From media to AI governance studies

Decentering established patterns through cosmopolitan critique

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Introduction

Media governance is a heterogeneous field comprising political sciences, communication, media economics, sociology, and, increasingly, technological design and programming. As a field of study, governance in media and communication studies also spans a variety of communicative means and types of media, according to their developments over time. Therefore, today, governance in media and communication studies offers an opportunity to be heterogeneous and multifaceted. It subsumes a variety of terms, ranging from media and communication, Internet, and social media platform governance to governance by things and to governance by algorithms and artificial intelligence (AI). Consistent with its conceptual nature, media governance scholars have emphasized and argued for broad conceptualizations of media governance and have pointed to the advantages of dynamic theorizing (Puppis, 2010). This conceptual openness of the field has invited an early critique of media governance as a buzzword, an empty signifier, and an ideologically coined term with little analytical value and as being ambiguous in its use (Ginosar, 2013; Karppinen & Moe, 2013). Together with evolving technological change, the critique of the field has contributed to self-reflections, and calls to reinvigorate the field through theoretical contributions, thus making these more visible to the wider field of media and communication studies (Braman, 2004; Just & Puppis, 2018; Picard, 2016). However, throughout the various self-reflections, the gaping blind spot has been the lack of opening the field up to decolonial, de-Westernizing, intersectional, and cosmopolitan perspectives.

In this chapter, I reflect on the cosmopolitan critique established recently in media governance studies and discuss how it can benefit future work in media governance. This specific area of study has been largely defined by scholars from/in Western contexts. However, it is one of the first areas of study where cosmopolitan critique (Ganter & Badr, 2022) has been proactively proposed as a methodology pushing for epistemological transformation. The cosmopolitan critique in media governance studies aims to include broader conceptual, theoretical, and empirical perspectives in the spirit of speaking with

voices from different contexts rather than speaking about their realities. It is a starting point to actively create a governance community conversing beyond the West and, as I argue, a necessity for the field to develop from an emerging area of study to one that fulfills its potential and establishes itself as a main pillar in media and communication studies. Most importantly, the cosmopolitan critique focuses on dialogue and encourages multidimensional media governance perspectives that go beyond applying dominant terms and concepts in non-dominant contexts.

This chapter develops over four sections. First, I review some of the main characteristics of the field, and particularly its development as it has started to flourish more recently due to the rise of platforms and related regulatory challenges and the needed reflections on shifting media ecologies. Second, I discuss cosmopolitan perspectives established in the field by pointing to exemplary work from the literature, and this will help to establish how cosmopolitan critique furthers epistemological transformation. Third, using concrete examples, I explain how cosmopolitan critique benefits media governance studies. Lastly, I discuss the experience of working toward establishing a cosmopolitan critique and argue that we need to work across scholarly, institutional, and pedagogical realms in the field to trigger sustained epistemological transformations through actions on all levels.

Characteristics of Western media governance studies

Deriving from media and communication policy and law research, media governance is not a synonym, but an analytical perspective breaking down media policy processes, values, outcomes, and related power constellations. Braman (2004) describes the policy field as latent and constantly challenging understandings of what belongs to the field; this continues to be true as new technologies constantly create new topics that can be subsumed under media governance. Freedman (2008) refers to media policy as an "umbrella term to describe the whole range of discourses and methods used to shape the behaviour of specific media" (p. 15). Media policies are the result of complex negotiation processes in which political economic and cultural values and objectives are established that broadly shape the context for the production, consumption, influence, and sharing of contents. Mansell and Raboy (2011) describe media and communication policy as a field that "refers to all efforts to influence media and communication systems, including those by the state, industry, and civil society" (p. 13). Consequently, governance considers informal and formal processes and practices that determine the framework in which traditional and new media perform (Hamelink & Nordenstreng, 2007; Kleinsteuber & Nehls, 2011). It is critical to generate knowledge around these frameworks as they also shape the decision-making and behavior of users, media organizations, and various platform and third-party companies that today play an important role in governance aspects, such as data management, content moderation, and copyright. Scholars have attributed multiple applications to media governance as a field of study; however, many scholars have contributed to the field without labeling it as such (e.g., see van Eeten & Mueller, 2013). Media governance is applied as a normative concept, descriptive term, and analytical approach (Donges, 2007). Early on, these three facets of media gov-

