



## Mapping Global Media Policy: Concepts, Frameworks, Methods<sup>1</sup>

www.globalmediapolicy.net - June 2010

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### Abstract

It is now recognized by scholars, policymakers and media activists that the environment in which media and communication policy is “made” is undergoing profound transformations. Trying to track, describe and analyze these transformations poses a stimulating challenge, particularly to scholars who see their work as an intervention in policy debates. This article seeks to address what we see as the most difficult yet necessary first steps towards meeting this challenge: defining the boundaries of what we mean by “global media policy”, providing a conceptualization of global media policy as a domain, elaborating a consistent analytical framework, and addressing methodological implications.

The conceptual framework that we lay out here is part of a Global Media Policy (GMP) mapping project that has been developed within the context of the International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR), with a view to addressing the many issues faced by researchers and practitioners, as well as policy-makers and advocates operating in this domain. In this article we present an overview of the conceptual journey through which the GMP mapping project has evolved.

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<sup>1</sup> A shorter version of the present text has been published in a special issue of the *Journal of Communication, Culture and Critique* edited by Leen d’Haenens, Robin Mansell and Katharine Sarikakis on “Media Governance: New Policies for Changing Media Landscapes” (Raboy & Padovani 2010). We thank the editors for their useful comments and for accepting to have this version accessible on the [www.globamediapolicy.net](http://www.globamediapolicy.net) website.

## Introduction<sup>2</sup>

It is now recognized by scholars, policymakers and media activists that the environment in which media and communication policy is “made” is undergoing profound transformations. Trying to track, describe and analyze these transformations poses a stimulating challenge, particularly to scholars who see their work as an intervention in policy debates. In the past dozen years or so, an embryonic field of global media policy studies has begun to emerge (O Siochru & Girard 2002; Raboy 2002). Yet, to date no body of scholarship has addressed this topic systematically and there is no set of theories available, nor comprehensive articulation of concepts, that allows for an overall understanding of the field.

We hope to contribute to filling this gap by addressing what we see as the necessary first steps towards meeting this challenge: providing a conceptualization of global media policy as a *policy domain* (Knoke et al. 1996)<sup>3</sup>, elaborating a consistent analytical framework, and addressing methodological implications to support research activities as well as policy interventions.

In this article we present an overview of the conceptual journey through which a Global Media Policy (GMP) mapping project has been developed within the context of the International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR)<sup>4</sup>. At the core of the project is the understanding of global media policy as an evolving field of practice and research. Addressing the challenges deriving from such shifting reality is crucial for researchers, who need to elaborate appropriate operational frameworks and methodologies to describe, interpret and anticipate evolutionary trends; but it is also essential for practitioners and policy-makers, who need to adequately position themselves in a diverse and complex environment in order to effectively meet their goals and orientate future developments.

At the conceptual level, our main question is: how should we think of global media policy if we are to understand the plurality of processes, formal and informal, where actors with different degrees of power and autonomy, intervene (Raboy & Padovani 2008)? We need to elaborate a theoretically sound and empirically viable understanding of GMP in order to render the diversity, dynamics and complexity that characterize its governance landscape; one that acknowledges existing definitional attempts, identifying their strengths and weaknesses, and yet contributes to the elaboration of a holistic approach able to transcend different terminologies and

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<sup>2</sup> We thank our colleagues Arne Hintz and Elena Pavan for many discussions which have contributed to this article.

<sup>3</sup> Knoke provides a useful definition of policy domain as a “complex social organization in which collectively binding decisions are made, implemented and evaluated with regard to specific topics (...) It is identified by a substantively defined criterion of mutual relevance or common orientation among a set of consequential actors concerned with formulating, advocating and selecting courses of action (i.e. policy options) that are intended to resolve the delimited substantive problems in question” (Knoke et al. 1996, 9).

<sup>4</sup> The project is supported by Media@McGill, McGill University’s media research hub, and the Department of Historical and Political Studies at the University of Padova, in cooperation with the Global Media Policy Working Group that operates within the IAMCR as an open space for scientific interaction to examine global media policy as an emerging field of research and practice. The GMP mapping project aims at addressing the many issues faced by researchers and practitioners, as well as policy-makers and advocates operating in this domain, by channelling fundamental information as well as research outcomes on the economic and political, social and cultural dimensions of media and communication policy. The final goal is to build capacity for policy intervention. See <http://iamcr.org/s-wg/mcpl/gmp>.

theoretical assumptions<sup>5</sup>.

At the analytical level, we are confronted with the question of how to operationalize such a definition: what would be the components of a framework for investigating and intervening in GMP, to be elaborated on the basis of a comprehensive definition? Another way to put this is to ask: how can we make sense of the complexities of contemporary communications? This requires a better understanding of the interplay between old, new, specific, transversal, stable and shifting *issues* composing the GMP agenda. Moreover it calls for a focus on the interactions amongst *actors* intervening in negotiations at different levels, expressing different interests, organizational logics and understandings of policy processes. It also implies to locate the *venues* and make sense of the many *processes* where actors' interactions take place, leading to learning and cooperation habits but also conflicts; as well as raising issues of effectiveness, accountability and sustainability. Finally, it focuses on the multiple *connections* between issues, actors, venues and processes.

In order to respond to these questions, we first outline the definitional and conceptual challenges through a literature review of selected works and we identify “multiplicity” as the central challenge to be faced when dealing with the global dimension of transformations that concern both the processual and the substantial realities of global communications. We refer to multiplicity to render the plurality of issues, actors, venues and processes in GMP and we contend that, while meaningful, addressing this multiplicity in a descriptive manner is not enough to adequately understand all of the dynamics of the domain and its evolution.

In the second section of the article we elaborate on the concepts we adopt to define the domain, indicating how the key terms “global”, “media” and “policy” should be conceived, and offering substantial justification for the use of those terms. Moving beyond descriptive accounts of the multiple components of GMP we introduce a second key notion, “convergence”; and we propose to refer to the different possible meanings of convergence in exploring the interplay amongst issues, the interconnections between “the global” and “the local”, or the co-existence of more and less hierarchical modes of regulation. On that basis we propose an analytical framework and a consistent definition of Global Media Policy.

