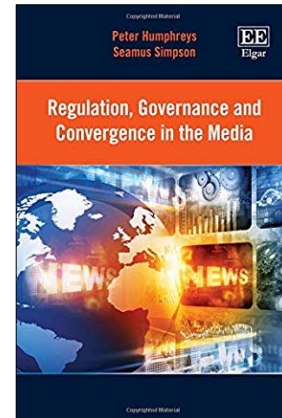


Peter Humphreys and Seamus Simpson, **Regulation, Governance and Convergence in the Media**, Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2018, 263 pp., \$130.00 (hardcover).

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In **Regulation, Governance and Convergence in the Media**, Peter Humphreys and Seamus Simpson explore convergence of telecommunications, electronic media, and emerging online services, mostly in Europe and the United States. In the first two sections, Seamus Simpson introduces the history of convergence and then shows how the implementation of Next Generation Networks (NGNs), governance issues related to spectrum, and policy features of net neutrality facilitated media convergence of communications infrastructures. Peter Humphreys then deals with media content in converging communications infrastructures. He examines how copyright issues, media concentration, and subsidies sustain public service communication. In the final section, both authors suggest possible governance solutions to remove obstacles to media convergence.

Media convergence occurs when mass communication platforms merge with the Internet to deliver a dynamic experience. With rapid technological development in the digital age, this blending of media outlets provided more disruption, threats, and opportunities. Therefore, regulations and media governance are attracting growing attention. Media regulation refers to the process of guidance or control of the media through the use of government rules and other political and enforcement authorities over certain activities. Media governance is broader; it refers to rules that organize media systems, and concepts for analysis of media policy and regulations. And the contestation of governance usually roots in fundamental laws and cultural beliefs of certain countries; for example, in the book, Simpson and Humphreys contend that the concept of spectrum governance reflects the basic idea of protecting equal human rights.

Simpson elaborates on the changes in governance of communication infrastructures by reviewing its evolution in several countries. He paints a clear picture of the development path media governance traveled worldwide. According to Simpson, the evolving information and communication technologies in hardware and software enabled convergence. Since the 1970s the merging of computing and telecommunications proceeded in parallel with technological developments. Combinations of voice, data, text, and video are now transmitted through microwave and satellites across commercial broadcast communication networks. The Internet's emergence and its communication protocols also encouraged media convergence. The proliferation of social networking platforms for information exchange and commerciality emerged in tandem with the Internet pushing telecommunications forward. So, the functioning and regulation of telecommunications became a major concern. Self-regulation and private interests were especially important. These anecdotes are intriguing, but additional analysis would have strengthened these two sections. More connecting data would have helped.

Media convergence also strongly influences social values. First, convergence generated economic growth by offering new information, access devices, services, and products. Second, social communication between individuals and public communications became more accessible, so diverse information sources opened more opportunities for social relations. Broadly, the availability of diverse consumption preferences liberated individuals. Third, the growth of user-generated content and the increase of mobility enhanced the convergence environment. Search also changed; piles of written and audiovisual information and big data emerged. Media convergence has proceeded for decades, but it remains "problematic and incomplete" (p. 3). Security concerns and worries about information accuracy and privacy also arose and lingered.

Media governance has followed convergence since the early 1980s. Until then state-owned Post Telephone and Telegraph authorities dominated in Europe and Asia, and AT&T, a privately-owned monopoly, dominated the U.S. market. During the 1990s EU governance was built incrementally from the Commission Green Paper on Convergence, the EU Framework for Electronic Communications during the 2000s, and then the 2013 green paper "Preparing for a Fully Converged Audiovisual World: Growth, Creation and Values." As regulations evolved, neoliberalism emerged as a key feature. Globalization, technology innovations, and products and services became the focus of neoliberal policies.