ernance were often intertwined, as academics only slowly revisited, complemented, and amended the many political definitions of governance (e.g., see Raboy, 2002; van Eeten & Mueller, 2013; Woods, 1999). Scholars using media governance as an analytical heuristic for theorizations of policy change and continuity have developed complex and broad understandings that are skeptical about terms like "good governance," which the World Trade Organization (WTO) used early on (Woods, 1999) in their documents and which promoted the idea that governance is necessarily something ideal or good (see Ganter, 2016). As a result, the conceptual and theoretical value of media governance as a perspective has been increasingly foregrounded. In short, assuming this critical perspective, the scholarly field has responded to questions addressing the materiality and discursivity of media and communication policy processes, which transpire through the negotiation of norms and values as well as the (lack of) interactions, their implementation, and the often uneven impacts they have across society.

With that, the field has departed from what van Eeten and Mueller (2013) described as following a misleading focus on centralized institutions and has shifted more into the less convenient but more "disjointed, messy and globally distributed processes that together produce governance" (p. 729). In line with this is the amplification from studying established governance practices, such as self-regulation or co-regulation (Puppis, 2010), toward studying innovations that establish new practices in policymaking (Mansell, 2012). One example here is work looking at policy-hacking, a countering strategy referring to citizens who collectively practice law writing (Hintz, 2016). Another amplification of the narrow perspective on governance as practice is represented by works analyzing protests and civil campaigns accompanying policymaking. Reitman (2016) analyzed the case of the anti-SOPA (Stop Online Piracy Act) protests in the United States as an example of civil society groups contesting elite-focused media governance processes. The study identified several successful strategies of the protests, such as their decentralized nature, speaking up fast and often, powerful visual imagery, engaging with Internet communities, and the crossing of political lines. Löblich (2016) studied the aspect of dissent in civil society groups, using the case of net neutrality debates in the USA, and found that the involvement of civil society groups in media governance debates is often multi-faceted and not unilateral. Other scholars have analyzed cases of limited access to power within policy processes. Kim (2018), for example, finds in the case of media governance in South Korea that media governance processes are steered by powerful media companies and are less accessible for other stakeholders. This is in line with the work of scholars looking at the role of discourses in influencing media policy debates and processes. Ali and Puppis (2018) point to the way powerful media companies can shape media governance discourses through the active use of their agenda-setting power. Ganter and Löblich (2021) argue, based on their discursive media institutionalist framework, that depending on context, media governance discourses can emerge within a broader spectrum of actors which are not homogeneous, and their internal multi-faceted discourses manifest internal and external negotiation of multi-facetted values and norms. Padovani (2018) notes that societal power imbalances and inequities also manifest in media governance processes, practices, and discourses, as well as in unequally distributed consequences of media governance measures. Finally, research increasingly includes citizens' perceptions of policy projects and regulatory

measures as a type of policy evaluation. Strycharz et al. (2020), for example, find in a survey study with 1,288 respondents from the Netherlands that citizens were highly aware of the new European Commission's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) but perceived very little impact of it on their individual rights.

Consequently, the field of media governance today plays an important role in better understanding conditions under which content is being produced, shared, and consumed—what type of content is visible to whom, where, when, at what cost, and why. However, because of that, it is also more necessary than ever to consider the political, economic, and cultural contexts in which media governance is being studied, defined, and theorized—and to reconsider the generalizability of the field, given that it is originally centered in hegemonic hubs. Therefore, the integration of work from various backgrounds and with countering perspectives has become even more necessary. If we look at the development of the field, we can note how imbalances in perspectives have been established since its early beginnings and how important it is to acknowledge the blind spots of the field and, consequently, to take concrete action to foster reinvigoration of the field through openness, inclusivity, and dialogue.

