



2013 Workshop of the ECREA's Communication Law and Policy Section

Communication & Media Policy in Europe: Assessing the Past, Setting Agendas for the Future

Call for Papers

The Communication Law and Policy section of ECREA invites abstracts for its 2013 workshop on *Communication & Media Policy in Europe: Assessing the Past, Setting Agendas for the Future*. The workshop will take place at MediaCityUK, Salford, Greater Manchester, UK, on October 25-26, 2013. It is hosted and organized by the University of Salford.

This workshop has two inter-related objectives. The first is to undertake an exploration of a range of the main conceptual and practical issues which have framed the academic analysis of communication and media policies in Europe over the course of at least the last decade. Second, the workshop will draw on this experience to explore key issues that can set the agenda for the short to medium term in communication and media policy in Europe. The workshop thus invites proposals for papers in a wide range of areas which, in their different ways, have in common the goal of addressing this dual purpose. Overall, the workshop aims to draw together policy lessons from the past and, in so doing, frame an agenda for the future. Papers may have as their focus empirical cases or conceptual and theoretical contributions, or both. Contributions may take a number of diverse foci individually or in some combination. These might range across the role and significance of policy actors, institutions, structures, instruments and processes in communication and media policy.

Below is a set of themes around which contributions might be centred, though ideas for papers which do not sit across one or more of these areas, but which address the core objectives of the conference, are also welcomed.

1) The Continued Role of Regulation

Issues of regulatory governance have sat at the heart of policies for the communications and media sector for decades and are now as strongly evident as ever. The regulatory governance of communications aims to evolve to keep pace with developments in technologies, services and markets, but often faces many challenges in so doing. Issues of regulation touch a broad range of areas concerned with the functioning of the communications sector: market making and monitoring; competitive relations between market protagonists; the nature and extent of public subsidies given to providers of communications media infrastructures and services; issues of equality of access and treatment; data protection and privacy. In particular, new de-



velopments in media – not least new social media and social networking activity which this has spawned – call forth particular challenges in terms of regulatory agendas. There is increasing evidence in the media sector of the emergence in new contexts of self- and co-regulation. Alongside this, the much studied convergence of media continues to raise major questions around the effective design of convergent regulation often drawing on the experience of different regulatory traditions and trajectories. What are the key current regulatory governance challenges in Europe and how have they become manifest? What regulatory solutions have been put forward nationally and internationally and what role have key actors such as governments, regulatory authorities, market actors and agents from civil society quarters played in the evolution of regulation? To what extent have regulatory solutions proved novel? To what extent have they displayed efficacy? What lessons can be learned from the experience and are these more widely applicable across the communications sector and beyond?

2) New Networks and Services Infrastructures

The development of infrastructures for electronic network communication media has been a core policy issue ever since the inception of telephonic and mass media communications. Today and looking to the future, policy debates at the national and European levels are addressing the current and future requirements of communications infrastructures. Whilst the creation of high speed, capacious networks is generally agreed to be a policy imperative, there is a debate on how precisely such networks might be delivered. This unresolved matter has tended to focus on actors, patterns of development, and timescales. What are the current key new network roll-out policy issues at national and European levels? What shape are the debates currently taking and which are the key policy actors? What kind of policy agendas for the delivery of new and upgraded communications should be developed into the future and what is the likelihood of them being realised?

3) Media Convergence

Technological and market convergence, until now much discussed in theoretical and speculative terms, is beginning to register a major impact on the media sectors. The Internet is eroding the boundaries between the press, broadcasting and new, on-demand media services. Broadcasters are offering press-like services and on-demand services. Newspapers are offering audiovisual content. New entrants from the telecoms are offering broadcast services. Faced with fragmenting audiences and readerships, media companies are trying to embrace convergence, and sustain their profitability, by re-using content across different media platforms. The re-articulation of traditional Public Service Broadcasting as Public Service Media has now arguably been well-established. The rise of social media has created a set of new online communications environments where the associated commercial and governance protocols are still very much in their infancy and thus contested. Issues of data protection, privacy, and advertising are salient among these. What are the key regulatory and policy challenges



that are developing in the converging communications? What kind of policy responses have been out forward in key areas such market regulation, the continuation or otherwise of public subsidy, the prescription of base line public services, data protection and privacy? To what extent have these policies proven successful and how do they need to be developed further? This theme of the conference calls for papers which cover a range of policy issues salient to convergence and which call forth new policy thinking, such as subsidies for media content, ownership regulation, copyright regulation, spectrum allocation, ‘net neutrality’, and the regulation of social media.