In the final section of the article we discuss some of the implications that emerge from the proposed articulation of GMP. Moving from a description of GMP as a domain characterized by multiplicity towards an understanding of its complex and converging trends, we suggest that “mapping” remains a crucial challenge. Furthermore, it should be conceived as a methodology: a system of methods to address, represent and make accessible to the public the complexities of GMP while, at the same time, exploring the potential of critical knowledge to transform existing power relations, in the perspective of a democratization of global media governance.

## 1. The complex ecology of Global Media Policy

There is growing interest in the international and global governance of media and communication among scholars and policy makers (see, for example, Hamelink 2000; Kidd 2002; McLaughlin 2004; Castells & Cardoso 2006; Chakravarty &

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<sup>5</sup> In recognition of the complexity that characterizes the processes through which global communications are orientated and governed, in this article we address the terminological ambiguity that often accompanies widely-used terms such as “policy” and “governance”, and offer our own conception of policy processes in Section 2.3.

Sarikakis 2006, Silverstone 2007). At the same time, this field of study appears to be under-theorized, not well defined in its boundaries and open to controversial interpretations regarding the main processes and actors involved as well as the approaches and methods through which research is being conducted.

The contemporary communication environment is seamless and apparently boundless in possibilities. Popular misconceptions about the end of regulation notwithstanding, however, activity within this environment is still based on rules and likely to remain so (Price 2002). The rules are changing, of course, but more significantly, the way the rules are made is changing (Cameron & Stein 2002): global institutions like the World Trade Organization have become the site of battles between stakeholders; national governments are looking for new ways to continue tweaking the influence of communication on their territories (Hallin & Mancini 2004); corporate strategies are redefining the shape and substance of institutions (Braithwaite & Drahos 2000). Furthermore, users, the networks they create, and the choices they make constitute a perpetual wildcard that makes it hazardous to predict how communication is likely to evolve (Benkler 2006).

The global environment for the governance of media and communication is therefore based on the interaction and interdependence of a wide array of actors and processes taking place in dispersed policy venues. Needless to say, power is not equally distributed among actors, and some sites of decision-making are more important than others. National governments still wield tremendous leverage both on the territories they govern and as the only legally authorized participants in international deliberations, while disparities between governments are enormous. Nevertheless, national sovereignty is no longer absolute as new strategies, new institutional models, new forms of trans-national collaboration, new networks of point-to-point communication are developing and we are witnessing the emergence of new (global) approaches to public policy.

Different authors have contributed to clarifying the major trends of global media and communication politics and their implication for both research and practice, starting from the early days of reflections about how to govern global transformations<sup>6</sup>. In a 1991 article titled “Global Communications and National Power”, Joseph Krasner identified what was at the time the main feature of global communications as a policy domain, what we here call “multiplicity”. He stated: “There is no single international regime for global communications. Radio and television broadcasting, electromagnetic spectrum allocation, telecommunication (...) and remote sensing are governed by a variety of principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures...” (Krasner 1991, 336). From Krasner’s International Relations perspective, the point was to clarify how interests and relative power capabilities of state-actors, even in a globalizing context, were the key to understanding if and how international regimes for communication emerged and consolidated.

Almost two decades have gone by and major changes have characterized the evolution of information and communication technologies as well as the global context within which communication technologies and networks operate. Media and communication policies have become one of the “most internationalized areas of public policy and institutional change” (Mueller et al. 2004)<sup>7</sup> and different trends have

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<sup>6</sup> One of the earliest attempts to explore the transposition of communication politics from the national to the transnational occurs in a short essay by Monroe Price (1994), entitled “The market for loyalties: agenda-setting for a Global Communications Commission”. See also Price 2002.

<sup>7</sup> For interesting historical accounts of the transformation in media and communication regulations and governance over the last 150 years, through which the peculiar features of contemporary global

been outlined as characteristic features of contemporary GMP<sup>8</sup>.

We have witnessed a shift from vertical, top-down and state-based modes of regulation to horizontal arrangements, where regulatory structures for telecommunication and media are gradually integrated while, at the same time, governing processes have become more permeable to (more or less transparent) interventions from the side of a plurality of players that have stakes in media and communication and intervene in orientating their developments.

As a consequence there has been a shift from formal and centralized steering processes to informal, and sometimes invisible, policy-relevant interventions in the media and communication sector. This development explains the growing attention devoted to self- and co-regulatory mechanisms, including loose interactions “generated within multiple-actor-sets in which individual actors are interrelated in a more or less systematic way” (Kenis & Schneider 1991, 32), that have come to be analysed as networked forms of governance<sup>9</sup>.

Highly evident, and due to developments in technologies and digital convergence, has been the shift from sector specific detailed regulation to more general and broad parameters for managing media and technology. This trend also reflects the need to provide effective policy responses to the challenges deriving from the interconnections among sectors that used to be regulated separately, according to specific rationales and goals.

Finally, we have witnessed a “shifting in the location of authority” (Rosenau 1999) by which more and more institutional arrangements to steer communication systems take place at the supra-national level. This also implies a plurality of decision-making arenas where different interests, goals and opportunities are played out.

The plurality of issues, actors, venues and processes is therefore recognized as a major feature of a policy domain that, as we shall discuss below, has been labelled in different ways. Referring to global media policy, Raboy states that we are witnessing “a complex ecology of interdependent structures” which is “increasingly the result of a vast array of formal and informal mechanisms working across a multiplicity of sites” (2002, 6-7). Differently stated: “What has developed over the past century and a half is a highly distributed and heterogeneous architecture comprising an array of arrangements (...) The global governance of global electronic networks is highly fragmented along multiple axes” (Drake 2008, 65).

Attempts are being made to map out such multiplicity, partly in recognition of the centrality of media and communication systems to contemporary societies; partly in due consideration of the constitutive status of communication-related governing arrangements in relation to other policy areas (Braman 2004)<sup>10</sup>; and partly in the awareness that the governance of media, and especially new media and communication networks, “may epitomize the new forms of governance arising in global politics” (Singh 2002, 18). We nevertheless see a risk that multiplicity is dealt

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communications can be identified, see O Siochru & Girard 2002, Van Cuilenburg & McQuail 2003, Braman 2006.