Two decades of centering the field in hegemonic hubs

Three geographical power hubs have been at the forefront of media governance: (1) the US-American tradition, which largely falls under the Internet governance label, (2) the global governance and policy tradition, and (3) the European tradition, which largely falls under the media and communication governance label. These different governance schools emerged almost simultaneously and cemented structures and research perspectives that have been described as myopic (van Eeten & Mueller, 2013), Western and hegemonic (Alhassan & Chakravartty, 2011; Ganter & Badr, 2022), exclusive, largely White, and patriarchic (Padovani, 2018) and which have only started to evolve from these early attributes.

In the development of the field, the emergence of the Internet contributed largely to the governance turn in media and communication studies (Kleinwächter, 2000; Mueller, 2002). Braman (2013) noted how negotiating standards for what would become the Internet since the late 60s took place in the USA through side notes and informal commenting. In her analysis of the Request for Comments (RFC), addressing points of early Internet design, Braman (2013) showed that these early processes constituted "sociotechnical governance of and by the Internet" (p. 79), which were critical in forming agreement and conflict around standards, values, and their implementations and determining what the Internet should constitute and for whom. The interdependence of the geopolitics of technological design and the emergence of the field is an important factor that has led to geographical imbalances and blind spots shaping the field until today. For a considerable time, technological developments have been studied as originating in the USA, and the idea of the US-American, White, male genius designer of networks, devices, platforms, applications, and standards, values, and practices has influenced media governance studies, as well. In the contrary, work addressing early network development, new technology innovations, and digital platform development generated from outside

of the Western/Northern geographical spectrum have by far not played the same role in past media governance work. Even though some publications on developments beyond the USA existed in English early on, the myth of the USA as the sole and central force in creating and structuring digital infrastructures has persisted (e.g., see the critique by Hong, 2022). Examples of such work are contributions to understanding earlier developments such as the Internet revolution in Japan (Coates & Holroyd, 2003), the planning and establishment of governance mechanism for the Internet in India (Shah et al., 2022), or elaborate histories on the development of the Internet infrastructures in Central America (Siles, 2020), Africa (Tankard, 1998; Wasserman, 2017), or the Arab world (Warf & Vincent, 2007).

Regardless, the geopolitical dominance in network development and technological innovation was maintained by a plethora of scholars from and working in the USA, who often chose a national focus and founded a strong US-American school of governance in media and communication studies, which proved to be decisive in the emergence and constitution of the field. This development was also upheld through the field's flagship journals *Telecommunications Policy* (founded in 1976) and *Communication Law and Policy* (founded in 1996) and through emerging strategic centers for policy and governance research.[1] Almost simultaneously, some scholars also started to address questions of national sovereignty (Braman, 2006; Price, 2002; Raboy, 2002) and studied global governance initiatives (Mueller et al., 2007; Siochrú et al., 2002). However, as van Eeten and Mueller (2013) outlined, this work has been criticized for being "myopic" (p. 728) and lacking considerations of power geographies in international entities such as the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), the Internet Governance Forum (IGF), Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA), and Internet Engineering task force (IETF) as well as ongoing processes such as the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). The latter, however, differed in that the summit aimed at least, on paper, for more heterogeneity and diverse geopolitical representation and contributed significantly to establishing global governance perspectives in media and communication policy studies (Mansell & Raboy, 2011). This body of work was at the start hopeful of multi-stakeholderism and enthusiastic about new forms of discussing frameworks shaping communication and media realities globally; however, soon, the WSIS would become an example of flaws of multi-stakeholder dialogue and Western dominance in setting standards (Musiani, 2013). At nearly the same time, a third power hub emerged that would ultimately combine media, communication, and Internet governance under the label of "media governance" and emphasize theoretical and conceptual developments. This hub was the Germanic school of governance that had its epicenter in Switzerland, predominantly at the University of Zurich, and it fostered neo-institutional perspectives as theoretical foundations in media governance (Donges, 2007; Puppis, 2010). A volume edited in German by Patrick Donges (2007) bundled works of a large group of representatives of media governance scholars from Austria, Germany, and Switzerland. The contributions reflect the early conceptual, theoretical, and normative discussions within Germanic media governance.

