

**Gripsrud, Jostein, and Moe, Hallvard (Eds.), *The Digital Public Sphere: Challenges for Media Policy*. Nordicom, Göteborg, 2010. ISBN 978 91 86523 02 2. 167pp., €25.00.**

This edited volume is one of the outcomes of *DigiCult*, an internationally networked research initiative led by Jostein Gripsrud, one of the book's two editors. While *DigiCult*, like the book, has an international orientation, it has a largely Scandinavian focus albeit in a broader European policy and regulatory context. In the book, most case studies are from Norway, in line with the fact that most of its authors are based in Norway, despite its suggestions of a more international focus. However, this somewhat 'narrow' focus actually works in the book's favour, as arguably its most valuable chapters are the ones that discuss localised case studies, for it is on a local level that the key dilemmas are faced when it comes to media policy for a digital public sphere.

In a broad sense, the book addresses the changes that are associated with an identified shift from a mediated public sphere to what is now clearly a digital public sphere. The impact of this shift is felt on three different levels: globalisation, convergence and marketisation. The impact of globalisation is for example that it is increasingly difficult to conceptualise a public sphere in the traditional national sense in what Habermas has described as a 'post-national constellation' (2001). With regards to convergence, digitisation blurs the boundaries between media, which in turn means that in the 'age of convergence' (Gripsrud & Moe, p. 12), media policy is forced to move from media-specificity to media-neutrality. Thirdly in terms of marketisation, the impact of digitisation has been huge, and has raised issues around on the one hand increasing opportunity for *more* voices, while on the other hand a concern with quality and diversity of voices. These are the three broad themes of the book, and a wide variety of more specific issues are addressed in relation to each of these themes, such as

transnational online television distribution, digital audiovisual archives, impact of EU regulations on global corporations and national public service broadcasters, net neutrality, regulation of the freedom of speech on the internet, and the impact of legal globalisation on media policy itself. Rather than using the three main themes identified above as its main organising principle, the editors have instead chosen to divide the book into three broader and rather more blurry parts: Perspective, Changes and Fundamentals. The effect of this is that the book does not develop its themes as clearly as it could have done, and the final chapter is symptomatic of this in that it is essentially a summing up of issues without leading to any firm conclusions. To be fair, the book's main ambition, as stated in the introduction, is to 'provide food for further thinking and debates' (p. 18), and it certainly does that. However, given the high quality and depth of analysis in many of its chapters, it would have benefitted from one more chapter to pull it all together into a set of suggested future directions.

## **References**

*Democracy and the Digitization of Audiovisual Culture (DigiCult)*, Accessed 23 February 2011 at: <http://digicult.uib.no/>

Habermas, Jürgen, 2001, *The Postnational Constellation – Political Essays*, Polity Press, Cambridge.

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