<sup>8</sup> We build here on Raboy 2002, O Siochru & Girard 2002, Latzer et al. 2003, Braman 2006, Drake & Wilson 2008.

<sup>9</sup> For an account of the role and relevance of networks in transnational politics see Keck & Sikkink 1998, Reinecke & Deng 2000, Slaughter 2004, Kahler 2009. A theoretical elaboration focused on the transnational networked politics of communication can be found in Padovani & Pavan (forthcoming).

<sup>10</sup> Braman clearly states that “Media policy creates the communicative space within which all public and decision-making discourses take place” (2004, 169).

with mainly in a descriptive and often partial manner, by identifying and listing the many actors involved and/or the multiple venues where diverse issues are addressed. Such an approach, while meaningful, does not allow to fully grasp the deep dynamics of GMP, which we address in their complex interplay in Section 2.

Some scholars express a stronger focus on the “what” of governance arrangements, others on the processes and the ways in which such arrangements are structured. Many contributions remain focused on the national as the relevant locus of authority, while others mostly address supra-national challenges; in some cases formal and binding mechanisms to regulate the media and communications are at the core of reflections, in other cases special attention is posed to transformations in regulatory modes. This plurality of (partial) perspectives is reflected in the plurality of terms through which areas that relate to the governing of media and communication have been defined, often without adequate theoretical justification for the concepts used and the definitions offered.

“Media policy” is possibly the most traditional formulation: from Garnham’s “the ways in which public authorities shape, or try to shape, the structures and practices of the media” (1998), with a strong focus on the nature and role of the actors involved; to Freedman’s “formal as well as informal strategies, underpinned by particular political and economic interests, that shape the emergence of mechanisms designed to structure the direction of and behaviour in media environment” (2008, 23), expressing the author’s understanding of media policy as a “window on broader questions of power”.

“Information policy” is another diffuse label, one that Braman articulates in terms of “all laws and policy affecting information creation, processing, flows and use of information” (2006, 77) conceptualizing the field by focusing on the information production chain. But “information policy” is also used, for example, by the International Development Research Centre (2001) to refer to “policy initiatives that promote the use and concepts associated with the ‘global information society’”<sup>11</sup> thus including a much wider set of issues that relate to societal development<sup>12</sup>.

A trendy catchword is that of “digital policy”, though it mostly refers to private initiatives that address consumer protection issues in online technologies, as in the case of the Digital Policy Forum<sup>13</sup>, or develop self regulatory programs for the online marketplace like the Digital Policy Group<sup>14</sup>.

Other scholarly reflections have focused on the changing nature of the processes through which media and communication are steered. Some of them have moved beyond the very idea that media policy is about governments and state actors, and suggested a shift in terminology from “policy” to “governance”<sup>15</sup>. Others have

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<sup>11</sup> In this document as well the plurality and diversity of approaches appropriate to respond to specific national context is outlined, recalling Rowlands: there is no such thing as a single information policy, but rather policies that address specific issues (An Information Policy Handbook for Southern Africa [http://www.idrc.ca/ev.php?URL\\_ID=11439&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC](http://www.idrc.ca/ev.php?URL_ID=11439&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC), retrieved November 18, 2009).

<sup>12</sup> A more elaborate attempt to conceptually clarify the interplay of the different policy fields that relate to media and information can be found in Mansell & When (1998) who distinguish ICT policy from media policy, telecommunication policy, technology policy and industrial policy, clarifying the respective features but also stressing the need to integrate national ICT strategies with the other overlapping four domains.

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.digitalpolicyforum.org/>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.digitalpolicygroup.com/>

<sup>15</sup> This is the case of the collective work conducted at the University of Zurich and synthesised in formulas like “From Media Policy to Media Governance”. This perspective has been publicized through seminars (for ex., “Media Governance – A New Concept for the Analysis of Changing Media

elaborated typologies to empirically investigate the diversified regulatory mechanisms that operate in the domain<sup>16</sup>. Moreover, a specific focus on changes in the conduct of global communication politics, due to the emergent and active role of non-state actors, has been the object of extensive scholarly as well as activist reflections in the context of the United Nations-promoted World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)<sup>17</sup>.

There is, therefore, growing recognition of the relevance of formal as well as informal mechanisms, latent and invisible policy making (Braman 2006), and of the plurality of stakeholders that play relevant roles in defining principles, norms and practices for global communication. Nevertheless, most of these efforts do not comprehensively address the complexities of the global environment within which national policies are being developed, nor the challenges posed by the interplay of regulatory arrangements that take place at different levels. Until now few scholarly works have explicitly addressed the globality of communication governance.

Hamelink has possibly pioneered the field, with *The Politics of World Communication* (1994), offering one of the first comprehensive views of what global communications were to become at the turn of the century. Bringing together historical accounts of the international regulation of diverse policy areas such as telecommunication and the protection of intellectual property, mass communication and culture, transborder data flows and the standardization of consumer electronics, he indicated the need to adopt an historically aware perspective in order to make sense of the future politics of communication.

Marsden's *Regulating the Global Information Society* (2000) may be considered exemplary of the several attempts made by the scholarly community to address issues related to regulation of a medium that has implications in an increasingly global society; the suggestion being that any attempt to regulate global communications will have to look at traditional regulatory factors in an entirely unconventional way.

In *Global Media Policy in the New Millennium* (2002), Raboy has made the effort of considering the politics, processes and policies of global media and communication and proposed an initial mapping exercise for the field, based on a typology that would connect institutional actors (from "global organizations" like the International Telecommunication Union and UNESCO, to exclusive "clubs" like the G8 or OECD, to state governmental and interstate groupings, to private sector actors and civil society organizations), relevant issues (from broadcasting in the global context and issues of harmful content, to the need to address media concentration of ownership, to the shifting role of mediation in conflict situations) and also alternative practices.

