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## Global media and communication policy: turbulence and reform

### Book section

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Global Media and Communication Policy:  
Turbulence and Reform

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## I. Introduction

Global media and communication policy studies, as a field of inquiry, is relatively recent within university departments, but the issues it addresses have been examined by scholars within the field of media and communications and several disciplines (including economics, law and political science) since the earliest days of international communication. Coordinating institutions were in place for the postal service and the telegraph to organize 'inter-imperial' flows of content and their network infrastructures.<sup>1</sup> A distinctive field of research started to appear in the 1980s when researchers began to examine how policy and regulatory institutions created in an era of analogue communication were responding to the new era of digital media and communication.<sup>2</sup>

Forces stemming from technological innovation, changes in industrial and cultural policy, and the liberalization of markets, have created pressures for shifting media and telecommunication network ownership structures from public to private and, most recently, into the hands of citizen producers of 'user generated content'. The operations of the institutions responsible for establishing policy frameworks and regulations for global media and communications have been characterized by contests over whether the economic value of information or the cultural and social value information should be given a priority in their policy making processes. The mandates of these institutions vary with respect to whether they allow for or facilitate participation by all interested stakeholders – state, private, and civil society. The balance between the technological and regulatory forces, in turn, influences the values that are privileged in policy and regulatory decisions.

Rather than attempting a comprehensive survey and history of all the issues addressed by global media and communication scholars, this chapter's aim is to introduce a selection of issues that are of global concern. This account draws principally on research undertaken by North American and European scholars due to the writer's familiarity with global debates from her base in Europe. This is a field of research that embraces research on markets, including studies of the global services industry and the expansion of networks, political tensions arising with pressure to liberalize and privatize media and communication markets, as well as research on media content, identity and representation, and cultural diversity, and on trade-related issues. It also encompasses research on standards, the radio frequency spectrum, intellectual property rights, access to media and information, privacy, hate speech, pornography and violence, children, and security.

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1 D. WINSECK & R. PIKE, *COMMUNICATION AND EMPIRE: MEDIA, MARKETS, AND GLOBALIZATION, 1860-1930* xvii (2007); T. Magder, *The Origins of International Agreements and Global Media: The Post, the Telegraph, and Wireless Communication Before World War I*, in *HANDBOOK OF GLOBAL MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION POLICY* 23-39, (R. Mansell & M. Raboy eds., 2011).

2 See, e.g. M. Raboy, *Global Media Policy: A Symposium on Issues and Strategies*, 5 *JAVNOST: THE PUBLIC* 1, (1998); M. Raboy, *Public Broadcasting and the Global Framework of Media Democratization*, 60 *GAZETTE* 167, (1998). and J. N. PELTON, *GLOBAL COMMUNICATION SATELLITE POLICY* (1974). who emphasizes the role of technological innovation in destabilizing policy regimes.

Readers may be interested in recent collections that bring the strands of the global media and communication policy field together. There are several handbooks with contributions by scholars from a variety of geographical regions.<sup>3</sup> There is a Palgrave Macmillan book series on Global Media Policy and Business, monographs with a global perspective,<sup>4</sup> and numerous monographs and edited collections addressing segments of the field from national or regional perspectives.<sup>5</sup>

Section II provides an introduction to the digital environment at the start of the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, by which time the Internet figures as a key feature in the global media and communication policy landscape. Section III turns to a consideration of factors that have given rise to turbulence in the policy landscape, providing an overview followed by a focus on network infrastructures and then on media. In Section IV, selected issues in this field are examined to highlight the tensions created by global flows of media and communication, first considering global forums for policy debate; second, developments related to trade in telecommunication and media services; third, intellectual property rights; and finally, debates about Internet governance. Section V concludes the chapter by restating some of the key policy tensions.

