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Private Profits, State Sanctions and Public Participation: The Disservice of the Media and Development Orthodoxy

Zaharom Nain¹

Universiti Sains Malaysia

Email: zaharom_nain@yahoo.co.uk

Abstract: This paper analyzes critically the state of regulated media in developing economies. In order to engender rapid growth and structural change the state is required to control the media to provide the essential conditions of stability and societal change. This media-for-development orthodoxy has held sway for more than six decades now, leading to governments, often authoritarian, utilizing the media to prolong their hegemony over society. Taking the welfare of citizens as the basis of public-private partnerships, this paper argues that it is precisely consideration of citizen well-being that is missing in media policy and practice in the developing countries in general and Malaysia in particular. The paper then discusses the emergence of the new media and provides an assessment of the possibility of media reform, leading to the democratization of media policy and structures.