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Article:

Lugo-Ocando, J orcid.org/0000-0002-9533-2088 (2017) *Media Movements*. *Journal of Communication*, 67 (5). E4-E5. ISSN 0021-9916

<https://doi.org/10.1111/jcom.12326>

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Segura, Maria Soledad and Waisbord, Silvio (2016). *Media Movements. Civil Society and Media Policy Reform in Latin America*. London: Zed Books.

Debates around media policy reform in Latin America have a long history (Pasquali, 1990; Reyes Montes, 2007). Perhaps one of the most important debates went around the creation of a public service broadcaster in Venezuela, the RATELVE project (RATELVE, 1977; Capriles, 1988), which will go to have an important influence upon the discussions around the Many Voices One World, UNESCO report (1981), often referred to the McBride Report. I spent great part of my Bachelor degree hearing about it and the different discussions regarding the possible role of such media institution in strengthening civil society. I remember hearing about how we could have a BBC-style broadcasting system that was both independent and publicly funded and, most importantly; one that could counter the almost oligopolistic landscape dominated by the private media corporations and that kept us 'oppressed' and 'sub-informed'.

In the elaboration of RATELVE, many sectors were consulted including experts, scholars and government officials. However, the project never materialized and for decades the media landscape in that country remained as concentrated, bias and close to reform as ever. Further attempts made later by President Luis Herrera Campaings (1979 - 1984) to diversify ownership and guarantee more access to local independent producers met with disdain and almost brought down his government. Fast-forward some decades to the times of Hugo Chavez's administration (2008-2013) and the coup attempt in 2002 against him, we find that other promises of media reform where also made. The parliament, then controlled by his followers, legislated swiftly on media policy reforms by claiming to empower the community but instead putting the state in charge as to achieve a 'media Pax' (Delgado-Flores, 2005). Consequently, the same type of oligopoly remained in place but now controlled by the government.

So the question remains as to why so many attempts to bring about media reform and promises for democratisation have failed in the continent? One of the answers is the lack of engagement from civil society, which –as the authors argue in this book- has played a fundamental role in the process of media policy reform where it has happen. They recognise, however, that they are not enough and crucially that who ever controls the state remains the most powerful actor in the game -as the cases of Argentina, Ecuador and Venezuela suggest-. The argument goes on to underline that legislative reforms are not enough and that looking at implementation one can see how the devil is in the detail. The book goes then to explore how civil society organisations, the state and even the private sector have entre at times into coalitions to push for reforms and change, although not always with luck or good intentions.

Having said that, as they also underline, there has been some important breakthrough and thanks to some of these movements the region now exhibits much more openness than ever before. As the authors remains us, all but a few countries have now pass laws that guarantee citizen's access to government data and information, something that was unthinkable a few years ago when the continent was still plagued by dictatorships. Legislation on media ownership remains nevertheless elusive and the region shows as much progress as setbacks. In some cases good intentions and personal vendettas have

characterised the debates, where progress have been fostered or hindered by a series of complex factors for which the authors account for. In this sense, this book is one of the most serious attempts so far to link the unconnected dots of the large but inconclusive picture of media policy reform in the continent and is a particular unique contribution in exploring the role of civil society in those reforms. In doing so, it also poses similar questions to the rest of the world and therefore makes a much global contribution towards media debates in general. This by making all of us inquire about the role of civil society in places where although institutional democracy is perhaps more robust it is nonetheless far more influenced by media corporation's lobbies. Indeed, anyone examining the media policy reforms implemented by the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) in the USA during de Clinton administration and epitomised by the Telecommunications Act of 1996 or the media policy reforms implemented by Tony Blair (1994-2007) in Britain under the guide of Rupert Murdoch that led to the chimeric creation of OFCOM, would looked baffled at the final outputs and ask herself where the dam was the civil society in all of this? In that sense, Latin America, with all it faults, has given –with no doubt- the greater lesson to the world: One of resilience and civic engagement against all odds. A lesson from which, as this book highlights, we can all learn from.

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