Media Policy in the New Communications Environment

June 1, 2001. Reuters news agency reports today that the new director-designate of the World Trade Organization, Supachai Panitchpakdi, has declared the urgency of putting in place a global framework for the regulation of electronic commerce. “The development of trade via the Internet is such that it is necessary to establish a clearly defined regulatory framework,” he is quoted as stating, adding that the upcoming WTO conference in Qatar would undoubtedly deal with this issue (Reuters 2001).

What’s wrong with this picture? Isn’t the very raison d’être of the WTO based on the premise of doing away with the barriers to trade that inevitably come with regulation and on ending the meddling of states, governments and regulatory authorities in the otherwise smooth machinery of the marketplace? Well, yes and no. Indeed, certain types of intervention – public intervention – are seen by the avatars of global commerce as a hindrance to flourishing markets; and justifying this position as the only reasonable one has long been a substantial ideological undertaking. At the same time, however, and usually with much less fanfare, the corporate community has been a most successful user of the levers of governance in promotion of its own interests.

The WTO now joined a chorus of powerful voices emanating from unlikely quarters over the past five years to call for new global policy measures in communication. One of the first was European telecommunications commissioner Martin Bangemann, author of a high-profile blueprint for communication liberalization that bears his name, who, in September 1997, called for an “international charter” to govern the new world order in global communications. Within days, Bangemann’s remarks were endorsed by White House policy adviser Ira Magaziner, who stated that the U.S. believed there was a need for international understanding on information policy issues, “some of which may need to be formal agreements, some informal understandings and common approaches.” This project – which may some day soon lead to a global
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agreement on communication governance – has been developing slowly and steadily, but entirely behind closed doors.1

Meanwhile, at the extreme opposite end of the global power grid, communications issues were beginning to appear on the radar screen of the growing world-wide movement for a “different” model of human relations and social development; one that would measure progress in units other than those used to describe the private accumulation of wealth. In the Declaration of the Second People’s Summit of the Americas, adopted by some 2,500 delegates in Quebec City on the eve of hemispheric free trade talks in April 2001, one could read: “We want states that promote the common good and that are able to intervene actively to ensure the respect of all human rights... including the right to communication...” (Declaration... 2001, emphasis added).

The gap between these various projects was immense; and in between, lay a vast grey area where media policy was – is – being played out in the day-to-day politics of our time. To highlight this, consider the following example that illustrates the unresolved question of who gets to communicate what to whom, on what basis and with what relative degrees of freedom and constraint.

At the height of the anti-free trade demonstrations in Quebec City in April 2001, a continent away, the Seattle Independent Media Centre (which had seen the light of day during the 1999 WTO meeting in Seattle) was visited by U.S. FBI and Secret Service agents bearing a sealed court order. The IMC was directed to supply the FBI with recent user connection logs from its Web server as part of an “ongoing criminal investigation” into possible violations of Canadian law. Apparently, the US agencies were seeking to uncover the source of a posting to the IMC newswire which allegedly included classified information stolen from the Canadian government (JL... 2001).

Although the FBI was officially concerned about only one or two postings, the court order demanded all user connection logs for a 48-hour period; in other words, the Internet addresses of every person posting to or even visiting the IMC site during the Quebec City summit. Furthermore, the “sealed” nature of the court order prohibited the IMC from speaking about it publicly. So much for privacy; so much for the First Amendment.

The lack of protection for fundamental freedom indicated by this example, juxtaposed onto the call for new structures to enable and facilitate electronic commerce underscores the policy vacuum in which a new global communications environment is emerging. Age-old issues need to be reframed and refocused, old institutions need to be revamped as new ones are invented, conventional practices need to be retooled. Overarching themes such as corporate concentration, technological convergence and national sovereignty are taking on new meanings, affecting who we are, how we see others and ourselves, how we live and how we interact. One of the great paradoxes of the current age of globalization is that this “we” is at once inclusive and fragmenting: no one is left untouched, but everyone is touched by it differently.
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In the age of the single super-power, globalization is the highest stage of capitalism. One of the clichés of this era is that the globalization of communications and the emergence of a world media system have made attempts to regulate media at the national level obsolete. This is still far from a fait accompli, and debates over the changing role of the nation-state with respect to media are ongoing everywhere. But one aspect of this issue has attracted much less systematic attention, although it is, arguably, the most crucial aspect to address in the present context.