1 Such as the Internet Governance Project at the School of Public Policy at the Georgia Institute of Technology, or the Berkman Klein Center for the Internet & Society at Harvard University.

Alongside the German-centric developments, media governance as a field also mushroomed across European universities in the Netherlands, Belgium, and the United Kingdom, where new university chairs and research centers labelled as policy and governance have opened since the 2010s. This European section of media governance literature from the start has included a much broader range of topics such as questions around media diversity (Helberger, 2011), regulation of public service media, audiovisual media (Donders et al., 2014; Michalis, 2010), and innovation (Mansell, 2012) as well as specific questions addressing spam regulation (Just et al., 2007) and digital rights (Padovani et al., 2010)—which confirms what Kleinsteuber and Nehls (2011) have summarized as a convergent nature of the field that includes new and old media.

The rise of digital platforms after 2015 led to new labels, such as social media governance (Flew, 2015), governance by things (Schulz & Dankert, 2016), governance of/by platforms (Gillespie, 2017), governance by algorithms (Just & Latzer, 2017), platform governance (Gorwa, 2019), algorithmic governance (Katzenbach & Ulbricht, 2019), and AI governance (Floridi, 2021; Hassan, 2023; Roberts et al., 2021).[2] During this time, voices were already calling for a decentering of media and communication studies (e.g., Waisbord & Mellado, 2014), and suggestions to decolonialize media and communication policy and law as a field were being expressed (Alhassan & Chakravarty, 2011). Regardless, these new labels were proposed from a Western-centered perspective (e.g., Hassan, 2023) and upheld previously created silos, while also reproducing "canonical silences" by ensuring "the continued circulation of influential texts" (Willems, 2023, p. 17) and self-referentiality (Connell, 2007). However, this was also the time when critique regarding the lack of intersectional perspectives (Bannerman, 2020; Padovani, 2018; Smith & Craig, 2023) and the constructive use of these in the field emerged together with first accounts of media governance from the Global South.

Examples of media governance research from the Global South

The three dominant hubs in media governance studies developed simultaneously, but largely in parallel, a phenomenon that Waisbord (2019) described as "siloization" (p. 40). At the same time, media governance as an approach had not spread widely in non-Western contexts (Ganter, 2016; Ganter & Badr, 2022). A review of literature from 2002 through 2019 showed that 45.75% of scholars working with media governance terminologies worked in Europe, 30.72% in North America, 7.19% in Oceania, and only 16.34% were from universities in the Global South (Ganter & Badr, 2022, p. 4). The contributions addressing contexts from the Global South, if published in English, were mainly published in area studies and not in subject-specific journals (e.g., see Yang & Mueller, 2014, on Internet governance in China). Work from or on the Global South addressing questions inherent to media governance studies have rarely used the label of media governance. Creating connections with more frequency through labelling has only started in the past 10 years. One example of this development is the Media and Governance in Latin

2 Some scholars use the terms AI governance and algorithmic governance interchangeably by labelling work on algorithmic governance as AI governance (e.g., see Floridi, 2021; Hassan, 2023).

America conference, which has been taking place at universities around Europe since 2014. Other examples for the uptake of governance research can be found in several centers and institutes of Internet governance located in countries of the Global South.[3] Consequently, this developing stream is creating an important connection between media governance as a field of study and scholarly work from/on countries beyond the central hubs established in previous decades. Bhuiyan (2014) provides a historical analysis of power structures in Internet governance, emphasizing the hegemonic position of the USA and providing the alternative suggestions and critique voiced by stakeholders from the Global South. In his analysis, he emphasized the influence of the state from the perspective of radical justice and proposed multilateralism as an immanent governance process solution to hegemonic structures. In his comprehensive history of media governance in Korea from 1980–2017, Kim (2018) emphasizes the idea that analyzing media governance means analyzing the interactions between government, media market, and civil society. He draws from the media governance framework by Puppis (2010), stipulating that the market had gained more influence and power in Korea over time. Opperman (2018), in his edited volume on Internet governance in the Global South, displays the work of scholars from different countries and times who had explored the meaning and thematical developments and discussions around Internet Governance in the Global South. These studies have shown how scholars have situated themselves proactively in the field, by approaching it through labelling their work accordingly and adding to the existing media governance literature, through applying the terminology for too often invisible contexts.

