Petros Iosifidis, **Global Media and Communication Policy**, Basingstoke, UK & New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, 288 pp., £58.00 or US$95.00 (hardcover).

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Global Media and Communication Policy is about media policy and regulation. Author Petros Iosifidis does not examine policy in terms of power structures and relations; rather, his aim is to assess the implications of technological convergence (see following) and of the processes of globalization, liberalization, privatization, and commercialization for media policy and regulation. In doing so, Iosifidis also considers the role of the national level in relation to the international or global level. Some of the key research questions that the book addresses are: How is the public interest defined in the electronic environment where multiple actors initiate and implement policy alongside the state? How are new policy subjects, such as the Internet, challenging traditional views about media policy and regulation? What are the powers of the nation-state in shaping media policy in the new global, borderless era? (p. 15).
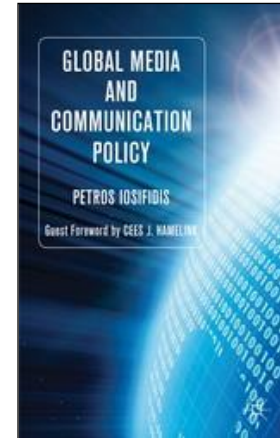
One limitation, the author acknowledges, is that the book draws on developments and the experience of the Anglo-Saxon Western world, primarily the United States and the EU (notably the UK). The author attributes this emphasis to the preeminence of these countries and regions in media production internationally, as well as to how policy developments (e.g., market liberalization) and regulatory responses by them often influence other countries.

The book is organized in four parts, with the first two providing the analytical and contextual frameworks while the latter two parts comprise the empirical chapters. Part 1 elaborates the concept of the "public interest." For Iosifidis, communication policy should be objective oriented and that this objective—the guiding principle of policy—should be the public interest. Based on the works by Anthony Downs, Virginia Held, and Denis McQuail, Iosifidis defines the public interest as "the collective cultural, political, social, and informational benefits to society, which serve both the democratic processes or political participation and cultural, social, and economic well-being" (p. 27). It follows that the public interest "assumes the development of common interests" (p. 27) and is more than the sum of individual interests. It covers various criteria, including plurality of media outlets, content diversity, objectivity, access, and competition. Even though the emphasis on these criteria has varied across time and space, the public interest has always remained a guiding principle for policy makers in Western societies. In short, Iosifidis adopts a normative interpretation of the public interest as common good.

Assessing the "citizen versus consumer" dichotomy, he establishes that, although at first sight, the public interest may seem to align with citizens' needs, a strict dichotomy between "consumer" and "citizen" may be unhelpful and unrepresentative of people's relation to digital media: Audiences are both

citizens and consumers, and increasingly in the Internet era, they are not simply consuming but also often producing media too, an attribute that a fixed "citizen-consumer" dichotomy would overlook.

Central to the notion of the public interest in media policy is the concept of "public sphere," that is, the empowering (or not) potential of the Internet and social networking sites and whether such new media technologies result in more civic engagement and political participation. Reviewing the relevant literature, Iosifidis agrees with those who see media technologies as enabling, mere tools that may be used as instruments of empowerment as well as of domination.

In Chapter 2, Iosifidis points to the core differences in the regulation of telecommunications (primarily economic regulation), broadcasting (content and structural/ownership regulation), and print media (guarantees for press freedom and strict limitations to government interference; in Western societies, the print media have been mostly self-regulated with regard to content, while government intervention has addressed the structure of the industry through media ownership rules). He then elaborates on the development of media ownership rules in the United States and the UK, and in particular, their relaxation, which has allowed market consolidation and concentration.

Chapter 3 summarizes the main points surrounding the notion of the public interest. For Iosifidis, the main aims of the public interest (such as media pluralism, content diversity, freedom of expression, access to information, choice, accountability, and so on) are as important and relevant as ever, but these objectives need to be addressed in the light of new developments, including channel multiplicity, commercialization, globalization, and the development of the Internet (p. 88).

In the second part of the book, following a brief historical account of global communication and related theories (e.g., modernization theory, cultural or media imperialism, critical political economy, cultural studies, and media globalization), Iosifidis agrees with those like Jeremy Tunstall and Terry Flew who maintain that media globalization has been exaggerated and that, while rejecting state-centrism, the state still plays an important role in media matters, nationally and internationally. This argument is reinforced in Chapter 5 in which the author argues that, although from the 1980s onward, media policy is no longer the exclusive domain of national states, the state's influence has not been diminished and national governments retain a substantial amount of autonomy to shape national policies, and at the same time, facilitate transnational processes.