I am referring to the question of how to transpose the media policy issues that have occupied national agendas at least since the invention of the telegraph to the transnational level where, to all intents and purposes, the most important issues are henceforth being played out. Simply put, the question remains how can we globalize the debate on media policy? This is a structural question. A global media system is developing according to its own logic, requirements, protocols, and rules. Profit is one aspect of this. Insulation from regulatory constraints is another. We already know the shape this system is taking. National governments and groups of states are trying to influence the activities of this transnational system in their own countries or regions as best they can. Only the most powerful can even begin to do this, and only then to the extent that they are havens to important global media players. But global issues require global solutions. Where can one begin looking for these?

This is no easy question to address. It is in some respects so overwhelming that it is not even easy to bring it up, let alone address it seriously. There are no precedents, no traditions for dealing with media policy outside the established political frameworks of national states. Many countries do not even have well anchored national traditions, and where these exist, their legitimacy is challenged and their sovereignty undermined in the new context.

In the political arena, various authors, think tanks, and international organizations have been working on new conceptual notions such as global citizenship and new forms of global governance since the mid-1990s. But as of very recently, questions specific to media and communications in this new context were still not being systematically addressed. One of the main problems is that there is still no appropriate forum in which to discuss such questions.

“Policy,” Japanese scholar Tatsuro Hanada points out, “is a medium of control acting upon politics and at the same time a product of the political process” (Hanada 1999). This book is therefore about politics and process as well as policy. Our focus is on media policy, although here a word of explanation may be necessary. As the technological boundaries that used to distinguish the different forms of mass communication blur and fall away – now that newspaper content travels across telephone lines, to take one example that would have been considered bizarre only a few years ago – we need a new definitional baseline. Nicholas Garnham provides one when he defines media as systems for the production, distribution and appropriation of symbolic
forms... based on the development and deployment of technologies of communication” (Garnham 2000: 3). Global media policy then, refers to the full range of attempts to influence the orientation of these systems, by social actors mobilizing whatever resources they can in order to promote their respective interests.

Media policy is about politics, commerce and technology but it is also about culture. Once again, Garnham is useful. He writes:

By culture I mean patterns of behaviour which are not merely instinctual, but are endowed with meanings which can be transmitted through space and time beyond the immediate stimulus/response site of action, and a learning process the lessons of which are cumulative and open to criticism and modification in the light of experience. Culture in this sense is crucially dependent upon systems of symbolic communication. (2000: 2-3)

Culture and media, in our day, are thus co-dependent. In Canada, where I live and work, we know something about this. For most of the 20th century, the Canadian state tried using communications policy as cultural policy, to use communications to promote and sustain a symbolic notion of nationhood, an idea of Canada (see, for example, Raboy 1990). The result was some noteworthy accomplishments, some interesting experiments in media policy design, and a robust cultural economy. Then, beginning around 1980, things began to fall apart. The state no longer had the funds, the political will, or, increasingly, the political capacity to exercise the authority it did previously. It began to look for new formulas. One solution was to join the globalization bandwagon and seek export markets for cultural industries in the hope that benefits would spin back home; a second, more recent but parallel approach is based on forging transnational alliances with other actors who might have similar goals. The Canadian state thus positioned itself as one actor among others in the cultural-industrial sphere. Canada spearheaded efforts to protect cultural goods and services from the new trade regimes, to promote cultural diversity policies within the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and other international fora, to facilitate the building of networks of non-governmental organizations as well as national ministers responsible for cultural policy. Through this work, a somewhat universal (as opposed to "national") concept of cultural diversity as basic to fundamental human rights has begun to emerge. So far, it is difficult to put a finger on substantial concrete results of all this bustle, but clearly a new policy model is emerging, an appropriately hybrid model in which diverse political, economic and civic interests have to collaborate.10

A range of seemingly disconnected institutions, issues and practices fall into the domain that we are trying to map. The terrain of media policy-making is shifting.11 What was still, even a short while ago, a field essentially defined by national legislative and regulatory frameworks and a minimum of international supervision, is now subject to a complex ecology of interdependent structures.
This field is characterized by a number of new developments, the most
significant of which is that communications policy is no longer "made" at any
clearly definable location, is increasingly the result of a vast array of formal and
informal mechanisms working across a multiplicity of sites. Specific policy
issues, such as copyright or rules governing property transactions, migrate
from one level to another, often typifying the flashpoint of conflicts between
jurisdictions. But it is no longer possible to understand, let alone deal with
such issues without referring to the broader context.

