

Francesca Belotti, **Indigenous Media Activism in Argentina**, London, UK: Routledge, 2022, 124 pp., \$49.99 (hardcover).

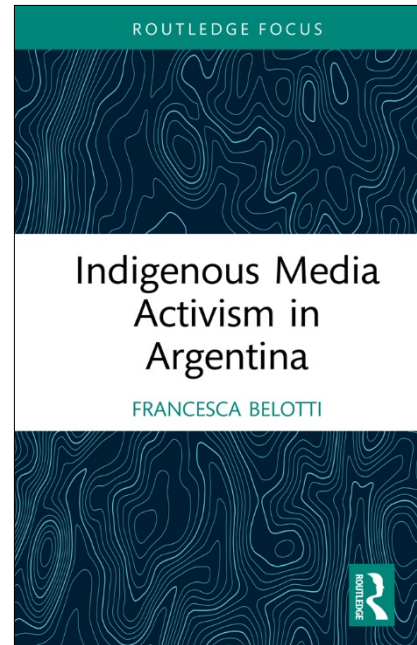
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Francesca Belotti's ***Indigenous Media Activism in Argentina*** offers a critically insightful and rigorously researched exploration of the role of media in Indigenous activism within Argentina, where Indigenous populations have been systematically marginalized, and their identities largely erased from the national narrative. Belotti's work is a valuable contribution to Indigenous media studies, addressing a critical gap by examining how Argentine Indigenous communities use media to resist colonial legacies, assert cultural identities, and fight for their rights. Combining robust theoretical analysis with detailed empirical research, this book is essential for scholars, students, and activists interested in the intersections of media, indigeneity, and decoloniality.

Central to Belotti's analysis is the concept of "media indigenization," which describes how Indigenous communities in Argentina adapt and transform media technologies to reflect their values and worldviews. This process goes beyond mere resistance, involving creative negotiation that produces hybrid expressions rooted in Indigenous cultural practices. Through this approach, Indigenous communities assert their identities and resist the homogenizing forces of globalization and neoliberalism.

This work is anchored in a rigorous theoretical framework, drawing on studies of indigeneity, decoloniality, and media practices. Belotti positions Indigenous media activism within the broader context of decolonial thought, arguing that these practices are not merely reactive but proactive efforts to create alternative spaces for self-representation and self-determination. By framing Indigenous media practices as acts of decolonization, the study challenges dominant narratives that have historically marginalized Indigenous peoples, seeking to reassert their presence and agency in both national and global contexts.

A key strength of the book is its critical engagement with the concept of "decoloniality." Drawing on scholars like Tuhiwai-Smith (1999), Quijano (2000), and Mignolo (2011), Belotti contends that colonialism in Latin America is not just a historical event but an ongoing process that shapes contemporary social, political, and cultural dynamics. This concept of "coloniality"—the persistent legacy of colonial power relations—serves as a crucial lens through which Belotti examines Indigenous media practices in Argentina, portraying them as acts of decolonization that reclaim and reassert Indigenous identities within the national discourse.



Belotti's methodological approach is another notable contribution. She uses a participatory research methodology, deeply engaging with the communities she studies. This approach ensures that the voices and perspectives of Indigenous media practitioners are central to the narrative. Belotti's detailed descriptions of these practices reflect the lived experiences and complexities of Indigenous life in Argentina, ensuring that Indigenous voices actively shape the research's direction and outcomes.

A critical aspect of Belotti's work is her examination of the legal and political frameworks shaping Indigenous media practices in Argentina, particularly the 2009 Law 26522 on Audio-Visual Communication Services (LSCA). While the LSCA was groundbreaking in recognizing Indigenous communities' rights to operate media outlets, Belotti critiques its limitations. She argues that, despite its progressive intent, the law falls short in practice, failing to fully address the unique needs of Indigenous media practitioners—issues exacerbated by the rollback of many LSCA provisions under Argentina's neoliberal Macri administration.

The critical analysis of the LSCA is enriched by her exploration of the everyday realities faced by Indigenous media practitioners. Through extensive fieldwork, including interviews with Indigenous media producers, she details challenges such as financial constraints, bureaucratic hurdles, and technical difficulties in remote areas. Despite these obstacles, Belotti highlights the resilience and creativity of Indigenous media practitioners, who persist in using media as a tool for cultural preservation and political advocacy.