O Siochru and Girard's *Global Media Governance: A Beginners' Guide* (2002), offers another attempt to respond to growing complexity in the global communication domain by articulating the who, what and how of media governance. They do this by asking questions like: why do we regulate the various media at all? What currently are

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Policy?" on the occasion of the 2008 IAMCR Conference), and refined in publications like Donges 2007 and the special section of *Communications* (2007) entitled "Media Governance: New Ways to Regulate the Media".

<sup>16</sup> Latzer (2003) looks at "regulation remix" in what he calls the "mediamatic sector", offering a very detailed focus on self- and co-regulation at play in the communications sector, but not elaborating as much on the nexus between media and informatics, nor on the multi-level interplay of such "remix".

<sup>17</sup> Accounts of the multi-actor dimension of the WSIS experience can be found in *Media Development* 2002/4, Burch 2004, Calabrese 2004, Hamelink 2004, Kleinwächter 2004, Mueller et al. 2004, O Siochru 2004, Padovani 2004, Raboy 2004, Drossou & Jensen 2005, Padovani 2005a, 2005b, Raboy & Landry 2005, Cammaerts & Carpentier 2006.

the major forms of global regulation, and how do they work? Who participates in, and who benefits from, media regulatory and governance structures? And they answer by identifying the major institutional actors, the trends and challenges that compose the global communication landscape at the turn of the century.

Finally we can recall Drake and Wilson's *Governing Global Electronic Networks* (2008), where a quite consistent framework is offered for the analysis of: "The development and application of shared principles, norms, rules, decision-making procedures, and programs intended to shape actors' expectations and practices and to enhance their collective management capacities concerning global electronic networks and the information, communication and commerce they convey" (Drake 2008, 11).

All these reflections have contributed a great deal in identifying the issues, actors and processes involved in the global governance of media and communication. We nevertheless contend that an effort is still needed in order to move from acknowledgement of multiplicity, to approaching the complexities deriving from converging trends through adequate frameworks and methodologies. Conceptual clarity can therefore help understand the nexus between the multiple processes through which global communications are steered and the content of such processes. It is also needed to ground the elaboration of analytical frameworks through which we can investigate the interplay among communication sectors (like broadcasting and telecommunication, Internet governance and cultural policies) and among media-related issues (for instance, cultural diversity and digital divides, or the normative basis for regulating the Internet critical resources).

## **2. Defining Global Media Policy**

We need a definition of Global Media Policy that avoids the traps of exclusive disciplinary legacies and opens spaces for inter- and cross-disciplinary dialogues. As we have seen in the previous section, different terminologies reflect different theoretical approaches and disciplinary backgrounds; it is therefore crucial that a definition of GMP, beyond the preferred terms, is clear in its connection to the multiple legacies it builds on and consistent with the aim of offering a common ground for further conceptual elaboration and empirical investigation.

We also need a definition that fully takes into consideration the major trends outlined earlier and the many challenges deriving from the different facets of multiplicity. A definition that, on the basis of a comprehensive conceptual framework, can contribute to outlining all relevant components of GMP as a domain.

The more human communications are structured in networks of interaction that span from the local to the global - with all the complexity of interacting languages, cultures, technologies, mechanisms to coordinate, steer and regulate - the more we face the challenge of understanding this reality through what Beck (1999) has referred to as an inclusive look: overcoming the tendency to look at the world in terms of "either... or ..." (either the state-level or the global, either media or information, either regulation or governance) and adopting an inclusive approach capable of considering the interplay among actors and issues, the blurring boundaries between policy sectors and levels of authority, the evolving articulation of issues, through framing activities that are carried out by institutions as well as communities, at the supra-national as well as the local level.

An inclusive approach is here proposed through the adoption of a linguistic

expedient. In spite of being all too often associated with technological evolutions and trends, the term “convergence” has the potential to support our move from the recognition of multiplicity in GMP to a better understanding of the resulting complexities. Through the lens of convergence we attempt to clarify the conceptual components of GMP: each of the terms discussed in the rest of this section is therefore articulated through the different meanings that can be associated to the etymology of convergence, that of *cum-vertere* or “coming together”.

## 2.1 – The Global

We do not propose here to revise a two decades long debate on globalization<sup>18</sup>, yet we contend it is important to clarify our specific understanding of “the global”. We do this by referring to a definition of globalization offered by Held and colleagues: “Globalization can be thought of as the widening, deepening and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness, in all aspects of contemporary social life, from the cultural to the criminal, the financial to the spiritual” (2000, 2). Reference to the widening, deepening and accelerating processes outlines the major dimensions involved in societal change: those of time, space and velocity, that are driven by and, at the same time, foster transformations in information and communication technologies.

The idea of convergence of time and space is not new: it can be traced back to the works of geographers like Janelle (1969) or Harvey who, in 1989, talked about “time-space compression”. In our perspective, convergence is not a process that eliminates the realities of space and time; on the contrary, we contend that space and territory, concrete localities and the ways in which they are experienced, still inform the ways in which different actors operate. The global in GMP does not just refer to a supra-national or trans-national space where interactions among a variety of actors take place: it refers to the multi-layered realities of communication systems, networks and regulation. Events or policy developments taking place in local and national settings may influence the other levels, while being affected by decisions taken in the trans-national context. Territorial scales (Shepperd 2003) and their *interplay* are therefore a central component of the global governance of communication and need to be analysed and understood in their interconnections.

In the global context we also witness convergence in the sense of an interplay between what Castells (1996) has defined as “spaces of place”, where concrete physical experiences contribute to making sense of situations, and “spaces of flows” that are made possible and continuously expanded through technologies. Recent developments in the governance of global communication, exemplified by events such as the WSIS and the process created in its wake, the Internet Governance Forum (IGF), offer examples of this global trend. The IGF was officially mandated to be a “multi-stakeholder policy dialogue”<sup>19</sup> and has been structured as an open space for networking. This networking not only happens in the physical premises where the yearly meetings of the IGF take place: it is also fostered in “spaces of flows” through technologies that allow for remote participation (through e-mail exchanges, discussion groups and teleconferences) and for on-going substantial exchanges in the period between the actual meetings (Padovani & Pavan forthcoming).

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<sup>18</sup> Systematic efforts have been made in this direction, to which we refer for summaries and synthesis; in particular: Held et al. 1999, Held & McGrew 2003, and Scholte 2005.