Briefly, the global policy "map" can be very schematically categorized
according to the following general typology:

—global organizations, encompassing bodies that have traditionally been
part of the United Nations family such as the International
Telecommunication Union (ITU), UNESCO, and newer ones such as the
WTO. Most politically-constituted "nations" belong to these
organizations, through their official state authorities. Procedures are
nominally meant to be inclusive but are actually restricted to government
representation. Regarding communications, this sector has been strongly
marked by the power shift in recent decades from organizations dedicated
to communications and cultural issues such as UNESCO or the ITU to
those focusing on commercial or trade issues such as the World
Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and the WTO.

—multilateral exclusive "clubs" such as the Organization for Economic
Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the G8, which
collectively exercise enough economic clout to influence global affairs
without having to deal directly with lesser economies politically. More
streamlined, and thus more efficient than more cumbersome global
organizations like the WTO, these clubs can at the same time afford to
put forward a more generous public discourse while promoting specific
projects (such as the Global Information Infrastructure or the Okinawa
Charter on the Global Information Society, launched by the G7/G8 in
1995 and 2000 respectively). These currently serve as the main testing
ground for pro-business proto-global policies, with the extremely
important caveat that their decisions are actually binding on no one.

—regional multi-state groupings, the most important of which are the
European Union (EU) and the North American Free Trade Agreement
(NAFTA), each of which represents a distinctly different model. The
first is an economic union with a political agenda; the latter a trade
zone which nominally has no political ambition. The difference means
the E.U. can elaborate common policies in the name of the general
community, while NAFTA-type regimes can only constrain the policy-
making range of member states. The EU's 1997 protocol on public
broadcasting (appended to the Treaty of Amsterdam) stands, at this
time, as the only living example of a transnational media policy that
aims to supersede economic imperatives.
regardless of their weakened condition, national states continue to be the main site of communications and cultural policy-making. Cultural policy agencies in countries such as Canada and France have been fighting rear guard actions against the constraining effects of international trade agreements that these countries have themselves signed. There is an increasing recognition of the need to bring these issues to global fora as a basis for legitimating the maintenance of national sovereignty in cultural matters on an equal footing with trade rules. National governments that wish to do so can still actively regulate important aspects of domestic broadcasting and telecommunications industries, sustain public cultural institutions and subsidize national cultural production. But the extent to which this can continue will require agreement at a supranational level.

—the transnational private sector has organized itself to achieve representation in official fora. No longer merely restricted to lobbying, transnational corporations and their associations are increasingly present at the tables where policy decisions are made. Groups such as the Americas Business Forum, the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, the Global Information Infrastructure Commission and the Global Business Dialogue for e-commerce (GBDe)—speaking for the 40 or so largest corporations in the information technology sector—have become a powerful force in setting the global communications policy agenda, especially with respect to Internet, e-commerce and new media issues.

—much less well-resourced and generally further from the centres of power, civil society organizations are less present in policy debates, but media issues are becoming, like the environment previously, an important rallying point of grassroots mobilization. Global associations such as AMARC (community radio), Vidéazimut (film and video) the Association for Progressive Communication (Internet activists), and Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility now represent alternative media producers world-wide, while umbrella groups with names like the Cultural Environment Movement, People’s Communication Charter and the Platform for Communication Rights are burgeoning.

