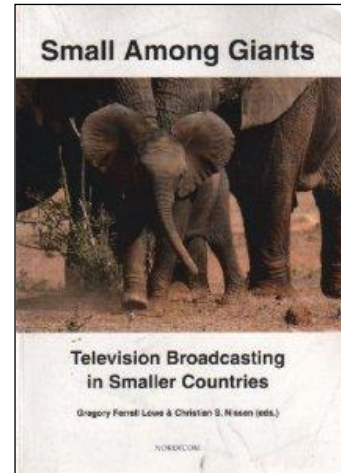


Gregory Ferrell Lowe & Christian S. Nissen (Eds.), **Small Among Giants: Television Broadcasting in Smaller Countries**, Sweden: Nordicom, 2011, 231 pp., \$92.63 (hardcover), \$37.39 (paperback).

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Gregory Lowe and Christian Nissen’s edited volume, **Small Among Giants: Television Broadcasting in Smaller Countries**, focuses on the limitations and challenges associated with television broadcasting in small European countries. Their research project and this book evolved from a BBC panel discussion on what television broadcasters in smaller countries could learn from their colleagues in larger countries. Lowe and Nissen argue that smaller countries should not try to duplicate broadcasting industry methods of larger countries because circumstances differ in small and large markets.

Scholars will find the book rigorous and specific, but the main audience for *Small Among Giants* appears to be broadcasting executives in smaller countries who might be tempted to emulate profitable, recognizable broadcasting firms in larger countries. The authors also target current and potential investors in small countries who need to understand how budgets and competitive broadcasting environments differ across countries before they allocate their dollars.

In chapter 1, Lowe, Nissen, and Christian Berg convincingly enumerate political, economic, geographic, and social differences between small and large nations to show why market size matters in broadcasting. Their goal is to analyze and comprehend the reasons why broadcasting in small and large countries differs and to argue why broadcasters in small countries should not mimic the characteristics of broadcasters in large countries.

Next, Robert Picard elaborates on the economics of broadcasting. First, he reaffirms that population size, as well as GDP per capita, influence the broadcasting industry, and he argues that it would be irrational to impose models from other countries. He notes that the great liberalization during the 1980s stimulated a greater exchange of content. This led to an oversupply of programming that benefited those in stronger and well-established markets while smaller countries’ productions experienced intense competition from abroad. Picard’s chapter serves as a platform for Erik Svendsen to explore the reasons that government regulations were needed to protect each country’s broadcasting industry. Svendsen, along with Chris Hanretty (in a later chapter), develop a more political and economic argument to explain why governments intervene in the broadcasting industry. It seems that Tom Moring and Sebastian Godenhjelm, in their chapter, also rely on Picard’s notes to explain certain media policies that are developed by international organizations like the European Broadcasting Union and by which countries are obligated to produce local, varied, and balanced programming. Subsequently, Berg raises a more sociological reason when he writes that “cultures that characterize a people as a nation, both in their distinctions and connections, are produced and must be continually reproduced” (p. 59).

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These authors are incisive, but the most accessible chapter is by Josef Trappel, who discusses the structure and dynamics of the broadcasting industry. He argues that smaller countries have a series of disadvantages: considerable television industry concentration, few powerful providers, limited consumer choice, high barriers to entry, and high exposure to take over. All of these factors are interconnected and it is difficult to judge them separately, as each element influences the others. Furthermore, there is an explicit concern on how EU media policies would work to neutralize these scenarios, because doing so enables a bigger and efficient exchange of products and services between different nations. It also allows higher competition from foreign goods, which, in the case of broadcasting, creates a contradiction of its own.

John Jackson, in his chapter, provides a compelling look at sociocultural factors of broadcasting using a comparative model (p. 92) to in which he suggest that each country's policies should be dictated by its own state (providers), economy (markets), political values (creators), and cultural values (receivers). He also notes how some countries are influenced by their neighbors—mainly smaller countries with large neighbors that share the same language. Jackson illustrates his point using the example of Germany and Austria. Austria's population is just under 10 million and all major broadcasters are public, but despite barriers of entry, there is a great demand for German content, even to fulfill programming on public networks and cable.

By contrast, Annette Hill and Jeanette Steemers evaluate big formats and small nations, prompting the question: Does size really matter? They challenge the size hypothesis that pervades other chapters by highlighting a few cases where programming from small countries eventually became worldwide phenomena—for example, *Big Brother* in the Netherlands and *Survivor* in Sweden. They imply that despite being from small countries, television shows that prove extremely popular can attract huge audiences beyond their initial borders, and therefore, media policies should encourage a global operation. Still, the authors agree that the size of the home broadcast market matters, but they urge further analysis of why this might be so.

Small Among Giants successfully argues that one policy does not fit all; however, the constant use of population size as a reason to justify this edited volume becomes repetitive. Nevertheless, Lowe, Nissen, and the other contributing authors provide an excellent overview of broadcasting in small European countries and important insight about European broadcasting as a whole. The authors carefully connect diverse aspects of society to explain why size matters in broadcasting and also why broadcasters in smaller countries should not emulate bigger countries, nor should they, in general, try to compete. As Berg remarks, in the broadcasting landscape, David would be defeated by Goliath. Nonetheless, more research could provide additional evidence, nuance, and insight to the arguments presented here.

Finally, adding the dynamically evolving political and economic shifts taking place beyond European borders might have added to the broadcasting conversation. A high-level snapshot of

developments in significant smaller countries in Asia, South America, Africa, and perhaps the Middle East would have helped ground the analysis.