations. They often had a literate class and institutions of higher education that fostered, in the communicative field, the same distinct sectors that economists had identified. The question was, then, how did these different communicative realms relate to each other? Taking the Brazilian example, how did highly literate Jesuit priests relate to Indigenous communities which were not familiar with writing, at the dawn of the Modern Era? What is the experience of slaves and former slaves who became literate against social norms and even the law? What efforts have Brazilian television fiction and news producers made in the heyday of the medium, when their public was mostly semi-literate? In other words, we need to pay attention to the kinds of challenges faced by people who inhabit the margins of communicative realms, belonging to more than one realm, as well as to the possibilities they create.

In the same country, and in the same era, various communicative layers may coexist. Where economists talked about “sector,” let us speak, using broad brushes, of communicative realms: the oral, the written, the electronic, and the digital. In developing countries, the configuration of communicative realms seems odd at first sight, because of the learned narrative about an ideal media configuration. But not only this: in fact, due to the reach of European Modernity, certain practices, technologies and institutions were, indeed, “out of place,” as Brazilian thinker Roberto Schwartz pointed out. Or, as media scholar Marshall McLuhan said, “the medium is the message,” that is, it brings with itself a mindset that is foreign and decontextualized. Developing countries received, therefore, the full blow of technologies imagined elsewhere. Potentially, we could envision a moment when all communicative “divides,” including the literate and the digital, would be bridged. We could also envision a media “convergence” where all communicative realms would be united in a single one. Of course, we need public policies to bridge divides and of course our realms interconnect every day, when we read our books in electronic devices or watch television in our computers. But we will always be divided by our communication forms as much as we are by our languages. And that is the beauty of studying the media: to look at the plurality of communicative forms and the unexpected ways in which they relate to each other.

We should not fall in the trap, however, of thinking that these “oddities” – technological advances in parallel with a lack of basic human needs or with fragile institutions – are restricted to countries that had rapid development paths which failed to bring everybody to the same communicative realm simultaneously. With globalization at a fast pace, even European and other developed nations are witnessing a plurality of communicative realms coexisting within their frontiers, when practices and ideologies from abroad intermingle with their own, for instance, when internet users abroad take part of massive national misinformation campaigns. But such coexistence might also take place when these nations take paths that create gaps within their own communities, adopting social and economic policies that produce inequalities, and particularly educational policies, fostering life experiences and understandings of the world that diverge and

struggle to find common ground. We shouldn't look at developing nations, therefore, as exceptions to the rule, but as magnifying glasses to problems in the articulation of distinct media realms in a given location.

Media segmentation is a serious communicative problem only when people inhabit different communicative realms; otherwise, it might be just an element of a plural democratic national dialogue. In other words, the real problem is not that a segment of the population is watching Fox News, the ultraconservative American TV channel, and another segment is watching PBS, the progressive American Public Broadcasting Service, but that they watch these channels from radically distinct communicative positions. The problem might be not the fake news *per se*, but the number of books internet users have on their shelves. We are mesmerized by the beautiful graphs showing how our global and national debates are polarized and how hashtags are handled by a host of media celebrities and their followers, and rightly so because such graphs give a unidimensional portrait of a larger media constellation. They show in one medium differences that are produced in that varied constellation.

The crucial issue, however, is the place people occupy in the constellation of media realms available in a certain society, in a certain time. This is not merely a question of reception, of individual choices and preferences and interpretations, but is also a question of place and of placing. Of where we are in the communicative constellation, of which place we can and do occupy. Visually, if each communicative realm can be imagined as one interconnected mesh, like those geodesic domes we see in various public places, arousing on us the desire to climb them up, our communicative environment is made of various such independent and overlapping structures, and we find ourselves moving from one to another until we find a place that gives us both stability and outreach.

In a particular moment and society, we have a coexistence of different media realms that relate to each other in unexpected ways. And in time, and globally, we have, more than separate models, a dynamic interpenetration of realms – much like the economic sectors – that accelerates with each media innovation. The introduction of television in countries where only half of the population was literate, or, in the twenty-first century, the introduction of the internet in a different set of countries with the same literacy rates, creates symbolic and material challenges to the citizens of these countries. They are being presented with a speed and volume of information and connection that is not necessarily matched by their rural and communal habits. This is the challenge that they have to deal with individually and collectively. The kinds of institutions that these countries will create to embrace the media might be inspired by the developed countries and international agencies recommendations, but they will also reflect an effort of accommodation and interpretation, much like Latin America media scholar Joseph Straubhaar had identified in his examination of foreign interests in the emerging Brazilian television.

Lerner examined the dynamic of media development, where social change, media demand, literacy, and media supply reinforced each other in a particular country. We need a model that includes, in addition to the factors above, different types of media and types of literacy and social change in a global scale. What kinds of social change increase media demands? What kinds of media demands stimulate

literacy, and what types of literacy? How are such demands met, nationally and internationally? What types of investments in education increase media consumption? Politically, which modes of resistance manage to avoid the traps of rapid media transformation and which modes only impede vulnerable citizens to actively take part in a global conversation? We hope the chapters of this book, with their plural objects and methods of study, help us envision our deep connections as communicative actors and our place in these interconnected meshes of communication.