—finally, amid all this bustle, cutting edge issues such as Internet regulation are increasingly “transversal” in that they cut across sites of categorical jurisdiction. Controversies surrounding the creation in 1998 of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) and its subsequent development typify this. At the same time, important issue clusters regarding transnational media and universal themes such as the right to communicate can be said to be “homeless” in that they are not being dealt with systematically anywhere.
This complex and multifaceted general structure makes it extremely difficult to intervene effectively in the new policy environment and poses a particular challenge for the development of democratic public life at the global level. At this point, the only actor successful at pursuing an agenda with anything approaching consistency is the transnational private sector. A number of national governments are engaged in rear-guard efforts to maintain some semblance of cultural sovereignty in the face of the new rule of international trade regimes. But despite all the talk and some excellent independent reporting on culture and cultural policy in recent years, concrete media policy developments at every level are clearly being driven by economic concerns.

In the past two years, restructuring in the communication industries has had high public profile because of its impact on the mass consumer media that nearly everyone uses (or is subjected to) in one form or another. Mergers (for example, AOL-Time Warner), high-profile court cases (US vs. Microsoft, record companies vs. Napster) and mediatized protest (the WTO in Seattle have come to characterize the pressure points of the global information society. In public discourse, the policy dimension of these issues tends to be subordinated to their spectacular aspects, while less spectacular policy issues such as copyright, intellectual property, telecom give-aways and spectrum handouts—tend to achieve little public profile and, consequently, low political priority.

This book proposes to explore a number of issues, themes, and case studies that can illustrate and enhance public understanding of the situation that has just been described. Its purpose is to amplify the empirical basis for a critique of the emerging global media policy environment as well as serve as a resource for actors seeking to intervene effectively in the area of media policy. Its target audience includes academics and students specializing in media policy, policymakers, regulators and analysts working in national agencies and international organizations; media professionals, grassroots practitioners and civil society activists. A majority of the authors are members of the Global Media Policy Working Group of the International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR); all of them are among the leading critical communications scholars in the world today.

The book is organized in three sections, loosely identified under the headings “Institutions,” “Issues,” and “Practices.” The range of topics covered is quite deliberately broad and eclectic—the only way to adequately reflect a field whose boundaries are not yet firmly established. Our overall goal is to try to problematize the notion of a global media system, something that our various distinguished contributors often see quite differently. While taking a necessarily broad view, we are seeking to discover and emphasize what is real new about the situation described by such notions as convergence and globalization, not to mention concepts such as media and communications. Our topic selection was made with this in mind. Critics will note that the book has a decidedly “northern” (Euro-Austral-American) bias; but is this not
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reflection of the geopolitical, socio-economic and cultural biases of the global media policy system? Where, after all, are the major policy issues of the day being played out, if not in the boardrooms and private clubs of the developed world?

Section I consists of five chapters examining specific institutional settings of contemporary media policy-making. The institutions featured make up a sample, and only a sample, drawn from the much more substantial array that would have to be covered by an exhaustive institutional portrait. Each chapter looks at a different aspect of the emerging institutional framework.

In the opening chapter, Dwayne Winseck looks at how the ideology of “free trade in communications” re-emerged with the collapse of the New World Information and Communication Order debate within UNESCO. This gave way to a transformation in the role and functions of organizations such as the ITU, which has played a regulatory role in international communications since the middle of the 19th century. The WTO’s involvement in telecommunications arose partially as a result of this displacement. Winseck’s historical review illustrates how an adequate governance regime is crucial to policy reform and infrastructure development, and also raises questions regarding the future of cultural policy and telecom regulation in the age of the Internet. He also debunks the myth of deregulation when he writes that “more aid money now goes into creating governance regimes than to developing the communications networks and services that people will actually use.” This is useful to bear in mind as the ITU prepares to organize a World Summit on the Information Society due to take place in 2003.

A rather different aspect of institutional globalization is covered by Daya Kishan Thussu in his chapter on the privatization of Intelsat, the global satellite consortium set up in 1964 as a state-based multilateral organization. Recalling the truism that satellites are the sine qua non of global communications, and that access to satellite technology is therefore crucial for any country to connect to the digital world, Thussu illustrates the policy implications of the unprecedented privatization of Intelsat for countries of the global South. Achieved with relatively little public attention, the privatization of Intelsat in 2000 can be seen as part of a broader move towards the militarization of outer space, to the advantage of major defence contractors such as Lockheed Martin.