In addition to these more application-oriented uses of media governance, related critique of its applicability and new conceptual phrasing in relation to the centered media governance literature have only emerged more directly in the past few years (e.g., Akpojivi, 2022; Asthana, 2022; de Albuquerque & de Matos, 2022; Hassan, 2023; Pies, 2022; Raghunath, 2022; Segura & Linares, 2022). This development has been manifested particularly in more visible studies on AI governance in China (Roberts et al., 2021) and in Hassan's (2023) emphasis on a racial and colonial understanding of AI governance. These recent works from scholars working in or on contexts based in the Global South reflect a more direct, dynamic, and confident pushback against and critique of scholarly conceptualizations from the hegemonic centers. Therefore, as voices from the Global South have become more prominent across media governance studies, the question is how to circumvent the reproduction of silos and instigate a lasting epistemic transformation. However, as calls for methodological, theoretical, and academic cosmopolitanism have been voiced more frequently, what has been missing is the application and transfer into an enduring academic ethos. Scholars from the field have started late to instigate this transition, but they have been comparatively early in modeling concrete suggestions for enacting epistemic transformation as an ongoing process. In the following, I will point in more detail to some examples of cosmopolitan critique voiced in the field that has raised

3 Examples include the Internet Governance Institute in Nepal, the Research Center for Internet Development and Governance at Tsinghua University, the African School on Internet Governance, and the Asia Pacific School on Internet Governance.

important questions and enables epistemic wonderings for all media governance scholars.

Cosmopolitanism in media governance studies: Starting with critique, aiming for transformation

Establishing cosmopolitan critique

At the beginning of cosmopolitan perspectives stands the recognition that media governance has not been used frequently as a concept outside of the contexts mentioned above. Scholars from the Global South have questioned governance as being part of a dominant narrative itself (Jose, 2007), claimed the marginalization of countries in global governance processes (Bhuiyan, 2014), found it to be an antiquated concept (Camou, 1995/2020), and came to note that the approach has not been used much so far in their contexts (Allam, 2022; de Albuquerque & de Matos, 2022). In Latin America, for example, media policy and industry studies are a very prominent and strong field that is part of the larger critical media and communication studies movement across the continent (Bolaño, 2020). However, its representatives have for a long time made a point of developing their work independently from other schools (de Albuquerque & de Oliveira, 2021; Paulino & Kaplún, 2020)—while also being largely invisible in Westernized contexts (Ganter & Ortega, 2019).

These circumstances alone can be considered an unvoiced critique that raises questions around the limitations of media governance in the ways in which it has been conceptualized and studied. In this context, it is not possible to just call for and implement academic cosmopolitanism; it is necessary to request and listen to the critique raised as a starting point for dialogue, which then considers this critique. Cosmopolitan critique includes, but goes beyond, the argument for dialogue, recognition, and respect across contexts and cultural spaces and seeks to ingrain those values into academic processes through a *cosmopolitan iteration*. Based on what Seyla Benhabib (2006) called "democratic iteration" (p. 16), cosmopolitan iteration is a proposal for a countering methodology which proceeds through a series of questions to trigger what I call *epistemic wonderings*. The questions leading through the iteration inquire about motivations behind academic work and publishing processes, reasons for involvement of some and exclusion of others, and related power structures. The questions also ask how to ensure that we do not reproduce abyssal thinking and instead circumvent the recreation of closed contact zones, that we identify, think about, and include othered perspectives, ideas, and concepts, and that all cosmopolitan work will create "cosmopolitan contact zones" (de Sousa Santos, 2005, p. 17) that are generative and constructive (Ganter & Badr, 2022). As such, a cosmopolitan critique offers starting points for the cosmopolitan iteration as a reciprocal constructive approach to media governance studies, which is dynamic, self-reflexive, inclusive, and empathetic but not free from disagreement. A cosmopolitan iteration comprises recognition of differences, inclusive differentiation, creation of enabling generative cosmopolitan contact zones, and intercultural transla-

