BOOK REVIEW

Tendai Chari and Ufuoma Akpojivi, eds. *Communication Rights in Africa: Emerging Discourses and Perspectives.* London: Routledge, 2023. 282 pp. $152.00. Hardcover. ISBN: 9781032482835.

Tendai Chari and Ufuoma Akpojivi's edited volume, *Communication Rights in Africa*, is an ambitious and timely exploration of communication rights in the African context, examining how these rights are conceptualized, protected, and contested across the continent. Using a rights-based lens, the collection addresses communication in both offline and digital spheres, shedding light on issues such as digital exclusion, language rights, citizen journalism, media regulation, intellectual property, and social media politicization. The book's innovative approaches make it a valuable resource for scholars, activists, and media practitioners.

The volume is organized into four parts with twelve chapters and an introduction. Chari and Akpojivi provide a comprehensive theoretical and historical overview of communication rights in their opening chapter, setting the stage for the subsequent case studies and thematic discussions. Part One focuses on cultural and minority rights. Chike Mgbeadichie examines the Ubang community in Nigeria, where gendered linguistic practices reinforce inequality, while Job Mwaura critiques Kenyan government-led digitization initiatives that deepen exclusion among pastoralist communities. Lorenzo Dalvit highlights the need for decolonial approaches to digital inclusion policies in South Africa, and Olutobi Akingbade analyzes how Nigerian youth utilized social media during the COVID-19 pandemic to express democratic rights.

Part Two addresses digital citizenship, with Dércio Tsandzana's chapter exploring youth digital activism in Mozambique, revealing the potential of social media to mobilize civic engagement in challenging contexts. It underscores how social media platforms have been used to mobilize civic engagement, even in a context marked by low internet connectivity and restricted freedom of expression. Ernest Mudzengi and Wellington Gadzikwa critique citizen journalism in Zimbabwe, arguing that its potential to advance communication rights is undermined by corporate and state capture. Drawing on Habermas's concept of the public sphere and Gramsci's theory of hegemony, they argue that citizen journalism's potential for promoting communication rights has been undermined by corporate and state capture. Their call for a more inclusive, socially oriented citizen journalism resonates with broader efforts to reclaim communication rights from vested interests.

Part Three shifts to censorship and intellectual property. Ikechukwu Obiaya examines Nigerian filmmakers' reliance on self-censorship to navigate state-

imposed regulatory barriers, while Aifuwa Edosomwan discusses how weak copyright enforcement stifles Nigeria's creative industries. Peter Tiako Ngangum critiques internet shutdowns in Cameroon as disproportionate measures aimed at suppressing dissent, and Brian Hungwe explores the misuse of media trademarks for spreading fake news in South Africa and Kenya, highlighting regulatory dilemmas.

Part Four examines the politics of digital infrastructures. Tendai Chari's analysis of South Africa's #DataMustFall campaign illustrates citizen efforts to demand affordable mobile data in neoliberal contexts, while Ufuoma Akpojivi examines Nigeria's 2021 Twitter ban, revealing the tensions between state control, corporate power, and digital citizenship. Together, these chapters demonstrate the complexities of realizing communication rights amid political and economic constraints.

The book's methodological diversity and regional breadth are among its key strengths. Rich case studies offer empirical insights while engaging with theoretical debates, making the volume both academically rigorous and practically relevant. However, the book has limitations. It often assumes a high level of familiarity with specialized theoretical frameworks, which could make some chapters inaccessible to non-academic readers or practitioners outside media studies. Chapters deploying abstract theoretical concepts without sufficient explanation risk alienating readers unfamiliar with such paradigms.

Additionally, while the editors cover a wide array of topics—from digital activism to intellectual property rights—there are notable gaps in regional and thematic representation. Certain areas of Africa receive limited attention, and critical issues, such as traditional media's role in communication rights or the intersection of communication rights with gender-based violence, are only briefly addressed. These omissions, while understandable given the book's broad scope, highlight areas for future research. Furthermore, the diversity of theoretical and methodological approaches occasionally results in a fragmented reading experience, with chapters lacking the cohesion needed for a more unified narrative.

Despite these drawbacks, *Communication Rights in Africa* is a landmark contribution to the study of media, digital rights, and human rights on the continent. It offers a nuanced and critical perspective on the challenges and opportunities of realizing communication rights in a rapidly changing digital landscape. For researchers, policymakers, and activists, this volume serves as both a rich source of knowledge and a call to action to address the pressing issues surrounding communication rights in Africa.

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