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Book Review

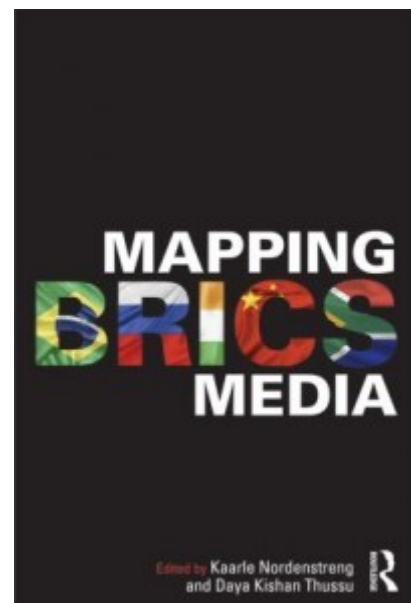
## Mapping BRICS media

**Nordenstreng, Kaarle & Thussu, Daya K. (eds.) (2015): Mapping BRICS media. New York: Routledge. 268 pages. ISBN: 978-1138026254.**

Giuliana Sorce, The Pennsylvania State University

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Kaarle Nordenstreng (Professor Emeritus, University of Tampere) and Daya Kishan Thussu (Professor, University of Westminster) are the editors of *Mapping BRICS Media*, the first book-length, critical introduction to the media systems of the five fastest-growing economies in the world – Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa – the “BRICS” countries. The edited collection features contributions by leading scholars in those nations who offer insights on the impact of BRICS media in the global economy. Published in the Routledge book series “Internationalizing Media Studies” (series editor: Daya Kishan Thussu), *Mapping BRICS Media* explores the relationships of the most impactful mediascapes outside of the West. This edited volume goes beyond nation-specific analyses of the BRICS countries by exploring the intricacies of this grouping and providing thought-provoking chapters that lead into, and out of, the respective case studies.



*Mapping BRICS Media* begins with an editorial introduction that centers the question how the BRICS economies fit into the patterns of information flow in the global media economy. Nordenstreng and Thussu critically grapple with notions of Westernization, dependency, and inter-BRICS relationships that situate the coun-

try-specific case studies. The book is divided into three main parts. The first part, entitled “Debates and Concepts”, focuses on the coherency of the BRICS grouping, its impact in the global communication economy, and its production of cultural contra-flow. Perhaps the most illustrative chapters of this section are by Jyrki Käkönen and Colin Sparks. In Käkönen’s analysis of the BRICS as a “new constellation in international relation”, he explores the role of this grouping in the existing global economy and poses that Brazil, Russia, and South Africa will continue to share dependency with Western media conglomerates and imports, while China and India have the potential to offer counter-hegemonic media products to challenge the Western domination. Subsequently, Sparks’ chapter questions the coherency of the BRICS grouping by offering insights on politics, wealth discrepancy, and the potentialities of digital media in marginalized markets. Sparks argues for the asymmetry in relationships between the BRICS, as they differ both within the grouping as well as in their relationships to the global media economy.

The second section, entitled “Media Systems and Landscapes”, provides five country-specific analyses that deal with notions of media production and ownership. Raquel Paiva, Muniz Sondré and Leonardo Custódio’s chapter highlights the continuous struggle of Brazilian media democratization at the hand of conglomeration and government control. A similar theme emerges in Elena Vartanova’s account of the Russian media system, in which she points to the complex relationships between the local media and the state. Zhengrong Hu, Peixi Xu, and Deqiang Ji also focus on the historical development of media in their native China, where government control and grassroots alternative media activism clash. Contrary to the lamented scarcity of critical media coverage and concentration of media houses in China, Brazil, and Russia, Savyasaachi Jain offers industry-specific accounts of India’s media production and export, while highlighting the plethora of media houses and the intensity of local competition. Lastly, Viola Candice Milton and Pieter Fourie’s chapter focuses on the recurring efforts to democratize media institutions and media content in post-apartheid South Africa by charting the efforts of local civil society organizations for freedom of information.

The third section, entitled “Comparative Perspectives”, puts the BRICS media systems into conversation with one another, both internally, as well as how they relate to the global industry outside of this grouping. The first is the focus of Herman Wasserman, Fernando Oliveira Paulino, Dmitry Strovsky, and Jukka Pietiläinen’s chapter, which examines how the respective BRICS nations report on each other in the news sector. Svetlana Pasti, Jyotika Ramaprasad, and Musawenkosi Ndlovu offer a comparative study featuring in-depth interviews with journalists in each of the BRICS nations who discuss the struggle for freedom of expression, discuss the journalist’s role in the mediascape, and self-describe their journalism ethics. *Mapping BRICS Media* closes with a chapter by series and book editor Daya Kishan Thussu, in which he deliberates global information imbalances in the global South, and the possibility of a new NWICO around BRICS digital media.

An obvious strength of *Mapping BRICS Media* is its recency. The book is on the pulse of contemporary global comparative research and offers the first comprehensive introduction to BRICS media. Additionally, the entire first and third part of the edited volume offer thought-provoking analyses that uncover both important relationships among the BRICS, and the grouping's connection to existing global structures. One of the most productive and informative conversations of this book occurs in the eleventh chapter, in which the authors explore the nuances of inter-BRICS relationships. The country-specific chapters could have benefited from such a comparative sub-section as they often focus more on the intricacies of the media sectors and the local relationships between politics and the industry, rather than critically investigating notions of media production, contra-flow, and the entanglements of the BRICS within the global media industry. Additionally, this collection implicitly reinscribes the BRICS economies as comparative, or even coherent; though, as so aptly illustrated by Colin Sparks, the relationships within this grouping are, in fact, asymmetrical and vary substantially among its most prosperous industries.

Nevertheless, the BRICS phenomenon merits explication by virtue of its salience in the world economy, and its potential to offer alternatives to the stronghold of the major media industries in the West. The book is extremely well-suited for courses in global media, international political economy, and comparative media systems and will find use in the disciplines of media and communication studies, as well as international relations, economics, and political science. With both its historical and contemporary overviews, the book's objective to introduce the intricacies of the BRICS mediascapes is well met. Hence, *Mapping BRICS Media* dovetails with current research trends in the aforementioned disciplines that focus on global media, trade, politics, and the future of the news and entertainment industry.