

The Last Cultural Mile

Ashish Rajadhyaksha

Ashish Rajadhyaksha, in his monograph on *The Last Cultural Mile*, provides an alternative history to Information and Communication Technologies in India, looking at its relationship with infrastructure, citizenship and new conditions of governance. The monograph takes up the challenge of dealing with the existing narratives on their own terms, taking up the much prevalent idea of 'last mile' as the catalyst for technology mediated development and governance, and examining it through a history of relationships between the modern Indian nation state and technologies of governance. Beginning by mapping technology onto developmentalist-democratic priorities which propelled communication technologies since at least the invention of radio in India, the project conceives of the 'last mile' as a mode of techno-democracy, where connectivity has been directly translated into democratic citizenship.

Especially given the rapidly changing nature of governance in the country, from unique identification projects to e-governance initiatives that take on the development problems of the 'broadcast nation state', Rajadhyaksha's analysis through sites of education, regulation, policy and identity, helps look at the larger mechanisms and machineries of the state which support and are transformed through the introduction of the digital. The analysis looks at contemporary debates on policy, pedagogy and practice by offering a new prism to explore instances like the Unique Identity Project without falling into older partisan positions that these projects often inspire. Mapping a range of state ambitions from being a nuclear imagination to becoming a 'SMART' state, and examining the conceptual paradigm of communication within governance, the monograph examines the contemporary as one in a larger history of state interventions to breach the last mile for efficient governance.



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Researchers @ work

The Centre for Internet & Society's 'Researcher's At Work' is a series designed to build and explore the intellectual resources for mapping and understanding the complex interactions between the rise of digital and communication technologies and the spheres of living that they influence. The monographs in this series, explore embedded approaches, frameworks and historical trajectories to understand the ways in which new technologies shape the nature, form, and texture of life and living in contemporary times. The (CIS-RAW) series was designed to build local intellectual resources for mapping and understanding the complex interactions between the rise of digital and internal technologies and the spheres of living that they influence.