tion.[4] All of this shows that the implementation of academic cosmopolitanism through critique and iteration requires time and resources to support the researchers, journal editors, students, and reviewers' ability to establish, maintain, and engage in cosmopolitan (net)work(s). Cosmopolitan critique needs to be voiced, listened to, considered, and implemented on academic, institutional, and pedagogical levels. Implementing academic cosmopolitanism requires recognizing one's own limitations, established belief systems, approaches, and practices to be able to give space to epistemic transformation. As described in cosmopolitan reflections (e.g., Ganter & Ortega, 2019; Waisbord, 2019), this process is complex and requires the additional emotional labor of self-reflection, open listening, and re-positioning—all of which are adverse in the fast-paced, hypercompetitive, and performative, often streamlined knowledge economy (Afonso, 2013). While media and communication governance scholars have started the iteration, it will take some time for the process to come full circle.

Learning from cosmopolitan critique

Points raised through the cosmopolitan critique (Ganter & Badr, 2022) concerning the field have mainly addressed scholarly but also pedagogical and institutional dimensions of academic work. One blind spot that has been highlighted is the lack of attention in media governance studies to transitioning or autocratic systems (Allam, 2022; Sakr, 2022). Scholars have outlined different modes of media governance in the Global South and have emphasized how established ideas, rules, axioms, and postulates of the field are questioned in this context. Specific conceptual points of the critique raised in this context refer, for example, to the need to provide an alternative theorization of AI ethics through emphasizing the "raciality of computing and political economy of technoscience" by providing a "racial and colonial understanding of technoscience" (Hassan, 2023, p. 1430).

Further points of the critique voiced have referred to different interpretations of formality vs. informality and underlined the need to study governance as centered around informalities and oral cultures of governance which shape practices and rules outside of written policies (Raghunath, 2022; Sakr, 2022). While there might be some references to self-governance and co-governance in this approach, the inclusion of locally shaped oral cultures of transmission, shaping, and changing of unwritten rules and practices and their consequences for media and communication, is an aspect worthy of further exploration in the literature. Here, the suggestion is also to consider individuals' negotiation of their freedoms, identities, and opinions in highly restricted public spaces in authoritarian and transformational systems as a governance mode (Matsilele & Mustvairo, 2022; Sakr, 2022) and to consider voice-parity as a value to be upheld in governance processes (Raghunath, 2022). In line with that, the multi-stakeholder approach is frequently critiqued as a contingent concept, a process that is often suggested as an ideal solution to democratic shortcomings, but one that neglects power imbalances and hinders policy innovations. Therefore, scholars who provide perspectives from the Global South offer critical thought and conceptual scrutiny. Shen (2022) points here to the problem of

4 Please see Ganter and Badr (2022) for a detailed explanation of which observations are foundational for cosmopolitan critique and its iteration.

overemphasizing the USA as an influential actor in international multilateral processes and not taking into account other countries such as China and their impact. De Albuquerque and de Matos (2022) criticize how the multi-stakeholder approach has been used to distribute neoliberal ideas and policy programs with the aim of maintaining power relations. Segura and Linares (2022) propose "participatory policy" (p. 215) as an alternative terminology altogether, to provide room for an analysis of multilateral processes which can address and acknowledge different types and stages of participation and how power asymmetries shape access and ability to participate in high-level policy making—as well as to provide encouragement and tools to start reform from below (Segura & Waisbord, 2016). Asthana (2022) similarly highlights the need to enable everyday people's involvement in resistance to established systems through practices of "commoning" (p. 32), thus lowering barriers to access to media infrastructures and goods.