<sup>19</sup> The 2005 Tunis Agenda for the Information Society, WSIS-05/TUNIS/DOC/6(Rev. 1)-E, in setting up the IGF, called for a “forum for multi-stakeholder policy dialogue” (par 67).

Finally, the global should be conceived as the interplay among the different “scapes” identified by Appadurai - ethnoscaples, finanscaples, ideoscaples, mediascaples and technoscaples (1990, 1996) – or, in Scholte’s terms (2005), by referring to the “growing trans-planetary social interconnectedness” amongst structures of production, governance, identity and knowledge. The point here is a conceptualization of “the global” as a multi-dimensional reality; one that allows to acknowledge the connection between media and communication systems and economic interests, political perspectives, and broad social and cultural issues<sup>20</sup>.

As a consequence, the global dimension, in our reading of GMP, reflects the multi-layered, multi-spatial and multi-dimensional processes involved in governing media and communication. These include processes that take place in local, sub-national and national contexts, as well as in the supra-national settings inhabited by state-based regional groupings such as the European Union, multi-lateral and universal intergovernmental organizations like the United Nations and its specialized agencies, and exclusive intergovernmental “clubs” such as the G8 and the OECD. But it also includes individuals and communities that are mastering their capacities to participate in both the spaces of place and the spaces of flows of global communication governance, without necessarily having their actions mediated by the state.

## 2.2 – *The Media*

Technological convergence is leading to convergence of communication modes, with growing interactivity and combinations of synchronous and asynchronous exchanges, as well as to transformations in social media usage, and the emergence of media-based alternative projects. We contend that all these processes relate to, and sometimes challenge, the very possibility of human interactions in a globalized context; they force us to rethink communication processes and the different mediations that are inevitable when interactions take place across spaces of place and spaces of flows.

We here adopt as a starting point an understanding of communication as “a fundamental social process, a basic human need and the foundation of all social organization”<sup>21</sup> and suggest that, in conceptualizing the “media” component of GMP, we need to integrate existing definitional approaches in order to accommodate convergence in media sectors, in meaning mediation and in normative provisions that affect human communications today. To this end, we introduce below a set of thematic clusters: they are discussed separately and reflect different ways of thinking the “media” as a sector to be regulated; nevertheless they are here conceived as *interconnected*, to suggest how this multiplicity of media-related aspects should be reflected in a comprehensive analytical framework<sup>22</sup>. Each cluster should therefore be

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<sup>20</sup> This multidimensional view of globalization is also consistent with the theoretical proposal made by Held et al. (1999).

<sup>21</sup> Statement on Communication Rights, by the World Forum on Communication Rights, held in Geneva in December 2003. The first paragraph of that statement reads as follows: “Communication is a fundamental social process and the foundation of all social organization. It is more than the mere transmission of messages. Communication is human interaction among individuals and groups through which identities and meanings are shaped”. Similar language is also found in the autonomous Civil Society Declaration to the WSIS, *Shaping Information Societies for Human Needs*, and in paragraph 4 of the official WSIS Declaration of Principles, *Building the Information Society: a Global Challenge in the New Millennium*.

<sup>22</sup> It goes beyond the scope of this paper to review and discuss the rich and highly specialized literature

understood as a possible “entry point” to the domain.

Certainly, the “media” in GMP should include the *inter-operation of infrastructures* that offer the bases for mediation to happen. These are the physical wires, cables and spectrum resources that create terrestrial as well as aerial and satellite networks, but they can also be logical infrastructures, such as software and codes, as well as standards that guarantee interoperability amongst physical infrastructures.

Technological developments and converging trends have stimulated scholarly reflections since the 1990s to overcome the idea of “media sectors” (broadcasting versus telecommunication) in favour of a more convergence-aware approach. Yet, if we adopt a truly global perspective, and look beyond developments that are mainly taking place in technologically advanced countries or in restricted (mostly urban) areas within countries, we still witness the *co-existence and use of different media platforms*: print and publishing, broadcasting and audiovisual media, Internet and telecommunications. Platforms are thus the second component of our analytical framework: they function thanks to the infrastructural base, have been made more and more interoperable through digital technologies and pose serious issues in relation to the very possibility for some of them to transform themselves or perish. For all these reasons, we contend it still makes sense to keep media platforms within the GMP landscape. Beyond platforms, *institutional forms of media systems* - in terms of public service, commercial networks, community media or state-controlled systems - have been theorized (Siebert et al. 1956, Hallin & Mancini 2004) and are currently analyzed as crucial entry points to understand the role and relevance of the media in societal developments, and should therefore be part of a comprehensive analytical framework.

*Media content* is certainly another area that falls within the media landscape: this includes regulation of issues that relate to the different types of content, from music to film, advertising and news; the production of content, including the cultural industries and their organizational practices; the professional practices that may be changing in the digital age, as well as the converging styles and formats, as in the case of infotainment. Content circulation and distribution in a global market, raise issues that pertain to production, proprietary standards and copyright provisions, as well as issues that relate to different standards of protection for freedom of expression and individual private communications. Finally, cultural implications deriving from the transfer of content have already proven to be a major concern for several states and communities.

This takes us to an analytical cluster focused on *media uses*, where we include all aspects that pertain to applications and services – such as e-commerce, e-health, e-government, e-education and the like. This reflects the convergence of social functions - personal communication, access to data and news, cultural expressions - that are no longer served by separately identifiable industries. Moreover, convergence processes favour the emergence of alternative communication practices, of use and production: from tactical media usage for political purposes to the rethinking of the roles of media professionals.

Reference to the global market also raises questions that relate to the very principles upon which regulatory practices should be grounded, from those that have long been recognized internationally, such as “freedom of expression” or “universal

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that would help to shed light on the peculiarities of each of the identified analytical clusters. Our goal here is to justify this conceptualization of the media component in the context of GMP.

access”, to recent recognition, in specific national contexts<sup>23</sup>, of “broadband” or “access to the Internet” as formal rights. A specific focus on *principles, norms and rights* in our analytical framework is a way to acknowledge the many efforts that have been made in recent years to understand media and technology transformations either in the light of the consolidated human rights machinery, or through more innovative proposals<sup>24</sup>.

