

Panel Session Proposal

Media Governance – A New Concept for the Analysis of Changing Media Policy?

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Panel Overview

Media policy can be described as a way for society to shape its media. Going beyond merely economic aspects of the media, media policy pursues political, social and cultural goals. Some of these goals – for instance diversity, integration and inclusion – aim at bridging divides in society. In addition, divides and inequalities become obvious in the political process itself. The various economic, political and societal actors have different possibilities and power resources to influence the formulation and implementation of media policy.

Media policy *and* the way it is analyzed, however, changes. In recent years, the concept of media governance is gaining in importance. On the one hand, *media governance is used to describe changing polities, politics and policies*. Several shifts in media policy can be observed: from national media policy to European and global media governance; from government to self- and co-regulation; from formal to informal decision-making in networks.

On the other hand, *media governance is a scientific perspective*. Scholars from different academic disciplines – mainly from political science and economics – focus on governance. Some see it as a positive concept to analyze changing media policy, some as a normative concept and as a democratic imperative. Admittedly, governance is an elusive concept. Despite these ambiguities, communication science can learn from and contribute to the debates surrounding governance.

For scholars interested in media and communications policy, governance is of utmost importance and opens up several perspectives. First, it is possible to claim that *media policy is changing* towards media governance. Second, governance can serve as a new *analytical tool*

to study media policy, considering aspects so far overlooked. Third, media governance constitutes a *normative demand on media policy*.

The proposed *panel session*, consisting of six brief and concise presentations and a subsequent discussion, strives for deepening our understanding of media governance. While the *introductory presentation* will touch upon the different meanings of media governance and the concept's significance for media policy, *the following presentations look at media governance from different perspectives*.

- *Societal perspective*: Media governance as a normative concept allows for analyzing the power of different actors in media societies.
- *Political perspective*: A new pattern of statehood derives from a modified division of labour between public and private actors, from changes in institutional structures, processes and content.
- *Organizational perspective*: Corporate governance in the media differs from other economic sectors. Accountability does not only exist towards shareholders but towards society as a whole.
- *Journalistic perspective*: Media governance raises questions of self-regulation, accountability and autonomy in editorial departments, e.g. internal codes of journalistic conduct.
- *Civil society perspective*: Finally, media governance can be seen as a new form of articulation and participation of civil society.

Media governance proves to be a multifaceted new concept for the analysis of changing media policy, able to identify divides and power inequalities in society. We are convinced that the subject matter fits the “political economy” section best, allowing for a critical discussion of different perspectives against the background of political and societal conflicts.

Introduction:

Media Governance – New Ways to Analyze New Ways to Regulate

Presenter: Manuel Puppis (m.puppis@ipmz.uzh.ch)
University of Zurich/Switzerland

Governance enjoys great popularity among researchers and practitioners alike. Its quality as a catch-all-word however comes at the cost of clarity. This *introductory presentation* conceptualizes media governance as both a change in government and a scientific perspective. On the one hand, *media governance describes changing polities, politics and policies*: Governance stands for new ways to regulate the media. On the other hand, *media governance is a scientific perspective*: Governance stands for new ways of viewing media policy and regulation. Here it is useful to distinguish between empirical and normative concepts. Very often, however, normative assumptions remain unexpressed. For instance the governance perspective is usually based on the functionalist assumption that governance is in the public interest. Nevertheless, media governance offers scholars some advantages. Governance can not only act as a bridge between disciplines but it is a new way to analyze new ways of media regulation as well.

Societal Perspective:

Societal and Media Power Structures as Challenges for Media Governance

Presenter: Werner A. Meier (wameier@ipmz.uzh.ch)
University of Zurich/Switzerland

Media governance is not only a disputed normative concept but also a new analytical tool to identify “checks and balances” of a fundamental power struggle within institutionalized social actors. Media governance is seen as a process in which a variety of interests are debated, coordinated, and negotiated, through different forms of social networks and social actors endowed with different resources of power. Insofar, media governance helps analyzing the power structure of public communication and it has to deal with the complex relationships of political, economic and mass media power. Media governance analyzes and evaluates existing power structures between and within all stakeholders involved. From a societal perspective, the concept of media governance is able to grasp complex power structures within and between media organizations and other institutions on both a theoretical and a practical level – thus helping to overcome inequalities and divides in democratic policy-making.

Political Perspective: Transformed Statehood in the Communications Sector

*Presenter: Michael Latzer (latzer@oeaw.ac.at)
Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna/Austria*

Media governance contributes to a transformation of statehood in the communications sector. The term statehood underlines the specific perspective; in particular it indicates that changes are analyzed from the standpoint of the state, which has traditionally played a pivotal role in the development of the communications sector. A functional approach to statehood focuses on the control and regulatory function of the state. A new pattern of statehood derives from a modified division of labour between public and private actors in the development and control of the sector, from changes in institutional structures (polity), processes (politics) and content (policy). Thus it encompasses changes both in the processes to solve problems and in the political organizations and institutions.

Organizational Perspective: Corporate Governance and News Management

*Presenter: Ángel Arrese (aarrese@unav.es)
University of Navarra/Spain*

Focusing on the level of media organizations, one can ask how corporate governance in the media differs from other economic sectors. Accountability does not only exist towards shareholders but towards society as a whole. In order to develop the implications of this idea, this presentation will try to justify how in the case of news companies it seems more suitable to adopt an approach of corporate governance based on the stakeholders and on the social mission, rather than more conventional approaches which are exclusively oriented towards the shareholders. In this framework, the proposals made in the last few years to improve the corporate governance of news companies will be explained. Some of these proposals referred specifically to the configuration and functioning of the Boards of Directors of news companies, aiming at integrating shareholders demands and news management duties.

Journalistic Perspective: Media Governance from a Journalistic Perspective

Presenter: *Lars Nord (lars.nord@miun.se)*
 Torbjörn von Krogh (torbjorn.von.krogh@miun.se)
 Mid Sweden University, Sundsvall/Sweden

Staying at the organizational level but focusing on journalism, media governance raises questions of self-regulation, accountability and autonomy in editorial departments, e.g. internal codes of journalistic conduct. This contribution discusses the implementation and effectiveness of media accountability systems in different media systems. Theoretically, the paper uses the analytical framework introduced by media scholars Daniel Hallin and Paolo Mancini in their work ‘Comparing Media Systems’ (Hallin & Mancini 2004). The degree of professionalization of journalistic practices and the implementation of self-regulation in different media systems are analyzed and related to the concept of media governance. Furthermore, different kinds of media accountability systems are analyzed and compared: corporative press councils with representatives for media owners, journalists and the public, education of citizens and professionals on ethical issues, monitoring institutions, evaluation systems including media professionals and media scholars (Bertrand 2000, 2003).

Civil Society Perspective: Auditing the Dutch Public Broadcasting Service: A New Articulation of Civil Society?

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Due to commercialization, the position of citizens in relation to the media has become weaker over the last years. Also in the Netherlands the growing influence of the state on broadcasting has gradually replaced the direct relationship with citizens. However, the Media Act of 2000 introduced a new instrument of media governance that now is a condition for licensing of public broadcasting organizations: an audit procedure that strengthens the articulation and participation of civil society. We ask ourselves whether this procedure is indeed able to do justice to the public as a full partner in the social communication process. We will take a close look at the procedure as a case-in-point and in light of other governance tools. In other words, the question whether the ‘switch’ to a citizen-based perspective bringing an inclusive programme supply and putting the audience at the centre has actually taken place will be raised centrally.