



Special Issue: 'Media Policies in South Asia: State of the Field'

Deadlines:

Abstracts of 400 words to be received by 20 November 2020.

Full manuscripts of 6–8,000 words, including references, by 30 June 2021.

Final papers to be sent to the publisher by 1 December 2021.

The diverse and rapidly expanding media systems of the South Asian region accentuate its vast cultural diversity and various stages of democracy. The interaction between these structures presents interesting examples of how they impact the corresponding national media policies. It becomes pertinent to understand how these policies are influenced by the hyper-nationalistic and protectionist rhetoric currently sweeping different parts of the world, further exacerbated by the ongoing pandemic. At the same time, the rapidly growing presence and consequent influence of global digital media networks further confound this relationship, as they are greatly interested in the expansion of media infrastructure in the region to tap into the potential of new markets. Additionally, the changing geopolitics of the region with an increasing presence of the Chinese state and private investments in all sectors including digital media, present a new stakeholder in the media policies of the region.

We identify South Asia not just as a geographic region, but one with cultural and socio-economic continuities. Thus, we also focus on the pressures and pulls of the countries on each other. While initiatives like the People's South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) are useful in delineating the region as a separate block, various issues have repeatedly highlighted the limits of these strategic regional markers. This was witnessed in the Rohingya refugee crisis of Myanmar, which is officially not a part of SAARC, but one that inevitably involves both India and Bangladesh. The Indian media's hyper-nationalist response to this crisis reflected the heightening protectionist rhetoric that has become commonplace, while also seeing an increasing amount of foreign investments flowing into its media sectors. Meanwhile, the influence of Indian broadcast media in Nepalese media markets seek to problematize its conceptions of sovereignty (Raghunath, 2020). Bangladesh's politico-commercial nexus has brought to the fore the practice of informal networks (Rahman, 2020). Sri Lanka has been a pioneer in community-based broadcasting and internet-based community experiments, even as neoliberal policies and the end of the civil war have transformed the media landscape. Pakistan's trysts with military rule and now, a civilian government has shaped the media in the country. Afghanistan's war has meant that international media development agencies have been involved in media training and development in the country.



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Myanmar's tryst with authoritarian majoritarianism and Bhutan's monarchy have their own influences on the media landscape in the countries.

What are the effects of these ongoing political and economic shifts on media policy in South Asia? Will these changes reflect differently on the media content and infrastructure markets? Given that the nature of relationships between South Asian countries have been rapidly changing due to the influence of China, how does this reflect on the media policies? In this special issue, we seek to explore empirical and theoretical aspects of media policies in South Asia. We seek to engage with works that analyze media policies in the region, or contribute to pedagogy pertaining to the study of media policy with a focus on South Asia. The scholarship on media policy in South Asia currently draws primarily on ideas and methodologies from the Global North, especially in terms of regulatory systems. We especially look forward to decolonial approaches and theoretical perspectives to the study of media policies in the region. We welcome submissions that go beyond the study of India as synonymous with the idea of South Asia, for adequate regional rumination. Therefore, contributors are invited to address issues such as:

- socio-economic and cultural aspects of broadcasting in the region;
- platform and gig economies in the region;
- digital media economy in South Asia;
- datafication of South Asia;
- community-centric broadcasting in the region;
- telecommunication policies and foreign direct investment;
- international engagement and cooperation in multilateral forums;
- urbanism and smart cities as practices of media policies;
- public interest and normative ideals;
- decolonial approaches to the study of media policies in South Asia.



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