Myria Georgiou, **Media and the City: Cosmopolitanism and Difference,** Cambridge, MA: Polity, 2013, 216 pp., $22.95 (paperback).

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With the arrival of globalization and digitalization and the intensification of trans-national, trans-urban, and trans-local dynamics, cities, particularly global cities, are now emerging as strategic sites for understanding key economic, political, and cultural dynamics (Sassen, 2010). Myria Georgiou's book *Media and the City: Cosmopolitanism and Difference* contributes to this literature by focusing on "cultural networks and mediated negotiations of spaces of *we*-ness, *other*-ness, inequalities and exclusions" (p. 19) in global cities. Studying the global city, a space of extremely diverse and intense communication and difference, helps us to "understand the uneven, hierarchical global order of the urban world" and "capture most intensely urban trajectories in global times" (p. 2). Living in a global city also requires us to "think of how we live in close proximity to each other and how we communicate across difference" (p. 2), which is probably constantly under cosmopolitanization, "a process with uncertain consequences of citizenship, equality and recognition" (p. 6). The main goal of this book is to link media and city together in order to examine how "media and the city become shaped by and shape cosmopolitanization" (p. 6). The author uses London, one of the major global cities in the Global North, as the object of study to establish a comparative starting point to explore these dynamics.
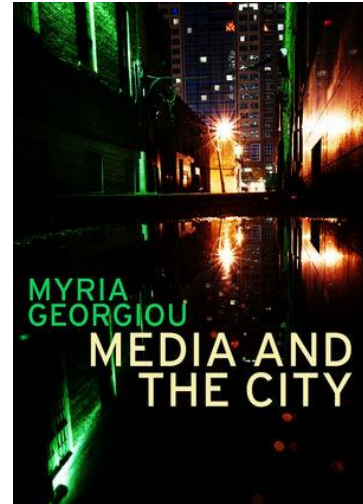
In media and communication studies, the complexity of the relationship between media and the city is often neglected, either taken for granted or reduced to a tool, subject to the production of government and corporate headquarters in global cities. Hence, Georgiou attempts to revisit the literature by focusing on how media and the city co-constitute each other and examining the synergies that occur between them in everyday social, cultural, and political life. Drawing on Roger Silverstone's conceptualization of "mediation," media is conceptualized as "the dialectical processes in which institutions and audiences are involved in the circulation of symbolic forms enabled through the media but not exclusively located *within* the media" (p. 15), rather than as specific communication technologies. Under this inclusive definition, interpersonal communication and other communication practices that produce urban meanings in everyday life are also included.

Obviously, the influence of media on the city is not entirely new, but Georgiou contends that with the rise of the global city, media has started playing a constitutive role. Chapter 2 examines the complex synergy between media and city in today's global cities. From a top-down approach, cultural industries and production are overconcentrated in a small number of global cities. Moreover, government hopes to rely on media to brand cosmopolitan cities such as London as global cultural centers to attract a flow of

capital, members of the creative class, and tourists. The city, including its history and culture, becomes a commodity and a place of consumption. This neoliberal discourse is also used by cultural industries to ask for and sustain low taxation and deregulation. In this sense, the city and cosmopolitan imagination are selectively represented by government or elites to reproduce the neoliberal discourse.

However, Georgiou contends that these media and city synergies should be examined from a bottom-up, street level perspective, which is the main focus of her analysis. This is because difference is not totally constructed by the government and transnational elites; it is also mediated and lived in the street. A city is a lived space for many kinds of urban dwellers, such as refugees, asylum seekers, migrants, and other minorities. They have their distinct ways of dealing with difference and inequality in everyday life. These practices of urban dwellers also lead to the possibility of resistance to neoliberal discourse and of other cosmopolitan visions. However, these practices cannot go beyond mediation because the media have the symbolic power to produce the images of the city. Most of what the urban dwellers know about the city come from these medaited images. Due to this dialectal relationship between media and the city, the city is a site of struggle among various social actors in everyday life.

Apart from media and city synergies, another important set of concepts in this book, as indicated in its title, are cosmopolitanism and difference. Georgiou distinguishes these concepts from political philosophy. That is, the book does not define cosmopolitanism as a moral standpoint in liberal thought. Rather, the focus is on the "actually existing cosmopolitanism" (p. 37). *Cosmopolitanization* is defined as "the process through which urban subjects are constantly exposed to difference through mediated and interpersonal communication" (p. 3). Compared to other cities, cosmopolitanization is more explicit. This is because the intensified and diversified flow of ideas and people connected the global city and the world. Following the logic of media and city synergies, cosmopolitanization is contradictory because the representation of difference in terms of *we*-ness and *other*-ness is constantly under negotiation among different urban dwellers at the street level. For instance, the intensified and diversified flow of transnational professional elites and a migrant working class from London to the world and from the world to London as well as the consumption of different cultural products can be observed as cosmopolitanization. The contradictory cosmopolitanization is reflected in these urban dwellers' individual ideas of the city and the varied ways they deal with difference according to their sociocultural backgrounds.