## II. The Global Digital Environment

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3 S. L. CALVERT & B. J. WILSON (EDS.), *THE HANDBOOK OF CHILDREN, MEDIA, AND DEVELOPMENT* (2011); I. BROWN (ED.), *RESEARCH HANDBOOK ON GOVERNANCE OF THE INTERNET* (2013); W. H. DUTTON (ED.), *THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF INTERNET STUDIES* (2013); J. HUNSINGER, L. KLAstrup & M. ALLEN (EDS.), *INTERNATIONAL HANDBOOK OF INTERNET RESEARCH* (2010); D. LEMISH (ED.), *THE ROUTLEDGE INTERNATIONAL HANDBOOK OF CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND MEDIA* (2013); R. MANSELL & M. RABOY (ED.), *HANDBOOK ON GLOBAL MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION POLICY* (2011); R. MANSELL, C. AVGEROU, D. QUAH & R. SILVERSTONE (EDS.), *THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES* (2007); M. E. PRICE, S. G. VERHULST & L. MORGAN (EDS.), *ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK OF MEDIA LAW* (2013); I. VOLKMER (ED.), *HANDBOOK OF GLOBAL MEDIA RESEARCH* (2012); J. WASKO, G. MURDOCK & H. SOUSA (EDS.), *THE HANDBOOK OF POLITICAL ECONOMY OF COMMUNICATIONS* (2011).

4 M. RABOY, N. LANDRY & J. SHTERN, *DIGITAL SOLIDARITIES, COMMUNICATION POLICY AND MULTI-STAKEHOLDER GLOBAL GOVERNANCE: THE LEGACY OF THE WORLD SUMMIT ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY* xvii (2010); T. L. MCPHAIL, *GLOBAL COMMUNICATION: THEORIES, STAKEHOLDERS, AND TRENDS: FOURTH EDITION* (2014); R. W. MCCHESENEY, *DIGITAL DISCONNECT: HOW CAPITALISM IS TURNING THE INTERNET AGAINST DEMOCRACY* § New Press (2013); I. BROWN & C. T. MARSDEN, *REGULATING CODE: GOOD GOVERNANCE AND BETTER REGULATION IN THE INFORMATION AGE* (2013); A. HINTZ, *CIVIL SOCIETY MEDIA AND GLOBAL GOVERNANCE: INTERVENING INTO THE WORLD SUMMIT ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY* (2009).

5 A non-exclusive list since 2010 not cited elsewhere: N. JUST & M. PUPPIS (EDS.), *TRENDS IN COMMUNICATION POLICY RESEARCH - NEW THEORIES, METHODS & SUBJECTS, PERSPECTIVES FROM EUROPE* (2012); M. Puppis, *Media Governance: A New Concept for the Analysis of Media Policy and Regulation*, 3 *COMMUNICATION, CULTURE & CRITIQUE* 134, (2010); L. S. EKO, *NEW MEDIA, OLD REGIMES: CASE STUDIES IN COMPARATIVE COMMUNICATION LAW AND POLICY* (2012); S. KOCH-BAUMGARTEN & K. VOLTMER (EDS.), *PUBLIC POLICY AND MASS MEDIA: THE INTERPLAY OF MASS COMMUNICATION AND POLITICAL DECISION MAKING* (2010); C. POTSCHKA, *TOWARDS A MARKET IN BROADCASTING: COMMUNICATIONS POLICY IN THE UK AND GERMANY* (2012); B. KLIMKIEWICZ (ED.), *MEDIA FREEDOM AND PLURALISM: MEDIA POLICY CHALLENGES IN THE ENLARGED EUROPE* (2010); P. NORRIS (ED.), *PUBLIC SENTINEL: NEWS MEDIA & GOVERNANCE REFORM* (2010); T. FLEW, *CREATIVE INDUSTRIES: CULTURE AND POLICY* (2012); X. ZHANG, *THE TRANSFORMATION OF POLITICAL COMMUNICATION IN CHINA: FROM PROPAGANDA TO HEGEMONY* (2011); B. DOBEK-OSTOWSKA, M. GLOWACKI, K. JAKUBOWICZ & M. SUKOSD (EDS.), *COMPARATIVE MEDIA SYSTEMS: EUROPEAN AND GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES* (2010); A. PACKARD, *DIGITAL MEDIA LAW* (2010); P. LUNT & S. LIVINGSTONE, *MEDIA REGULATION: GOVERNANCE AND THE INTERESTS OF CITIZENS AND CONSUMERS* (2012); D. FREEDMAN & D. K. THUSSU (EDS.), *MEDIA & TERRORISM: GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES* (2012).