In chapter 3, Wolfgang Kleinwächter explores some of the new global governance issues posed by the development of the Internet and the challenge to the idea of sovereignty that accompanies the conception of “cyberspace” as a territory. Who will have legal jurisdiction over this territory and its citizens? If the Internet is indeed the first comprehensively global medium, its governing framework may be a harbinger of what is to come. Recalling the history of the global policy framework for Internet governance – still in its infancy, barely five years old! – Kleinwächter describes the unique status of new institutions such as ICANN and the GBDe, and explores general concepts of “trilateralism” and
“co-regulation” that are indicated by these new institutional practices. Along the way, his narrative dramatically illustrates the relative weakness of the civil society sector and the overarching presence of the major governments, most notably the US, in this process.

Yet another relatively new institutional level is revealed in the chapter by Katharine Sarikakis, on the European Parliament. As the only functioning supranational institution based on an extension of the operating principles of liberal democracy, the EP experience is rife with ambiguities. For one thing, it is at one and the same time the only elected and the least powerful of the European Union institutions. Can this, the only international democratically elected political organization in the world, stand as a new model for governance? It is probably more prudent to look at the interaction of the range of European institutions in a perspective of democratization and proactive policy intervention. In this respect, Europe’s emphasis on keeping media freedom and diversity issues on the political agenda is a unique contribution to the practices of transnational media policy.

The section on institutions closes with the chapter by Ben Goldsmith, Julian Thomas, Tom O’Regan and Stuart Cunningham, on the enduring place of the national in media policy development. Goldsmith et. al. demonstrate how national governments in the Euro-Austral-North American sphere continue seeking to promote cultural policy objectives in the rich new weave of what they call “converging media systems.” Transnational alliances, multilateral institutions and the fora of international trade negotiations form the backdrop, or setting, for this process. The crucial point is that the state remains the key player.

Moving to the book’s second section, there is a shift in register. Here the emphasis switches to issues, rather than institutions. Our general purpose is to sample the range of issues that can be considered component parts of the field that we are trying to map. Many of the chapters in this section reflect a particular area of interest and expertise and are almost personal in their approach. Each of them deals in some respect with a new take on the role of the state.

Terry Flew examines how neo-liberal ideology has influenced the evolution of public policy in an area which in many respects typifies the conventional approach to media policy: broadcasting. Policy approaches to broadcasting have evolved along with broader discourses on communications and citizenship, ideas of the public, and notions of what it means to constitute a public trust. As commercial broadcasting moves to the centre of national systems, the idea of a “social contract” – where industry protection is offered in exchange for regulation – takes shape. But new developments “are moving media regulation away from frameworks that are national, sector-specific and discretionary, towards frameworks that are generic, compatible with international trade law, and legally binding.” These put the social contract at risk, and raise unresolved questions about culture, citizenship, and the role of public policy with respect
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to media old and new.

In his chapter on the regulation of harmful or illegal content, Monroe E. Price presents regulatory lawmakers as an issue of technique, not sovereignty: the key question (once a consensus is reached on normative goals) is what to do and how to do it? In media content regulation, a combination of methods and legal jurisdictions overlap: industry self-regulation, voluntary versus coercive approaches, “cross-national regulatory influence.” Price’s story belies the new wave argument that today’s media “can’t” be regulated. His case material shows the important link between national control of content and notions of what is deemed harmful content; as the distinction between information generated within and without a state’s boundaries diminishes, “increasingly, practicalities, efficiencies and international agreements, not nationally imposed limitations, will keep such boundaries in place. ... In this sense, all messages, wherever they originate, are domestic in impact and, as a result, fall under the responsibility of the state.”

For Robert W. McChesney, “neo-liberalism” rather than “globalization” should be the preferred explanatory term for understanding the global restructuring of media systems. Where media systems in the past were primarily national, a global system, built around a global commercial market, has emerged. This has to be the starting point of understanding the political economy of media: beginning with the global system and then “factor(ing) in differences at the national and local levels.” Neo-liberalism, rather than globalization, explains, for example, that the highest quality media fare today is aimed at business consumers. Media are entertainment vehicles rather than institutions of political debate and public education. Meanwhile, recent mergers (such as AOL-Time Warner or Seagram-Vivendi) demonstrate that huge is no longer big enough, and also that global does not necessarily mean American in the same way that it once did (five of the nine major media corporations are American, but all view the global media system as a single market.)