Grounded in this contextual and conceptual framework, the book aims to map three different and conflicting cosmopolitan visions: (1) *neoliberal cosmopolitanism*, which is "the celebrated realization of neoliberalism" (p. 44) and is also "ubiquitous, hegemonic and normalized" (p. 145) in a global city; (2) *vernacular cosmopolitanism*, which is "an embodied, practiced and contradictory form of cosmopolitanism that emerges in urban spaces of intense juxtapositions of difference" (p. 44); and (3) *liberatory cosmopolitanism*, "which starts from urban encounters, but which raises questions about the significance of difference in advancing equality, recognition and redistribution" (p. 146). Georgiou approaches this objective by examining four interfaces—consumption (chapter 3), identity (chapter 4), community (chapter 5), and action (chapter 6)—from an empirical perspective. All three cosmopolitan visions share the same starting point—"all recognize the value of difference, cultural diversity, urban openness and the ways in which media and communication can maximize access to difference and its cultural products" (p.

145)—while each interface presents "distinct strategies for domination through the incorporation of cosmopolitanization and particular tactics of resistance to neoliberalism" (p. 147).

Chapter 3 examines the cases of Stratford (top-down cosmopolitanism) and Shoreditch (vernacular cosmopolitanism) through the mediated consumption spaces and actual act of consumer culture. The former represents a neoliberal project, "enabled through the close collaboration of local and national government and corporate interests" (p. 65). Shoreditch represents the neoliberal cosmopolitanism that seeks to incorporate the long history of migration and flows of newcomers and turn difference into a commodity, while vernacular cosmopolitanism both reinforces the divide and turns it into their own culture and history. Consumption often turns urban culture into a commodity, which incorporates the neoliberal discourse. Therefore, Georgiou argues "consumption does not present a politics of resistance to neoliberalism" (p. 148).

Chapter 4 focuses on urban music and graffiti in the inner city—Hackney—because they play a key role in representing the "socially and culturally marginal identities in the global city and in the context of global culture" (p. 67). The creativity shown in popular culture is developed by experience, history, and everyday encounters with difference and inequality. This is the other layer of vernacular cosmopolitanism, which reminds urban dwellers that minorities are also part of the city, though sometimes this popular culture is celebrated by neoliberal cosmopolitanism to turn difference into profit. Hence, identity is another uneven area of struggle.

In chapter 5, the author focuses on community "where vernacular cosmopolitanism coexists with neoliberal cosmopolitanism and where the values of neoliberalism can be both incorporated and resisted" (p. 149). The Arab diaspora in Europe, the inner city's multiethnic communities, and urban nomadism are examined in this chapter. By comparing these three communities, Georgiou wants to show how their distinct mediated and interpersonal communication of dealing with differences make the city with openness, and to challenge the neoliberal cosmopolitanism of city.

Chapter 6 focuses on liberatory cosmopolitanism through the interface of action. The cases studied here are the Occupy movement and the 2011 urban riots in London. Georgiou sees the former as a rare moment in which difference was emphasized and recognized with intentionality, while the latter represents a moment without political intentionality, one of "making a claim to presence—in the city, on its streets, on the screens that make the city a global city" (p. 150).

By examining these four interfaces, in chapter 7 Georgiou reflects on the possibility of justice and resistance to neoliberalism. Although cosmopolitan skills are "ordinary capacities of everyday citizenship" that most citizens in global cities use to deal with difference (p. 153), cosmopolitanization cannot always provide freedom from neoliberalism. But with intense mediation and cosmopolitanization, neoliberalism is constantly challenged at the street level. Additionally, Georgiou argues that media and the city synergies should be understood within cosmopolitanism but not within nationalism or between cosmopolitanism and nationalism. The major contribution here is to go beyond methodological nationalism in media and communication studies.

This book provides a good starting point for media and communication scholars to rethink the dynamics between media and the city. However, it is reasonable to question what "city" refers to when we use this construct (Sassen, 2010). If city is embedded in mediation, the key is "less whether or not everything is mediated . . . but rather, whether this matters" (Livingstone, 2009, p. 8). Georgiou illustrates this point by arguing that people's perceptions of the city cannot go beyond mediation, while the intense mediated and interpersonal communication in a global city means that people experience and encounter difference in everyday life.

Georgiou contends that this book focuses more on the present due to "the distinct characteristics of this present relationship" (p. 17), though she also argues that the symbolic hegemony of global city is contextual. From this point of view, the historical perspective is relatively weak in the book, probably due to length constraints and Georgiou's perspective. However, without mapping the historical context, we may not understand the underlying reasons why mediation is possible and why the city developed in a certain path to become a global node connected to the world.

It is especially important to extend this framework to the cities of the Global South, with their colonial experience. The process of urbanization and mediation may be very different from that of the Global North, and the colonial past may also influence the present postcolonial spatial settings as well as how the city is mediated (Sidaway, 2000). This is not to argue that Georgiou's framework is not applicable to other global cities. But if Georgiou includes more on the question of historical context, her framework may provide a better comparative starting point for global cities in both the north and south.

References

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