We open this book with a chapter on Brazil, *Foreign Authors, National Bans: Books and Censorship in Brazil (1964–1985)*, where Sandra Reimão analyzes one particular aspect of the all-encompassing censorship machine that was in place during the 1964–1985 military dictatorship. While the censorship of newspapers, soap operas, and songs is well known, having targeted prestigious publications such as the newspaper *O Estado de S. Paulo*, works by highly popular soap opera writers such as Dias Gomes, or important song writers such as Chico Buarque, censors also bureaucratically read and classified books. Reimão analyzes the small set of foreign non-fiction books that were prohibited in those decades, while the country underwent rapid economic growth, including in the book industry, and a disconcerting rate of urbanization. She examines the legal and administrative criteria used in the censorship process, and highlights the courage and determination of publishers who bravely defended their trade, at commercial as well as personal risk. Her interpretation is that Brazil in those years lived through a conservative modernization process, and one wonders if the echoes of the Portuguese Inquisition, with its *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*, were not being heard in a Brazil that celebrated its third World Cup soccer victory and aimed at fantastic economic goals. Sandra Reimão, who has done extensive research and analysis on the military dictatorship censorship, is investigating today the current ultra-right Brazilian government. She asserts that “the vehemence with which authoritarian powers try to curtail the publication and circulation of books attests to the fear that despots and tyrants have of the power of printed ideas.”

From the “Country of the Future” we cross the Atlantic and the Cape of Good Hope, until we reach Malawi, which was one of the last countries in the world to introduce television. In *Manufacturing the Liberal Media Model through Developmentality in Malawi*, Suzanne Temwa Gondwe Harris brings Ghanaian political scientist Lord Mawuko-Yevugah’s concept of “developmentality” to analyze the particular relation between Malawian society and a host of international actors interested in implementing the liberal media model in the African country. Harris explores the contradictions of this encounter, particularly among Malawi political establishment, which shows various degrees of autonomy in accepting or rejecting the proposed offers of modernization, liberalization, and Westernization put on the table in various historical moments. The Malawi chapter is particularly fascinating for reminding us that illiteracy coexists with high technology, that democratic quests coexist with harsh sanctions against free expression, and that each society and individual has to find a way to navigate between contradictory forces. In addition to being a scholar of development and international relations, Harris brings to this volume the perspective of a human rights activist and her quest for decentering media studies with the inclusion of Global South voices.

We go north now until we find ourselves in the Middle East, in the Iraqi Kurdistan, examined by Jeannine E. Rely, Margaret Zanger, and Paola Banchemo in the chapter *Toward a Framework for Studying Democratic Media Development and "Media Capture": The Iraqi Kurdistan Case*. Rely, Zanger, and Banchemo bring an informative background of the international efforts of media development, as well as of the ups and downs of Iraq since the fall of the Saddam Hussein regime. They also present impressive primary data in the form of interviews with more than 20 Kurdish journalists, done with the assistance of a translator, bringing to this volume a superb view of the personal conflicts people on the ground face when they find themselves at the crossroads of different media cultures, values, and expectations. The journalists interviewed had received media training from a largely democratic perspective, coming from developed countries or international agencies, but were immersed in a country with serious political and economic challenges. The authors offer a typology of forms of media cooptation that help us analyze the challenges faced by these journalists at the crossroads, in environments where "media landscapes may not be supportive of journalists and may, in fact, imperil them, and where social media disinformation has actually made it more dangerous for some journalists to practice." We hope that their analytical tools and on-the-ground research inspire many other scholars around the globe.

We then turn East to far away Australia, colonized by the methodical British whose descendants implemented a liberal government there. So liberal, says contributor Nipa Saha, in the chapter *Regulating Unhealthy Food Advertising to Children under Neoliberalism: An Australian Perspective*, that they don't feel anymore the need to protect children from the ingenious and quite mature advertisement industry. Saha offers a detailed narrative of all the steps taken by regulators for the protection of children from food advertisement in Australia, and the progressive dismantling of such protection under neoliberal governments. She concluded that self-regulation, although apparently simple and cost-efficient, is not enough to protect the health of this vulnerable population. Her thorough analysis of regulatory practices by various government agencies, influenced not only by the private sector but also by changing norms and ideologies, brings to this volume a description of the strength of the fight between public and private entities over media content, reminding us that the construction of our media systems is a political, ongoing process with no final point of equilibrium in sight.

We now cross Asia and reach an apparently timeless Russia, portrayed by Dmitry Strovsky and Ron Schleifer, who bring us, in the chapter *How Russian Media Helped Develop the Authoritarian Tradition: Its Historical Legacy for Today*, a compelling narrative of the permanent cultural, economic, and political structures making Russian media an arm of the State. Strovsky and Schleifer's narrative runs parallel to the very compelling story Jürgen Habermas told us. Habermas's story is one where the media serves as a symbolic curtain dividing the State and its citizens, through the constitution of a buffer, "public" sphere, protecting the latter and providing a check on the former. Strovsky and Schleifer's media seems to be a buffer protecting the State from the scrutiny of the public, with very little room for resistance and autonomous reporting, curtailed by