Book Review

Terzis, Georgios (ed.)
European Media Governance: National and Regional Dimensions
Bristol: Intellect Books (2007)
&
European Media Governance: The Brussels Dimension
Bristol: Intellect Books (2008)

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Media policy is an important issue in terms of economic and technological developments, cultural diversity and the democratic legitimacy of political systems. Our lives are shaped by newspapers, television, the internet, etcetera, all of which provide information about lifestyle, culture and politics. Perhaps most importantly, a plural media landscape and freedom of the press are vital conditions for enabling people from all walks of life to express their views in a public arena and to form an opinion on matters important to them. Consequently changes in media markets as well as technological progress provide new opportunities but also new challenges for media companies, policy makers and citizens alike. The two books on European media governance edited by Georgios Terzis (Vrije Universiteit Brussel) on the occasion of the 15th birthday of the Maastricht-based European Journalism Centre (EJC) attempt to illustrate how such issues are affected by national and European policies.

European Media Governance: National and Regional Dimensions discusses the media landscapes and policies of 32 European countries. Though this is by no means the first volume to bring together chapters on media and politics in various European states, it stands out in two ways. First, the book is structured around the three models (Polarised Pluralist, Democratic Corporatist and Liberal) developed by Dan Hallin and Paolo Mancini in their book *Comparing Media Systems* (OUP, 2004), which makes the volume more coherent than comparable publications lacking such a framework. Second, it includes chapters on countries ranging from Finland to Turkey, the result of which the reader gets an overview of broad developments across Europe.

While it would be unfeasible to provide detailed information on all 32 countries, each chapter discusses the media market, state policies, civil society organisation and trends. Consequently these chapters tend to mainly focus on data and facts rather than reflecting upon the reasons behind certain developments. Nonetheless, each section starts with an introductory contribution explaining the corresponding model of Hallin and Mancini. Interestingly, the former communist countries are discussed in a separate section ('The Eastern European/Post-Communist Media Model Countries'). Karol Jakubowicz explains that this has been done in order to find out "… whether Central and Eastern European media systems can be compared to any of Hallin and Mancini's systems" (p.303). The overall conclusion seems to be that the media environments in these countries are still in a state of flux, which makes any conclusion premature, despite similarities to, for instance, the Polarised Pluralist model.

In his contribution Denis McQuail (pp.20-1) notes that while all 32 countries experience similar developments, such as privatisation and globalisation, differences do persist. Interesting deviations from more general developments are, for instance, the rise of newspaper sales in Ireland (p.34) and the continuously dominant position of public broadcaster SRG SSR in

Switzerland (p.184). What is more, the introductions to the models, as well as the country chapters, typically stress that despite many similarities there are also differences between countries grouped according to each model. For example, the partisan stance of the British press is not in line with the more neutral approach of the press in the other Liberal countries. Considering these and other differences discussed in this volume, one may question Johannes Bardoel's proposal for another possible division: that between old and young democracies (p.455). Such a distinction might be more practical, but it could conceal important differences between European states.

European Media Governance: The Brussels Dimension examines EU media policies from the perspectives of various organised interests, the European Commission and European Parliament. The overview of the operations of these stakeholders and institutions sometimes tends to be quite sketchy. Also, the format of the chapters differ with some more informative than others. Nevertheless, most contributions do provide hands-on information about a variety of interests such as the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) and the European Consumers' Organisation (BEUC). Chapters give overviews of their positions, sometimes including lists of position papers, as well as an outline of the main policies devised at the European level and their importance for the organisations. Particularly useful in the latter respect is Annex A of the book, which consists of a list of EU directives, programmes, etcetera which have an impact on the media.

The diverse set of EU policy fields that have impacted upon the functioning of the media is striking. In addition to well-known major directives and programmes such as the Television Without Frontiers Directive (amended late 2007 and renamed the Audiovisual Media Services Directive) and the MEDIA Programme, it appears that copyright laws, internal market legislation, programmes in the field of culture and even environmental policy all play a role in shaping the media environment. The contributors note that they pursue their own specific interests at certain times, while cooperating in joint endeavours to lobby the EU institutions at others. As the chapters are written by representatives of interest groups and institutions it is no surprise that preferences are clearly stated and authors are not shy about expressing strong opinions. For example, Aidan White of the EFJ calls the 2006 Commission Green Paper on labour law "a funeral oration for the European social model" (p.144). Yet, it is somewhat uncomfortable to read that Jean-Eric de Cockborne and Harald Trettenbrein of the European Commission call a regulatory framework on electronic communications "a world-class legal framework" (p.33).

Terzis' second volume presents a great deal of information on organisations, opinions, etcetera, but regrettably there are no *thorough* attempts to present the reader with a synthesis or to reflect on broader questions. For example, to what extent are lobbying activities actually influential in shaping EU media policy? What does EU media policy mean in terms of freedom of speech, media pluralism and so on? In this respect, Alison Harcourt's introductory comments on the nature of media governance are quite unsatisfactory, as is Bettina Peters' concluding discussion of the uneven balance between market and culture in EU media policy. Ultimately, most contributions only refer to changes in the media market, whereas other issues are only addressed superficially.

In sum, while *European Media Governance: National and Regional Dimensions* provides a more analytical dimension both volumes will be particularly useful to researchers and practitioners wishing to acquire a factual knowledge into media governance in the EU and its Member States. Readers interested in more detailed analytical reflections on issues such as the impact of media polices on the freedom of speech should probably look elsewhere.

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