We also believe that the very *processes* through which media and communication are regulated have become, and should be considered, a distinct thematic area within a comprehensive analytical framework. The nexus between the substance of regulation in the GMP domain and the nature and changing scope of processes has become relevant to many observers; furthermore, this parallels the reflexive movement through which more and more governance modes are discussed and re-oriented as they happen.

Finally, given the constitutive nature of media and communication policy for other domains, and in view of the interplay among sectors and policy fields in the global context, it is crucial to include in a conceptual framework a number of *related policy areas*. Amongst them: economy, where rules governing concentration and competition policy are laid out; trade, given the relevance of supra-national trade policy in relation to technology and communications; and culture, given the challenges that global media pose to cultural expression and diversity. But we also outline the relevance of GMP from the perspective of development, in creating equal opportunities for disadvantaged groups, including women and indigenous peoples, or in contributing to address global environmental and health problems.

Summing up, the notion of “media” should be understood, and investigated, through a set of analytically distinct and yet interrelated clusters that compose a broad framework. Aware of the pace and speed of transformation in the GMP domain, such a framework should be a flexible tool. Moreover, it should allow different entry points to the complexities of the domain, thus favouring disciplinary convergence; and it should be able to accommodate broad thematic areas and more specific topics, including newly emerging issues.

### 2.3 – Policy processes

To adequately address the converging trends of GMP, a terminological clarification is needed. In the literature we have reviewed we find a low degree of precision in the use of terms like “governance” and “policy” to indicate arrangements through which the steering of media and communication takes place. The two terms are sometimes utilized as carrying the same meaning<sup>25</sup>, sometimes the difference between these concepts is recognized and yet authors, though utilizing different terminologies, mainly focus on formal decision-making processes<sup>26</sup>; other times a shift in language towards “governance” is welcome but then governance processes are characterized through a generic reference to the fact that the structures of public

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<sup>23</sup> This is currently the case in Estonia, Ecuador, Switzerland and Finland.

<sup>24</sup> We refer to a statement adopted at the World Forum on Communication Rights, Geneva, December 11, 2003. For a more articulated review of the Communication Rights debate in the transnational context in recent years, see Kuhlen 2004, Padovani & Pavan 2009, Raboy & Shtern 2010. We also refer to the different proposals that have been made in these years for a Bill of Rights for the Internet (see Padovani et al. 2009).

<sup>25</sup> This is the case, for instance, with O Siochru & Girard (2002).

<sup>26</sup> See, for instance Braman (2006) and Drake (2008).

policy-making and societal governance are rapidly changing. We therefore think it is necessary to clarify our use of the term “policy”.

Part of the existing conceptual confusion derives from the fact that terms like “governance” and “governing” have come to be utilized in different disciplinary fields<sup>27</sup>. Public policy studies have focused on transformations in governing arrangements since the 1980s, in the light of trends like the privatization of public enterprises, deregulation and commercialization of the public sector, reduced capacity and will of intervention from the side of the State and general trends towards market-based governing arrangements. Principles of “New Public Management” have emerged, and theoretical reflections have emphasized the role of non-state actors by referring, for instance, to “iron triangles” (Heclo 1978), “policy networks” (Rhodes 1997, Marsh 1998) and “policy communities” (Walker 1989).

The resulting debate about whether to base societal governance on either the state or the market has then been challenged by new developments since the early 1990s: new forms of negotiated governance, public-private partnerships, strategic alliances and inter-organizational networks have become part of an expanding scholarly narrative as well as of public discourses. The term “governance” has then been articulated in different ways: from a focus on the extension of government both horizontally and vertically (Rhodes 1997, Schmitter 2001) and on the several ways in which governing arrangements could develop (Kooiman 2003); to a prevailing focus on the multi-level dimension of governance processes, particularly in the European space (Marks et al. 1996); to a more recent conceptualization of “networked governance” as the result of “governing processes that are no longer fully controlled by the government, but subject to negotiations between a wide range of public, semi-public and private actors, whose interactions give rise to a relatively stable pattern of policy-making that constitute a specific (and pluri-centric) form of regulation” (Sorensen & Torfing 2007, 4)<sup>28</sup>.

Alongside efforts to re-articulate the nexus between state, market and societal interests at the national level, other strands of reflection have focused on the challenges posed by global transformations and the ways in which such transformations could be managed. Interestingly, it is in this supra-national context that the term “governance” originated<sup>29</sup>. As Hewson & Sinclair (1999) remind us, among international studies’ scholars different strands of reflections on “global governance” have emerged: one stimulated by the study on global change and international organizations in the immediate post-Cold War period (Commission on Global Governance 1995); a second one in connection to international regimes theory (Kratowil & Ruggie 1986); and a third one stemming from the studies on globalization, with a focus on intergovernmental economic organizations such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

As early as 1992, James Rosenau indicated the possibility of “governance without government” (Rosenau & Czempiel 1992), suggesting that, contrary to conventional theorizations of world politics, systems of authority could develop at the

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<sup>27</sup> It would be very difficult, and certainly beyond the scope of this article to account for the historical evolution of scholarly works that have dealt with these transformations and articulated the features, potential and shortcoming of “governance” modes. We prefer to refer to some classic works in the field – such as Marin & Mayntz (1991), Kooiman (1993, 2003) Scharpf (1994), Rhodes (1997), Pierre & Peters (2000) – and focus our contribution on the terminological implications that emerge when we investigate the global realities of media and communication.

<sup>28</sup> On networked governance, with a specific focus on the trans-national level, see also Khaler (2009).

<sup>29</sup> World Bank 1989, 1994.

supra-national level even in the absence of a political or legal authority. This would take place through a myriad of control mechanisms, and if a number of conditions are met: the development of habits of cooperation, a tendency towards organization, collective choices and legitimation from below. Under these conditions, a “relocation of authority” is possible, originating a situation in which states and intergovernmental institutions are not excluded from governing processes, but no longer occupy a central position; while mechanisms of governance can develop in a top-down as well as a bottom-up manner. This perspective allows us to introduce the three converging trends through which we intend to characterize the global steering of media and communication.

