



Media Movements in Latin America: Citizens' Participation in Media Policy-Making

Juan S. Larrosa-Fuentes

To cite this article: Juan S. Larrosa-Fuentes (2018) Media Movements in Latin America: Citizens' Participation in Media Policy-Making, Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 62:1, 192-194, DOI: [10.1080/08838151.2017.1402908](https://doi.org/10.1080/08838151.2017.1402908)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/08838151.2017.1402908>



Published online: 30 Jan 2018.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 4



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

BOOK REVIEW

Media Movements in Latin America: Citizens' Participation in Media Policy-Making

Juan S. Larrosa-Fuentes 



Segura, M. S., & Waisbord, S. (2016). *Media Movements: Civil Society and Media Policy Reform in Latin America*. London: Zed Books. 214 pages.

In recent decades, the study of social movements has informed the research agenda of various communication scholars and sociologists. One of the most important topics for researchers has been to evaluate the impacts, consequences, and effects of social movements on contemporary societies. One way to achieve this evaluation is by assessing cases where social movements' demands have been crystallized in the creation of new legislation and the transformation of legal systems. In this sense, the book *Media Movements: Civil Society and Media Policy Reform in Latin America* is an extraordinary contribution to understanding how social movements have transformed some of the legal regulations that control Latin American media systems and public communication in general. This book, by Maria Soledad Segura (Universidad Nacional de Córdoba) and Silvio Waisbord (George Washington University), describes and analyzes how, in the last 20 years, social movements have contributed to the democratization of public communication in a particular region of the world.

Media Movements: Civil Society and Media Policy Reform in Latin America offers a panoramic view of Latin American media movements. The authors examine media movements of Argentina, Uruguay, Mexico, and Ecuador in order to find the "connecting threads among media movements regarding goals, strategy, and impact" (Segura & Waisbord, 2016, p. 2).

As the authors explain, these cases do not represent all the nuanced complexity of the region, but condense some of the key features of media movements in the area, which are bounded by a common language (i.e., Spanish as a lingua franca) and an

Juan S. Larrosa-Fuentes is a Ph.D. candidate in the School of Media and Communication at Temple University. His research interests include the history of media systems, digital journalism, the political economy of communication and culture, and political communication.

© 2018 Broadcast Education Association *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 62(1), 2018, pp. 192–194
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/08838151.2017.1402908> ISSN: 0883-8151 print/1550-6878 online

ideological and discursive understanding of public communication as an important human right in the context of contemporary democracies. The methodological strategy of the research includes a historical review of media movements in Latin America, a careful analytical reading of the research about media movements in the region, and the analysis of more than forty interviews with scholars, journalists, politicians, and activists. By and large, the reader will find three important elements in this book. First, a clear, concise but sophisticated contextualization of the political, economic, and legal development of media systems in Latin America. Second, a detailed description and analysis of the goals and strategies that media movements used to transform laws and create new regulations. Third, advances in the theorization of social movements in the twentieth century.

The first chapter of the book contains a historical contextualization of Latin American media systems and policy making. The authors explain that media systems in the region have been characterized by a strange and unique blend of two essential elements: a market media systems model and “patrimonialism,” a political culture that informed the relations between the state, media owners, and citizens. Latin American media systems have been owned by capitalists and entrepreneurs who have used media institutions for making a profit. However, the “invisible hand of the market” was not the only media systems regulator. During the twentieth century, some countries implemented legal systems to control media institutions. In other cases, media organizations operated without laws, and states controlled media owners through a *quid pro quo* political structure, where media institutions were allowed to work and make a profit in exchange for a political behavior that satisfied the political *status quo*. In this order of things, civil society was ignored, and media regulations were negotiated by political elites (i.e., politicians and media owners).

The third and fourth chapters contain the empirical findings of the book, which are based on a theoretical scaffold that draws from the concept of media movements, defined as “initiatives aimed at transforming media policies to promote pluralism in public communication” (Segura & Waisbord, 2016, p. 3). In the third chapter, the authors present and analyze the strategies that social movements have used to achieve their goals. Media movements in Latin America used different strategies to change media systems, such as building coalitions among various social movements and civic organization, creating technical knowledge about media systems and their regulations in the region, persuading political elites, protesting in the streets, creating public communication campaigns, and participating in state-sanctioned channels, such as national courts and the international human rights legal system. The fourth chapter describes the achievements of these social movements and analyzes the various cases resulting in the passage of new legislation. In short, Latin American media movements changed and created new laws in three important domains: broadcasting, public access to government information (freedom of information laws), and speech laws (e.g., repeal of contempt laws, the elimination of penal sanctions for public speech).

Media Movements: Civil Society and Media Policy Reform in Latin America renders a compelling description of how civil society has participated in changing

legal systems. The book concludes by claiming that media movements have contributed to change through “the historical pattern of elite-captured policies to participatory decision-making” (Segura & Waisbord, 2016, p. 173). The authors are cautious to avoid over-enthusiastic and celebratory evaluations of this matter, and they explain that there are many reasons that nuance their findings. Although a limited pluralism model still structures Latin American media systems and regulated by “elite-captured” policies, the media systems of the region are changing towards more democratic models.

ORCID

Juan S. Larrosa-Fuentes  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1529-5107>