The critique of media governance as a "utopian concept" (Jo & Jin, 2022) is also a powerful reminder that commonplaces from media governance are not widely accepted as evident. This critique points to the increased uneven influence of powerful companies, such as digital platform companies, when it comes to dealing with new practices and rules when citizen involvement in these processes is limited through structural and cultural conditioning. It is interesting to note that the rise of platforms has exposed the impact of similar challenges and their varied consequences for citizens around the world. Different countries negotiate and deal with challenges such as the circulation of content that is potentially harmful to individuals and society at large, economic imbalances and challenges related to the media industry and journalism, or the violation of privacy rights and copyrights in different ways (e.g., Ganter, 2022). Moving forward, the underlying assumption needs to be that all contexts are equally insightful and conceptually and theoretically important and that they all can enrich the development of the field. Overall, cosmopolitan critique brought forward recently have emphasized the need to move beyond conceptualizations of media governance, as based on regulatory or multi-level actions, to consider power relations, particularly those that affect and delimit or enable citizen action, and to reflect more of what is not addressed, studied, or asked about and therefore not conceptually considered.

Challenges to cosmopolitan iteration in media governance studies

The impact that cosmopolitan critique unfolds academically and the results that cosmopolitan iteration will bring to the fore will over time depend on whether new perspectives and voices can obtain good visibility and whether the field engages them. Research suggests that those who manage journals will influence the geographical spread of authors and issues studied (Ganter & Ortega, 2019; Goyanes & Demeter, 2020). Editors in chief of the few current flagship journals of the field are mainly from the US-American or central European context, and editorial board members are similarly distributed (see Table 1). Consequentially, organized special issues and edited volumes that promote perspectives of the Global South or specific regions that are normally underrepresented are still required (e.g., Bizberge et al., 2023; Ganter & Badr, 2022) to promote work on and from within contexts outside the established geographical hubs. However, the risk is that these bundled publications will remain invisible and not engaged with from within hege-

monic centers. Comparative perspectives, for example, would offer multiple opportunities for deep engagement and have been popular particularly in the European stream of media governance research (e.g., d'Haenens et al., 2018). However, even studies with large samples are often restricted to more similar cases and are likelier to exclude countries which would contribute experiences different from centered contexts—or adapt outliers to Western understandings (Pies, 2022). The argument that country X is not comparable with country Y is frequently used and often misses the mark when it is about finding new ways to think about and study media governance in the first place (see also Radue et al. on media systems in this book). The question to be asked is not "How comparable is it?" Instead, the important question in cosmopolitan inquiry would be "What are the differences and similarities in the generic thinking and resulting conceptualizations of what constitutes media governance, and why do they exist?" or simply put, "What can we learn from context x or y, and how does it matter?" This, however, requires the courage to "reach beyond the comfort zone" (Ganter, 2020). However, it is not enough to foster cosmopolitan critique and to publish case studies from the Global South or include experiences from the Global South; it will be essential to engage them proactively over time. This engagement will not be successful if constructive critique is mentioned as a counter-hegemonic agenda but then the contributions made are not considered in the emerging conceptualizations of the field (e.g., Puppis et al., 2024)—or if Western-centric conceptualizations, for example, of "algorithmic governance" are being translated and published in contexts of the Global South as if they were also automatically and equally addressing the contexts beyond the West (e.g., see Katzenbach & Ulbricht, 2019).

Pedagogically, embracing epistemic wonderings would also mean training and encouraging students to study scholarly works from a variety of contexts. This particularly includes empowering students from the Global South, regardless of where they chose to study, to engage with concepts and ways of studying from their local contexts and to transport them to their university. However, at times when governmental policies force universities to start reversing from being globalized with a high portion of international students into being more nationalized places, it might be challenging to uphold a cosmopolitan perspective in classrooms—even in universities that currently have a culturally, linguistically, and nationally diverse studentship.[5] Explaining to local students in North America and Europe why findings from studies done in Tanzania, Argentina, China, or Egypt matter and are theoretically, socially, and politically at least as important as studies done in Canada, the USA, or the UK, could require more effort and dialogue in the classroom moving forward. Therefore, to be convincing in this effort, it is even more important to make it a standard that faculty engage with and use scholarly work from outside their own cultural, linguistic, and national contexts. At the same time, it is necessary that efforts for cosmopolitan iteration are institutionally supported and normalized through funding agencies, departmental inclusion of this type of work into evaluations of workload, and its recognition as academic work per se. In particular, funding agencies should engage more open funding schemes that do not preselect a

5 In Canada, for example, the government decided in January 2024 to considerably limit visas for international students for at least two years (https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/miller-cap-international-students-1.7090779).

limited number of potential cooperation partner countries and enhance and facilitate global partnerships on a level playing field between researchers, as well as support both national and international students with comparable funding schemes. In the field of media governance, this is particularly relevant, as it is a field where policy innovation (in all directions) could emerge from more dialogue between academics from different contexts and with diverse experiences that could be shared widely and benefit not only the academic community but also policymakers and citizens.