Part 3 of *Global Media and Communication Policy* covers international policy initiatives and key organizations. Chapter 6 notes the ascendancy of economic and trade-related international policy for inmedia and culture-related spheres(for instance, WTO and TRIPs), somewhat at the expense of traditional UN agencies. Still, the latter, according to Iosifidis, have gained momentum in recent years, though new initiatives either support the established neoliberal order (e.g., ITU and WSIS), or if they question it (as in the case of Unesco's Convention on Cultural Diversity), they do so through less powerful instruments and thus do not challenge the main principles of free trade.

Global media policy has become more plural; it is no longer the exclusive domain of national governments and powerful corporate interests, as civil society and NGOs are involved too often in what is

known as "multistakeholder" processes, such as the WSIS under the auspices of the ITU. However, this is not to imply that it is necessarily more equal, because the traditionally dominant interests are still more powerful than are other players like NGOs.

Iosifidis recognizes the growing power of international trade agreements (notably the WTO) and that media policy is increasingly being made beyond national borders. However, having reviewed the main such international organizations (WTO, Unesco, ITU, ICANN, WIPO and the EU's media policy in Chapter 7), he concludes that "national governments continue to play a primary role in preserving their cultural policy. Despite globalization, governments are still in charge of their audiovisual industries, [and] can pursue cultural diversity and protect their public service broadcasters" (p. 142). In short, despite the rising importance of economic and trade-related international organizations and despite the new technologies, states have retained much of their sovereignty.

In Part V, Iosifidis discusses regulatory reform in the media-converged communications environment. Chapter 8 examines the three facets of "convergence": (a) technological, or the coming together of the previously distinct sectors of information technology, media, and telecommunications; (b) industry convergence, that is, the same corporation being active simultaneously in telecommunications, the audiovisual sector, and the Internet; and (c) corporate and market convergence, or convergence at the level of markets and services.

Chapter 9 considers whether this convergence necessitates regulatory convergence and examines the challenges for regulation resulting from convergence by looking at evidence, primarily from the EU. The chapter focuses on two issues: (a) regulatory convergence, that is, the rise of integrated regulatory agencies, such as OFCOM in Britain; and (b) the prominence of competition law in media regulation and the move in the EU toward a more horizontal approach to all transport network infrastructure and associated services, premised on the separation of the regulation of transmission from the regulation of content. Regarding horizontal regulation, Iosifidis' intent is to highlight trends, and so he refers to the 2003 Electronic Communications Framework where this trend can be traced, but not to the subsequent revised 2009 Electronic Communications Framework.

Chapter 10 offers "guidelines for regulatory reform in a world of media abundance" (p. 203). Iosifidis argues that the rationales for media regulation are still relevant to the "new multimedia global communications era" (p. 204) and assesses, in particular, the balance between sector-specific and economic regulation. For him, economic regulation is important to safeguard fair competition, but he also notes that economic regulation alone cannot fulfil the social and cultural public interest objectives in the converged media environment; rather, sector-specific regulation is needed to address these aims, including flexible mechanisms like self-regulation and coregulation in which the industry and (or) users are involved as opposed to traditional state top-down regulation.

Iosifidis is at his best when he discusses content and media ownership regulation. With regard to content regulation, he covers negative obligations (for instance, the restriction of harmful content), and positive requirements (notably public service media). He also stresses the importance of universal access. Here, drawing upon Philip Napoli's work, Iosifidis rightly observes that in the era of digital media, policy

should not focus just on "access to the media" but also on "access to audiences," that is, the rights of citizens as speakers and disseminators of information in response to the growing trend toward user-generated and user-distributed content (pp. 207–208).

Iosifidis argues that content regulation "remains essential in the convergence media age" (p. 217) and moves on to illustrate some of the challenges to content regulation that the Internet brings up. He refers to the need to protect privacy and copyright and freedom of expression as two additional "fundamental values in need of reformation and protection," respectively (p. 220). His aim is to discuss why these issues are controversial rather than to cover power struggles and specific policy debates and responses, such as the graduated response measures adopted in France in 2009 with the so-called Hadopi law (concerning copyright reform) and the subsequent Digital Economy Act in Britain in 2010, both of which are pieces of legislation inextricably linked to the revision of the EU electronic communications framework concluded in 2009.

With regard to media ownership, Iosifidis rejects purely quantitative market share caps and emphasizes the need for transparency of media ownership and control as a more pragmatic solution, given the growing complexity of alliances in media and communications.

Overall, *Global Media and Communication Policy* is concerned with a key controversy in media policy: state intervention and the right to communication. The book is well-structured and provides a very useful account of main trends and developments in media policy up until 2011, using examples from primarily the UK, the EU, and the United States. Iosifidis covers and synthesizes a significant amount of literature. His lucid writing and clear arguments will appeal to a wide range of audiences from advanced undergraduates and graduate students to policy makers and policy analysts. This is a valuable contribution to the growing literature in global media policy studies.