In an introductory text to the Global Media Policy mapping project (Raboy & Padovani 2008) we referred to policy as “all processes, formal and informal, where actors with different degrees of power and autonomy” intervene<sup>30</sup>. With the aim of making that statement more precise, we should look at governing arrangements for media and communication in such a way as to include the formal structures of law making and regulation, with their binding or non binding outputs, as well as the less formal, latent and often invisible processes through which decision-making is informed, such as lobbying, advocacy, interpersonal exchanges amongst policy-makers and media corporate interests. Furthermore, we have come to recognize the relevance of ideational and cognitive elements in shaping the governance of communication since “no single actor, public or private, has the knowledge and information required to solve complex ... societal challenges; no governing actor has an overview sufficient to make the necessary instrument effective; no single actor has sufficient action potential to dominate unilaterally” (Kooiman 2003, 11).

Alongside the official venues where policy is negotiated and adopted, it is therefore crucial to acknowledge the fact that different actors, both governmental and non-governmental, contribute different understandings and knowledge to these processes in different ways. Moreover, through their interactions, they contribute to framing policy-relevant issues and promote the evolution of norms, standards and rules that inform state-based policy-making, as well as non-state based standard setting and self-governing arrangements (Padovani & Pavan forthcoming). In recognizing the relevance of knowledge in orienting societal changes that are based on and foster communications developments, it also becomes clear that “academic knowledge ... not only has intellectual significance, but also political consequences” (Scholte 2005, 22)<sup>31</sup>.

#### *2.4 Framing Global Media Policy*

We can now further elaborate our analytical framework, beyond thematic clusters: given the multiple elements that come into the policy “picture”, we once more look at converging trends to keep track of complexities. We have already mentioned the multi-layered nature of global governance processes; here we look at convergence in terms of the intersection between continuity and change in actors’ engagement in different processes and at the co-determination between ideational knowledge and the actual production of rules for GMP<sup>32</sup>.

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<sup>30</sup> The introductory text and an overview presentation of the GMP Mapping Project are available at <http://iamcr.org/s-wg/mcpl/gmp>.

<sup>31</sup> The classical reference in relation to the role of ideas and epistemic communities in global transformation is Haas (1992).

<sup>32</sup> The following definitions have been elaborated in the context of the GMP Mapping project and are

We start from referring to convergence in terms of the coming together of a plurality of actors: what used to be multilateral arrangements amongst state actors, has now turned into a highly complex landscape, where states and intergovernmental institutions share the stage with private corporations, standard setting entities, civil society organizations, epistemic and technical communities. It therefore becomes relevant to elaborate a definition of actors that takes into consideration the different dimensions that are relevant for an adequate classification; these would include: the interests they represent (public or private), the type of activity they conduct (from formal governance to technical and normative standard-setting, to monitoring and advocacy...), the sectors in which they intervene (in due consideration of converging trends) and the level(s) at which they operate.

We therefore define organizational actors as “*entities that have stakes in the issues and/or participate in global media policy-making and governance processes. Actors can be governmental, non governmental or multi-stakeholder; they can represent different interests (public or private) and can operate at different levels (national, regional, international etc.)*”. These entities can be of different nature, from state governments and the more institutionalized intergovernmental organizations, to regulatory bodies and loose groupings, such as clubs or networks, the composition of which may vary, from a state-based exclusive one or multi-stakeholder<sup>33</sup>, to exclusive private corporation groupings or civil-society-based structures.

Alongside organizational actors, it is relevant to include a focus on individuals who can be “*directly involved in or have an active interest in thematic areas and topics that are relevant to Global Media Policy or others*”. A diversified set of individuals are seen as having “active interest” in our understanding of GMP: they can be policy makers, advocates or researchers; but they can also be diplomats, educators and media professionals who help to shape the understanding and normative structures of GMP as a domain.

We should then be aware of the implications of this coming together of actors, and consider the possible future scenarios in GMP processes and their outcomes. Here convergence can be conceptualized in terms of the *co-determinant effects* of centrally-controlled formal decision-making and “decentralized concepts (*and practices*) of social organization and governance” that are no longer “exclusively controlled by a central intelligence (e.g. the State); ... (and) ... intelligence is distributed among a multiplicity of action (or ‘processing’) units” (Kenis & Schneider 1991, 26, *our italics*). We need to acknowledge the *co-existence* of diversified processes through which GMP takes place: they can be state-centred as well as multi-stakeholder; they can take place in institutional venues but also in informal, open and discursive settings; they can develop into trans-governmental networks (Slaughter 2004) as well as trans-national advocacy networks (Keck & Sikkink 1998).

This complexity is certainly difficult to map as the less formal and public the processes become, the harder it is for observers to trace and investigate actors’ positions, their influence and use of power resources, the interplay of contending interests as well as the evolution of habits of cooperation. We contend that, alongside qualitative in-depth investigations of specific processes, it remains nevertheless relevant to consider the actual inputs and outputs which represent the communication

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core components of an overall framework described in the documents available at <http://iamcr.org/swg/mcpl/gmp>.

<sup>33</sup> Multi-stakeholderism has been widely discussed in the context of media and communication governance, especially in connection to developments made evident on the occasion of the WSIS. See Kleinwächter 2004, Padovani 2005a, Padovani & Pavan 2008.

trails of such processes, and thus an indirect way to grasp the nature of communication governance. Policy documents are therefore relevant components of GMP as a field, and include *“inputs and outcomes of formal institutional processes at different levels (national, regional, international etc.). These can be elaborated by individuals or organizational actors and include briefs, reports, policy statements, legislative and regulatory texts, conventions etc. Such documents can be of binding or non binding nature”*.

Finally, we also recognize the *“complementary sources of knowledge that are relevant to render a complete picture of Global Media Policy as a field of research and practice. These can be academic publications, policy-related documents that have been elaborated outside of formal processes, research projects, repositories, web-portals, course and training materials, and conference proceedings.”* This rich and diversified body of knowledge should be included in a comprehensive understanding of GMP as part of the ideational base on which policy-relevant public debates, negotiations and decision-making take place.