In his chapter on media regulation in post-conflict societies, David Goldberg addresses an aspect of media policy-making that is bound to become increasingly problematic in the new global environment. A new litany of appropriate media practices is an inevitable aspect of the post-cold war international order. As this order evolves and consolidates, it imposes a certain model of media behaviour on the world’s most troubled areas, a politically correct stance on communication that is sanctioned by the need to assert moral authority in the face of extreme immorality. But if the so-called “international community” (made up of the most politically authoritative national states and state-based international institutions) is to be checked in any way, a countervailing power of international civil society will need to be developed. Assuming the legitimacy of an international community intervening in the affairs of particular states, how can the action of such a community be made accountable?

In the final chapter of this section, John Hannigan examines some of the policy implications of physical location for the outcroppings of the global media
system. Cities welcome the global entertainment economy as a motor for revitalizing urban cores; cultural practices thus becomes less a mode of expression in urban life, and more a locomotive of the urban economy. This begs the question of how to establish a meaningful political power base in the world’s major cities, in the context of the international policy vacuum and diminishing national sovereignty? Public access and democratization of cultural life are among the generally unproblematised aspects of this question. If the development of the global entertainment economy does not solve urban problems, does it nonetheless increase access to culture? And what kind of culture? The city is the predominant concrete flashpoint of conflict between abstract conceptions of the global and the local.

In the book’s third section, the focus is on alternative practices. Here, we are seeking to show that media policy-making does not take place in a political vacuum. The efforts of both mainstream and alternative media practitioners, scholars and researchers, educators and lobbyists are all part of a common process. This is increasingly so in the context of change, fluidity and uncertainty that characterizes the present time.

Alison Beale argues for the pertinence of gender-conscious research to political economy and policy studies in general, and media policy in particular. Reminding us that every set of theories has its blind spots, Beale writes that “the political economy of communications and culture is not only structured in gendered terms but also researched and regulated using tools of analysis that are gendered.” Echoing one of the book’s central themes, she points out that while the international women’s movement has pressed for gender-sensitive policies internationally, it is within national institutions and laws that gains have been made. In issues involving sex-role stereotyping, employment equity and professional codes of conduct, there is still no international media regulation.

Meanwhile, on the ground, media activists are appropriating technological resources, developing skills, and inventing new forms of communication. John D. H. Downing’s tale of the rise of the Independent Media Centre movement helps to situate our thinking about media and globalization with respect to the world-wide mobilization around the corporate-driven international free trade agenda. This story unveils a potentially hidden aspect of the global media policy framework: will it aid or hinder the emergence and sustainability of grassroots alternative media? A key unexamined area of the global media policy debate concerns the link between different possible uses of media in the struggle between projects of political emancipation and repression.

A second example of grassroots organizing through media is explored in the chapter by Bram Dov Abramson who focuses on media system design as a policy issue. In the vein of Lawrence Lessig’s pioneering work which opened the horizons of thinking about media policy to include the regulatory power of “code,” Abramson’s study investigates what he terms “policy’s broadband bias.” On the surface a case study of one media NGO’s attempt to undertake
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virtual conferencing as an alternative model for Internet use, this exploration underscores the complex nature of “communication rights”—both as a topic of policy intervention and as a problematic object in itself.

These examples contribute to what Cees J. Hamelink describes as the civil society challenge to global media policy. The so-called anti-globalization movement, he notes itself an example of globalization, facilitated in part by communications technologies. Hamelink presents an overview of two opposing agendas, the neo-liberal and the humanitarian, breaking them down to show their discrete elements with respect to media and communications. One of the key distinctions, for Hamelink, is the basic inclusiveness of a human rights-inspired democratic order. Among other things, he raises the issue of the role of researchers in forming an “epistemic community” of knowledge-based support for activist groups (a fringe benefit of books such as this, one might say!).