Table 1: Journals designated to publishing work in the field of media governance (source: author's compilation)

Journal	**Year founded**	**Editor in Chief/ Managing Board**	**Affiliation of Editor(s)/ Managing Board Members**
Telecommunications Policy	1976	Erik Bohlin	Western University Canada and Chalmers University of Technology, Sweden
International Journal of Cultural Policy	1993	Oliver Bennett,	Centre for Cultural and Media Policy Studies, University of Warwick, Coventry, UK
Communication Law and Policy	1996	Amy Kristin Sanders	University of Texas at Austin, USA
Journal of Digital Media & Policy	2010	Petros Iosifidis	City University, London, UK
Internet Policy Review	2012	Mélanie Dulong de Rosnay Natali Helberger Jeanette Hofmann Martin Kretschmer Vincent Homburg David Megías Jiménez Wolfgang Schulz	CIS-CNRS, Université Paris-Sorbonne IViR, University of Amsterdam HIIG Berlin CREATe, University of Glasgow Johan Skytte Institute, University of Tartu IN3, Universitat Oberta de Catalunya Hans-Bredow Institute, University of Hamburg
Digital Policy, Regulation and Governance*	2017	Anna Visvizi	SGH Warsaw School of Economics – Poland

*Formerly info: The journal of policy, regulation and strategy for telecommunications, information and media

Conclusion

Media governance as a field is built upon three main hegemonic hubs that emerged almost simultaneously and, to some extent, overlapped in thematic areas, conceptual and

theoretical considerations, and methodologies but failed to acknowledge the differences that also exist when we think about, approach and study media governance from within different contexts and positionalities. Even though all three hubs have produced self-reflections and calls to reinvigorate or improve the field, little attention has been given to blind spots, which include work done in the field from and on the Global South as well as intersectional perspectives. The temporary renewal of the field through the introduction of new labels, such as social media governance or platform governance, has largely been a testimony of the structural imbalances shaping the field and further cemented the invisibility of de-Westernizing realities and perspectives. This is particularly problematic, as the rise of digital technologies, increased access to the Internet, and the emergence of platform services and AI technologies have also increasingly shown dispersed impact in countries around the world (see also Sarısakaloğlu in this book). There have been varied attempts and opportunities for citizens and the industry to engage in the technological developments and their impact on society. The limited opportunities for agency have led to concrete consequences for access, freedom of expression and privacy rights in countries where powerful actors used new means as a way to control, monitor, and restrict access to unbiased information, their circulation and their production. Regardless, we see emerging forms of resistance and new informal ways to shape media governance, to establish and safeguard rights, and to formulate expectations toward the frameworks and practices that shape media systems. These realities are different from what Western media governance studies have addressed, and they are equally important for a truly broad and open conceptualization and theorization of the field—and publications addressing these realities from a media governance perspective have been slowly increasing since 2014. If the aim is to be inclusive and move the field forward through an epistemic transformation, it is critical to trigger epistemic wonderings in those who have been at the center of the field for many years. These wonderings need to be triggered through critique, the process of cosmopolitan iteration, and the recognition that iteration has no perfect ending, no ideal answers, but that it is ongoing and requires broad engagement and consideration from academics working under all different labels that media governance literature provides us with and from all parts of the world. The creation of spaces where epistemic wonderings are possible enables structural ruptures and changes needed for epistemological transformations. Academic cosmopolitanism provides an encouragement to move out of the established comfort zone and engage in epistemic wonderings. If media governance as a field of study wants to maintain its relevancy and become a more equitable and open area of study, this is where we need to invest the time, labor, and resources to succeed.

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