4) The Role of the EU and the National Level

The European Union has emerged as a key institution in the development of communication and policy within the last 20 years. EU policies have spanned a raft of often controversial policy areas. Research on EU communications and media policy has highlighted the interplay between a range of often competing interests comprising variously: EU institutional actors in the European Commission and the European Parliament, national level policy makers and politicians and regulatory interests, civil society interests, and nationally based and multinational business interests in the media and communications industries. Papers are called for highlighting policy case areas which address one or more of the following issues: How significant an actor has the EU been in developing communications policy? What has the interplay between national and EU level been and what have been the consequences of this? What are the current key issues that the EU faces in communications policy and what policy measures are being taken? What are the chances of the EU being successful in achieving its policy goals in the key areas of communications policy with which it is currently concerning itself? In what ways might/should EU policies for the communications sector be developed and what are the likely policy constraints on this occurring? How might these be overcome?

5) Perspectives from Outside Europe

A key feature of research on communications policy in Europe has been the development of comparative analysis with non-European cases. This might take the form of cross-country, or inter-regional comparison. Comparative communications media public policy analysis has proven fruitful in understanding Europe in a number of ways. It allows the degree to which there are characteristically European approaches to matters of communications policy to be determined. Second, it can illuminate how European nations or, by contrast, the representative political bodies such as the European Union or the Council of Europe, operate in international/global policy environments, including institutional contexts. Finally, this kind of analysis allows us to understand better how Europe, be it in specific national contexts, or representative bodies such the EU, is viewed from outside. This can allow an enriched understanding of the significance of European perspectives on, and actions taken in, communications media



policy to be established. Papers are invited in the full range of communications, media and cultural fields which address one or more of these broad criteria.

6) New Theoretical and Methodological Approaches

Communications and media policy is a dynamic field constantly in search of refined and new ways of determining causal relationships, characterising complex phenomena and providing enriched and new conceptual and theoretical models to deliver better understandings of fast evolving communications environments. Theoretical and conceptual analyses focus on the position, role and dynamic interplay between key actors, interests and institutions of communications policy. Often theoretical analyses of recent and current communications policy matters lead to conceptual problematisation and, thence, new explanations which bring the state of the art forward. This theme calls for papers which articulate such developments in topic areas right across the field of policy studies in communications and media. Have new/enriched theoretical and conceptual understandings emerged to explain recent and current phenomena? How are these constituted? To what extent, and how, are they incremental or path-breaking in nature? What has their key contribution been and to what extent are they robust and flexible enough to help us understand other areas of communications policy now and into the future?

7) Commercialisation and Ownership

As has been well-established in the literature and beyond, recent decades have witnessed a structural shift in the communications sector and its sub-parts in the direction of commercialisation. The expansion of traditional broadcast media along commercial lines and the marketisation of telecommunications has occurred alongside the development of a new Internet based sector of communications underpinned, primarily, though not exclusively, by market values and practices. The consequent shape of the European communications sector highlights the significance of a raft of commercial issues pertinent to the current and likely future functioning of the sector, on which papers are invited. For example, well established issues of media ownership and concentration are still strongly relevant to our understanding of the evolving media landscape and are sharpened by developments such as online cross-media platforms. What are the current issues and controversies in media ownership and concentration and to what extent are these manifest at the national and European levels? Are there new explanatory models being developed to help us understand better key commercial changes across the European media sector? What new regulatory challenges exist from such developments and to what extent are we witnessing the emergence of appropriate solutions nationally and at the EU level?



Abstracts of no more than 400 words should be submitted in Word document format directly to the conference organizer, Seamus Simpson (s.simpson@salford.ac.uk) by **May 22, 2013**. Your abstract should address one of the topics mentioned above and have a separate cover sheet providing your name(s), institutional affiliation(s) and e-mail address(es). You will be notified of acceptance by June 30, 2013. Full papers are due no later than October 1, 2013.

It is the intention of the organiser to put together an edited volume of the conference contributions.

The Registration fee for the workshop is £25.

Details on booking accommodation will follow on acceptance of your proposal.

Organizer

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