Belotti's exploration of "territorial struggles" is a significant contribution, linking Indigenous media practices to land rights and environmental activism. She demonstrates how media is used to document and resist state and corporate encroachments on Indigenous territories, emphasizing the media's role in preserving Indigenous cultures and sustaining their physical and spiritual connection to the land. This is especially timely given ongoing land disputes in Argentina and across Latin America.

In addition to territorial issues, Belotti delves into the cultural dimensions of media activism, examining how Indigenous media practitioners use radio and television to promote Indigenous languages, traditions, and worldviews. In a country with a history of assimilation and cultural erasure, this cultural activism is crucial. Her focus on orality highlights radio as a powerful medium for transmitting Indigenous knowledge and reinforcing community ties, challenging the dominance of written and visual media traditionally associated with Western knowledge production.

The study further explores "media management" within Indigenous communities, revealing the complexities of maintaining cultural integrity while navigating the demands of modern media production. Belotti examines the relational dynamics within these organizations, particularly across generations and genders, showing how these interactions are shaped by Indigenous cultural norms and the pressures of modernity.

This book also makes a broader contribution to the field of media studies by challenging dominant paradigms that have historically marginalized non-Western forms of media production. It also argues that Indigenous media offers a unique perspective on the role of media in shaping cultural and political identities, and calls for a decolonial approach to media studies that recognizes the value of Indigenous knowledge and practices. This approach is evident throughout the book, as Belotti consistently emphasizes the need to move

beyond Eurocentric frameworks and to understand media as a tool for cultural survival and political resistance in contexts of ongoing colonialism.

One of the key theoretical contributions of the book is its articulation of the concept of “media as a cultural interface” (p. 4). Drawing on Nakata’s (2007) work, Belotti argues that Indigenous media functions as a space where Indigenous and Western worldviews intersect, clash, and sometimes merge. This concept is essential for understanding the dual role of Indigenous media as both a product of and a response to the colonial media landscape. By framing media as a cultural interface, Belotti provides a nuanced analysis of how Indigenous media practitioners navigate the constraints and possibilities of working within a system that is often hostile to their interests.

In addition to its theoretical contributions, the book offers practical insights for media practitioners and activists. Belotti’s detailed case studies provide concrete examples of how Indigenous communities use media to achieve their goals. These case studies not only highlight the challenges faced by Indigenous media practitioners but also offer valuable lessons for other marginalized communities seeking to use media as a tool for social change. By sharing these stories, Belotti contributes to a growing body of literature that emphasizes the importance of media as a means of empowerment for marginalized groups.

While the book is comprehensive in scope, there are areas that could be further developed. For instance, Belotti’s analysis could benefit from a more in-depth exploration of the role of digital media in Indigenous activism. Although the book focuses primarily on radio and television, the rise of digital platforms presents new opportunities and challenges for Indigenous media practitioners. How are these communities adapting to the digital age, and what impact is this having on their media practices? A deeper exploration of these issues would add another layer of complexity to Belotti’s analysis and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the contemporary landscape of Indigenous media activism.

Moreover, while Belotti’s focus on Argentina is both timely and necessary, the book could also benefit from a comparative perspective. By examining Indigenous media practices in other Latin American countries, Belotti could provide a broader context for understanding the unique challenges and opportunities faced by Indigenous media practitioners in Argentina. Such a comparative analysis would not only enrich the book’s theoretical framework but also offer valuable insights into how different political and legal contexts shape Indigenous media practices across the region.

Indigenous Media Activism in Argentina is a confirmation of the transformative role of media in empowering marginalized communities. By synthesizing extensive empirical data with theoretical insights, Belotti’s work sets a new standard for scholarship in Indigenous media studies and decolonial methodologies. Her commitment to participatory research ensures that the voices of Indigenous media practitioners are central to the narrative, offering a richly textured analysis of how media serves as a tool for cultural survival, political resistance, and self-determination. Belotti’s book is critical and nuanced for understanding the ongoing struggles of Indigenous communities in Argentina and beyond as they fight for their rights in a world that often seeks to marginalize them. Her meticulous research and insightful analysis make this work a lasting contribution to the broader field of media and communication, highlighting the critical role of media in Indigenous struggles for justice and autonomy.

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