Technical infrastructures were at the foundation of convergence. First, convergence applications and services relied on new network infrastructures with expanded capacity and high-speed transmission. The network upgrade to NGNs involved high-investment cost and physical implementation, and was a strategic communication policy priority (p. 33) in media governance everywhere. Simpson discusses the realization of NGN in Europe, the United States, Australia, and South Korea. In Europe, policies to roll out and secure the network upgrade began in the 1990s. Although the NGN governance agenda proceeded sluggishly during the economic recession after 2008, European public sectors still promoted broadband infrastructure implementation. U.S. policy progress to upgrade the network was swifter. As the advocate of the neoliberal agenda in digital communications in 1980s, the United States pushed the Broadband Initiative Program and the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program. Australia also liberalized, conducting a large publicly funded network expansion. South Korea adopted strong state-led ICT strategies in which tax relief was a dominant feature. Compared to Europe, where setting framework conditions in policy agenda was the main focus, the South Korean government engaged in the upgrade of its business sector to speed up the process. But Korean upgrade policies sometimes focused too much on the supply side and neglected the capability of mobile broadband companies to meet high-quality network demands.

Second, incomplete media convergence prompted spectrum policies debates. Technological developments empowered massive growth of audio-visually based mobile communication that put pressure on spectrum capacity, which in turn forced the reallocation of scarce airwaves. Therefore, spectrum policies were designed to increase the capacity and reallocate it. Changes of spectrum policy centered on the marketization of communications and are still in flux. What is certain is that the spectrum will remain a fundamental infrastructure concern as media convergence proceeds.

Third, as media convergence progressed, net neutrality became another focus of attention. The Internet became a major information source, and the emergence of social media platforms increased the demands on infrastructural resources. Therefore, the debates raged about whether Internet service

providers interfere with the flow of Internet traffic, whether people would pay more for faster Internet services, and whether some content and websites should be given priority. Comparing Europe and the United States, Simpson concludes that net neutrality is complex because it involves basic ideas of individual rights and public interest. Although the majority favor making standard services to all users, some opponents of net neutrality legislation favor a "market-based approach" (p. 96). In short, the debate on net neutrality both in fixed and mobile communications is ongoing.

After considering infrastructure regulations, Peter Humphreys turns to policy changes required by the convergence of content. Humphreys' section is especially incisive and enjoyable, combining facts with in-depth analysis. Copyright, media concentration, and subsidies are the three main concerns Humphreys addresses. First, he raises important questions (but offers few solutions) about intellectual property rights. How should intellectual property rights, especially copyright, be protected in the digital world? Does current copyright law limit creativity and innovation? As media convergence opens new competitive opportunities in the digital era, how should copyright law be reformed? Humphreys asks whether the EU, France, the UK, and the United States should introduce more comprehensive copyright reforms. He worries that market vulnerability will be underestimated if copyright law is too constrained.

Next, he turns to issues related to regulating media concentration. Access to multiple media outlets provides users with more choice. Still, regulations on concentration are necessary to determine how and to what extent regulators should intervene in the complex task of managing diverse platforms. Ensuring sufficient independent media voices guarantees that all citizens are exposed to news, information, and content from different sources in the ongoing messy media convergence environment. Structural measures, the use of revenue to measure cross-media shares, periodic plurality reviews, heightened transparency, avoidance of bottlenecks, and strong well-resourced public-service broadcasters are recommended. Humphreys also suggests that a new regulatory approach to subsidies might be considered to promote media pluralism.

In addition, Humphreys endorses using subsidies to sustain public service communication. Journalism, as a public service, faces major challenges because of the commercialism of communications in the digital era. But public service communication remains important and needs regulatory and institutional support. Public service broadcasters deserve support to become public service media, and regulatory interventions should promote public service journalism in the digital age. New support mechanisms such as the UK's Public Service Publisher are models of what is possible.

In their conclusion, Humphreys and Simpson offer solutions to the obstacles that may impede the process of media convergence and the unprecedented opportunities convergence opens up. A neoliberal, collaborative approach could provide leverage to make these opportunities real.

In summary, *Regulation, Governance and Convergence in the Media* draws a comprehensive picture of the development of media regulations and governance with vivid examples and historical, international anecdotes. It provides a clear logical analysis from infrastructures to content and then to concerns that may impede convergence, regulation, and governance. My only quibble is that some parts of the book need more background for readers new to the subject and that the introduction is a bit hard to read. All in all, this book

provides an excellent overview for academic scholars and others interested in developments in digital communications.