Book Reviews

MEDIA ACTIVISM, ARTIVISM AND THE FIGHT AGAINST MARGINALISATION IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH BY ANDREA MEDRADO AND ISABELLA REGA
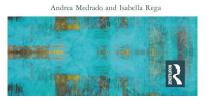
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Media Activism, Artivism and the Fight Against Marginalisation in the Global South: South-to-South Communication, Andrea Medrado & Isabella Rega, New York and Oxon, Routledge, 2023, 186 pages, $160 USD Hardcover, ISBN 9781032080833

In media studies, the study of media activism is largely media-centric and Western-centric. In response to this, *Media Activism, Artivism, and the Fight Against Marginalisation in the Global South* presents a resourceful study to understand how media activism and artivism function in Global South contexts for overcoming everyday marginalisation and discrimination. The

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authors Andrea Medrado and Isabella Rega have been involved in research on Global South countries over the years, drawing heavily from the experiences of marginalised people in these countries. They also underline the locus of enunciation in research and/or activism and emphasize empathy and dialogical relations.

The book mainly conveys the findings of research conducted in Brazil and Kenya during the eVoices Network project, which both authors were involved in and was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) in the UK. The authors indicated that they adopt an intersectional decolonial perspective to understand the marginalisation and inequalities faced by people with various backgrounds. They aim to create bridges for dialogues and global movements between Brazil and Kenya, and the book's subtitle *South-to-South Communication* corresponds to this intention. By using decolonial, intersectional perspectives, Medrado and Rega expose the intersections of raced, sexed, gendered, and economic inequalities, and the decolonial subversions of his/her-stories and narratives, highlighting the importance of generally erased/silenced histories, knowledge, and narratives of oppressed and marginalised people.

They conducted in-depth interviews, participant observations, and (n)etnography with Brazilian media activists and Kenyan artivists. They conclude that the classifications of these activists should not imply that Brazilian favela media activists don't engage with artistic tools or that Kenyan artivists don't use social media sites. Medrado and Rega remark that they capture media activism/artivism between online and offline spaces and critique the media-centric approach dominating the media and communication field (Morley, 2009). They identify three main themes for media activism in the Global South context(s): (a) establishing (contradictory) dialogical spaces; (b) mobilising memories and histories; (c) reclaiming media territories (p. 6).

In the Introduction chapter, the authors clarify their perspectives and useful theoretical tools mentioned earlier. Medrado and Rega also contend that while chapters 1-3 focus on the "communication of reflexivity", chapters 4-6 focus on the "communication of approximation". The first half of the book elaborates and takes a reflexive stand on media activism and artivism of marginalised communities from the Global South. The second half of the book concentrates on the activist exchange between Brazil and Kenya: "To put it simply, if the first part is about who we are and what we do, the second part focuses on what we can talk about with each other, and what we can learn from each through dialogue. By opening up avenues for South-to-South dialogues, we hope to offer a contribution to the field of media activism, development studies and citizen media." (p. 5). The authors denote that, for them, media activism consists of mediated social acts for progressive social changes and developments. Therefore, they adopt Mattoni's (2013) definition of media activism, which addresses media activism as a) activism in the media, b) activism about the media, and c) activism through the media. Activism in the media is considered as people's use of media

for subverting and challenging media representations and symbols. Activism about the media focuses on changes in media structures, which are generally asymmetrical, with media policy reforms and activism through the media taking a wider stance to media activism as it encompasses activists' acts for promotion, organization and coordination, and protests with various tools and platforms.

In the first chapter, the authors expand on their perspective on marginalised and oppressed communities and identities and discuss the need to re-write and re-learn the silenced, erased, and forgotten histories of these communities. They also underscore the need to relocate communities, knowledge, and histories from the margins to the centre. While they aim to establish dialogical bridges between different Global Souths, they also seek to create dialogues between the authors and their concepts between Latin America and Africa, such as pluversality, humility, conviviality, and incompleteness. For them, these concepts could open dialogical spaces and relations while resisting hierarchies and inequalities in different contexts.

In the second chapter, they engage deeply with the practices of media activists in Brazil's favelas. They begin by addressing how favelas are dominantly and inaccurately conceived as places of homogeneity, abnormality, criminality, and chaos. They oppose these arguments by explaining that favelas are heterogeneous and associate them with creativity and mutual solidarity. They look at how people from favelas narrate their histories and experiences, using the example of Museu da Maré, the first museum located in the favela areas of Brazil. They analyse media activist collectives such as Maré Vive Collective and Colletivo Papo Reto to help subvert images of favela residents and create information that helps them in their everyday lives.

Chapter 3 focuses on artivist practices in Kenya. They examine the PAWA254, an artivist non-profit organisation that mobilises living histories, chaining artivism, dialogue, and the lives of artivists. In the Kenyan example, artivists often oppose tribalism and the colonial narratives of failure, fatalism, and inertia, highlighting creativity instead. They use both offline and online spaces for their purposes. Additionally, they argue that creating a hub means connecting people with different skills and minds, leading to creative solidarity.

Chapter 4 conveys the authors' model for apprehending how visibility works in activist circles. They underscore that while visibility is concerned with empowerment and recognition, it is also a double-edged sword that leads to surveillance and control. This aspect is significant as it argues that becoming an activist on social media could lead to harm and damage, opposing the ideas that associate social media activism with harmlessness and comfort (Fuchs, 2014). They apply their visibility model to four cases to understand the threats, critical moments, turning points, and crises for activists, sharing processes of strategies and affordances of social media visibility of activists and marginalised groups.

Chapter 5 explains how the animation of "A Portrait of Marielle" was produced along with Kenyan artivists. The animation tells the story of Marielle Franco, a Brazilian Human Rights activist and politician from the favelas, who was killed with her driver in March 2018. The animation workshop and production process are also seen as tools for fostering relations between marginalised people in Brazil and Kenya.

In the 6th Chapter, the authors conclude by discussing how South-to-South communication could be considered and maintained, drawing from their narratives. They ask readers to be reflexive throughout the chapter, accepting that the Global South is not a single geolocation and underlining the plurality of Global Souths, which can also be found in Global North countries. They emphasize the formulation of "We" in social movements and discuss how activists, artivists, and marginalised communities continue to dialogue in different Global South countries, despite being restricted by cultural, geographical, and political boundaries.

To conclude, the book presents a significant resource that breaks away from media-centric and Eurocentric approaches that dominate the fields of media scholarship in general. It engages with many disciplines and can be a very helpful source for scholars researching the topics of development studies, decolonial studies, community media, media activism/artivism, and the Global South, especially for understanding non-Western contexts of media activism/artivism. Moreover, in some parts, the book uses lay terminology and everyday life aspects, making it more accessible and engaging for readers.

Although the book is very promising in its connections between different contexts and scholarly work, it can be argued that more ethnographic observations and voices of participants could have been included. Additionally, at some points, the book falls short of providing wider historical contexts of activism and media in those countries to fully comprehend the issues. Moreover, the abundance of different theories and conceptual tools might be puzzling for some readers.

References

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