The final chapter reproduces the founding statement of Voices 21, an informal association of media activists and other individuals who have been trying to place media and communications issues on the agendas of broader social movements. Not coincidentally, several of our authors are among the signatories of the Voices statement, which recapitulates many of the themes and issues raised elsewhere in the book. The bottom line, of both the statement and the book, is that these can no longer be considered narrow or isolated issues; indeed, the future of democratic public life in the new global environment will depend on their resolution.

Notes
1 An Internet (Alta Vista) search for the term “global communication policy” in March 2000 turned up 400,000 sites, first of which was Bangemann’s 1997 speech.
2 See, for example, the Web site of the Global Business Dialogue on Electronic commerce (GBDe): www.gbd.org (discussed in Kleinwächter, this volume). The GBDe describes itself as “a world-wide, CEO-driven effort to strengthen international co-ordination in the development of policies that will promote global electronic commerce for the benefit of business and consumers everywhere” (http://www.gbd.org/media/papers/workplan.html).
3 See Downing (this volume).
4 Like everyone else, I use the term “globalization” as a buzzword. Mine is meant to refer to a situation characterized by the diminishing sovereignty of national states; the increasing integration of the world economy; the technologically-based shrinking of time and space; the passing of received ideas about identity; the emergence of new geographically dispersed yet locally-based global networks; and the establishment of a new framework for global governance.
5 This was noted, prospectively, as early as 1969 by US national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski (1969) who pointed out that the United States had become the first society in history to propose a global model of modernity based on universal values and behaviours rooted in cultural productions. For this reason, “globalization” has become a more appropriate descriptive term than “imperialism.” I am thankful to Dr. Eric George for this insight.
6 With the notable exception of the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) debate within UNESCO during the 1970s, whose story is told in Galtung and Vincent (1993). The UN-UNESCO World Commission on Culture and Development (1995) has more recently generated pockets of discussion on these issues, but official international diplomacy has generally shied away from dealing with media policy issues.
since the publication of the provocative “MacBride Report” (UNESCO 1980) led to withdrawal of the United States and Great Britain from UNESCO.

7 The range of emerging literature on this subject is truly vast. In the interest of brevity, let me mention simply, as illustrative examples: The Group of Lisbon (1993); The Commission on Global Governance (1995); and Archibugi et. al. (1998).

8 This problem was first addressed in a pioneering article by Price (1994).

9 See also Thompson (1995), who calls for the invention of a new kind of “publicness.”

10 On the complexity of “cultural diversity” as a policy concept in Canada, see Baeker (2000). In this volume, see chapters by Goldsmith et. al., in which further examples of new governance models for “converging media systems” are developed, and Kleinwächter, who refers to these as processes of “trilateralism” and “co-regulation.”

11 This is, of course, not unique to media. On the general notion of “global public policy,” see Reinicke (1998); on the process of policy “forum-shifting” as it affects international business, see Braithwaite and Drahos (2000).

12 The Canada-U.S. dispute over split-run magazines that wound up before the World Trade Organization in 1999 was a case in point.

13 See Winseck (this volume).

14 Possibly to be superseded by an eventual Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA).

15 See Sarikakis (this volume).

16 Examples of initiatives in this regard are abundant. See, for example, AP Online (2000), which begins as follows: “Geneva (AP) – Some of the biggest names in computers and communications have asked the United Nations to help regulate a system they claim will ease the headache and cost of keeping up with software advances, spokesmen said today. (...)”

17 See chapters by Downing, Abramson and Hamelink in this volume.

18 Indeed, the transversality of Internet-related governance issues is rapidly extending the boundaries of the field we have tried to map out in this volume. See, for example, Lessig (1999) and Hamelink (2000).

19 See Kleinwächter (this volume).

20 Hence the importance of initiatives such as Voices 21 (this volume).

21 See McChesney (this volume).

22 See, for example, chapters by Winseck and McChesney in this volume.

23 For an attempt to represent this range schematically, see Appendix I to this book.

24 See http://www.itu.int/wsis/. A coalition of NGOs and other associations of communication activists has been launched to lobby the ITU for input to a promised “civil society” dimension on the WSIS agenda. See http://www.comunica.org/cris/.

References


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