

Leen d’Haenens, Helena Sousa, and Josef Trappel (Eds.), **Comparative Media Policy, Regulation and Governance in Europe: Unpacking the Policy Cycle**, Bristol, UK: Intellect, 2018, 260 pp., \$49.00 (paperback).

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The European Union (EU) is the global trendsetter in media and communication policy in the public interest. From the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) that protects consumer privacy and instills the so-called right to be forgotten (EU Commission, 2019) to requiring Netflix and other over-the-top providers to ensure at least 30% of their catalogs in Europe are devoted to European productions (Dillet, 2018) to fines against Google and Facebook for anticompetitive behavior and privacy violations (Schulze, 2019), the EU has struck an uneasy balance between the neoliberal need to appease media markets and the democratic need to protect freedom of expression. To be sure, such praise is not without exception. The UK’s approval of various mergers, most notably Sky and Comcast, and constant right-wing attacks on public service media (PSM), stand in contrast to the tenets of European media policy. Still, while certainly not immune to the ravages of neoliberalism or what Victor Pickard (2015) dubs the market ontology within contemporary policymaking, the EU remains at the vanguard of thinking about public policy as being in the public interest rather than reflective of the public’s interest or the market’s interest (Fowler & Brennan, 1981).

The tension between market interest and public interest comes to the fore in **Comparative Media Policy, Regulation and Governance in Europe: Unpacking the Policy Cycle**, edited by Leen d’Haenens, Helena Sousa, and Josef Trappel. The book is framed as an overview of Europe’s response to the challenges of digitalization, globalization, and commercialization, which are confronting media systems the world over. This edited collection emerged out of the meetings of the Euromedia Research Group and is the sequel to Trappel, Meier, d’Haenens, Steemers, and Thomass’s (2011) *Media in Europe Today*. The Euromedia Research Group is a network of European policy scholars, with “aims to collect and exchange information and to develop framework that help to describe and analyse developments in media structure and policy in the European region” (Euromedia Research Group, 2019). The present anthology meets this mandate through a comprehensive description of the structure of European media policy, comparative analyses of policies in individual nation states, and conceptual explanations of issues such as media governance, media democracy, and the future of journalism.

The collection begins and ends with conceptual interventions, bookmarked by Hannu Nieminen’s chapter on “Why Study Media Policy and Regulation” and Auksé Balčytienė, Karin Raeymaeckers, and Elena Vartanova’s chapter on the need to understand the new norms of journalism. Nieminen argues that European media policy is in danger of becoming “an offshoot of the market,” struggling as it does to incorporate the “challenges created by the digitization and globalization of communication” (p. 15). In spite of this, or because of this, he argues that regulation of media industries remains crucial to “promote

democracy . . . secure the functioning of the market . . . and guarantee the compatibility of various media technologies” (p. 7).

Nieminen’s chapter is followed by others on television content, economics, governance, subsidies, PSM, EU media policy, the council of Europe, Internet policy, media democracy, diversity and pluralism, and the concluding chapter on journalism. Hilde van den Bulck, Leen d’Haenens, and Tim Raats, for instance, offer a fresh take on comparative media policy by comparing the remits, funding, programs, digital services, content, and audience reach of 11 European public service broadcasters. Public service broadcasting—or its more current iteration, PSM—is, of course, the hallmark of both European media policy and European media policy studies, and no volume of European media policy would be complete without a chapter dedicated to the structure of PSM and issues on the horizon. Importantly, van den Bulck, d’Haenens, and Raats conclude that despite consistent encroaches by both private market competitors and digitalization, PSM continues to garner high ratings and maintains its relevancy and resonance in an erstwhile crowded media market.

Read in concert, the chapters in this collection paint a thorough and comprehensive overview of European media policy. The chapters are also immensely readable and approachable, which reminds the reader, first, that this is a textbook more than an anthology, and second, that this volume is “first and foremost designed for teaching” (p. vii). As a result, it departs from other recent edited collections on European media policy that have a distinctly research-based orientation (e.g., Donders, Pauwels, & Loisen, 2014; Simpson, Puppis, & van den Bulck, 2016). To achieve this objective, each chapter comes with clearly stated objectives (learning outcomes, if you will), is relatively short in length, and functions as a review of issues and topics rather than advancing new empirical research. The book is therefore well suited for undergraduate classes on media policy, both in the European Union and in a comparative context. Indeed, one does need an extensive understanding of European media policy a priori before starting this book. Papathanassopoulos’s chapter on “The Europeanization of the European Media” (chapter 7) and McGonagle’s chapter on “The Council of Europe” (chapter 8) are particularly important here, as they provide the novice reader with crucial descriptions of the structure of European regulatory decision making, in general, and European media policy, specifically.

In an unexpected occurrence, the postscript following the final substantive chapter is addressed directly to students (“Dear students!”) and researchers (“Respected colleagues, dear scholars!”). To the latter, the editors provide suggestions for how to get students interested in media policy (make it personal) and remind us that we can use these chapters as launchpads for discussions about policy issues on the horizon while simultaneously reminding ourselves of the enduring issues in media policy and regulation: ownership concentration, journalism, profit-oriented versus public media, the role of the state, and freedom of expression. While it is indeed odd to be addressed in such a way by the authors, the postscript succeeds in reminding us of the purpose of the textbook and the interconnectedness of teaching and research.

It is to the future where the strengths of this book shine. In contrast, its time-boundedness is its weakness. The book was published in 2018, with chapters no doubt taking shape the previous year. As a result, the more recent events in European media policy discussed at the outset of this review—GDPR, Netflix, Google, and the merger of Sky and Comcast—are absent. While one cannot fault a book for its date of publication, it is nevertheless the theoretical and conceptual interventions—economics, subsidies,

governance, PSM, democracy, journalism—that have the longest shelf life. These are the enduring issues in media policy, both in Europe and abroad. One could imagine a professor teaching a course on media policy and regulation and asking students to read one of these chapters and use the concepts therein to frame a new generation of empirical research. At any given time, we can and should be asking ourselves: What does PSM look like throughout the world? How do we protect freedom of expression? What are the human rights of communication? How do we foster a media culture of diversity and plurality? And what is the role of the state, region, and market in media regulation? *Comparative Media Policy, Regulation and Governance in Europe* gives its readers the tools to address these enduring questions of public communication.

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