On the basis of this refined understanding of each component of Global Media Policy, we propose to define the domain as:

*“The multiplicity of configurations of interdependent but operationally autonomous actors that are involved, with different degrees of autonomy and power, in processes of formal or informal character, at different and sometimes overlapping levels - from the local to the supra-national and global - in policy-oriented processes in the domain of media and communication, including infrastructural, content, usage, normative and governing aspects. Through their interactions, actors may (re)define their interests and pursue different goals; contribute in framing policy-relevant issues and produce relevant knowledge and cultural practices; promote the recognition of principles and the evolution of norms that inform state-based policy-making, as well as non-state based standard setting and self-governing arrangements. Ultimately, they engage in political negotiation while trying to influence or determine the outcome of decision-making”*.

We can only address the complexities of GMP if we acknowledge the interplay among actors, the interconnections among sectors, the co-existence of regulatory mechanisms and governance processes, the relevance of ideational elements and the trails of communication through which we can trace the evolution of issues and processes. Thus, when focusing on a single aspect, a specific issue, or a defined process, observers and practitioners may find it useful to keep the broader picture in the background. In combining the different aspects, the proposed definition offers a point of reference; nevertheless it also opens up methodological challenges, which we discuss briefly in the next section.

### **3. Mapping Global Media Policy**

So far, we have proposed a conceptualization of Global Media Policy as a comprehensive domain, and have made the attempt to articulate it in terms of its scope, substance and steering processes. In the introduction we suggested this effort is crucial for researchers as well as for practitioners and policy-makers. Furthermore we have outlined the constitutive potential of relevant knowledge – knowledge collection,

creation and diffusion – in transforming existing power relations in GMP in the perspective of a democratization of global governance. We then discussed the notions of multiplicity and convergence (in their relation to each of the key terms, “global”, “media” and “policy”) as the two characterizing dynamics of GMP. We did this in the attempt to elaborate a framework that would reflect a critical standpoint, one that “is self-conscious about its historicity, its place in dialogue and among cultures, its irreducibility to facts, and its engagement in the practical world” (Calhoun 1995, 11).

We have then proposed an articulated framework for looking at GMP that includes the actors and issues involved, the levels of intervention, the interplay among converging sectors and the co-existence of governing mechanisms. We believe such a framework can help understand GMP not only in descriptive terms, but also as a standpoint from which to address some “hard” questions, such as: what is the meaning of normative concepts like “the public interest” and “communication as a fundamental right” in the context of globalized knowledge societies? In whose interest are policy moves related to issues such as digital switch-over or reducing the digital divide being carried out? What should be the role of accountable public authorities in orientating configurations of actors that are more and more operating on the basis of self- and co-governance modes? And also, what kind of “expert knowledge” informs and influences the evolution of discourses and norms that relate to GMP? Questions like these can only be addressed effectively, we argue, if we have a clear understanding of the complexities of GMP.

We therefore propose this framework to be adopted as a starting point towards mapping the field and we conclude by discussing some of the methodological implications that derive from such a comprehensive understanding of GMP, in the light of the Global Media Policy mapping project.

“Mapping” is not just conceived as a matter of “listing who does what to whom” in the global system of media and technology: it is a step towards understanding the interactions, competing interests and alternative perspectives involved in global media and communication policy in order to clarify where decisions come from, on which principles they are grounded, as well as the outcomes and consequences of policies, strategies and actions. Mapping as “engagement in the practical world” therefore becomes a methodology.

Mapping is certainly about connecting to existing resources on GMP, be they the growingly rich and yet fragmented scholarly efforts, or the number of web-based repositories and monitoring initiatives that deal with media and information technologies. From an initial review of such initiatives - amongst which the UNESCO Observatory on the Information Society<sup>34</sup>, The Communication Initiative Network<sup>35</sup>, the IT for Change-promoted Information Society Watch<sup>36</sup>, the Global Media Law and Policy Website<sup>37</sup>, or the Nordicom Monitoring of Media Trends<sup>38</sup> - we can see that the wealth of relevant information available is impressive, and yet these initiatives often lack explicit theoretical justification, efforts to disambiguate the terminology, or the ambition to go beyond data collection and develop tools to realize their potential for policy support.

Mapping is certainly about the collection and organization of data concerning

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<sup>34</sup> <http://www.unesco-ci.org/cgi-bin/portals/information-society/page.cgi?d=1>.

<sup>35</sup> <http://www.comminet.com/en>.

<sup>36</sup> <http://www.is-watch.net/>.

<sup>37</sup> [http://www.globalmedialaw.com/blog/?page\\_id=80](http://www.globalmedialaw.com/blog/?page_id=80).

<sup>38</sup> <http://www.nordicom.gu.se/eng.php?portal=mt>.

specific issues as well as broader thematic areas, concerning actors' attributes as well as their interactions, concerning specific processes or general trends, and concerning the evolution of scientific knowledge and the challenges of trans-disciplinary exchanges. We believe, however, that the framework presented in this article offers a consistent point of reference to better ground future mapping activities both theoretically and conceptually.

Furthermore, mapping recalls the immediateness of charts, maps and visualizations: tools through which humans have always attempted to position themselves in the world, get orientations and offer interpretations for events and situations. Maps are social constructions of the world, and mapping is “a creative act that describes and constructs the space we live in” (Corner 1999, 213). If we recognize the fact that mapping has emerged in the information age as “a means to make the complex accessible, the hidden visible, the unmappable mappable” (Abrams & Hall 2006), we realize how important a visual rendering of the complexities of GMP could be to make issues and stakes accessible beyond the expert community.

We can therefore think of looking at, investigating and acting upon GMP through different visualizations: we can map GMP geographic territories, but we can also visualize conversations and controversies, as well as the interconnectedness of concepts that are used in policy discourses. Moreover, we can visualize themes that compose those discourses, as well as networks of interaction and “spaces of flows”, among people and themes<sup>39</sup>.

Alongside visualizations, and as a fundamental component of the GMP mapping project, we envision more conventional critical scientific analysis by a community of scholars dedicated to developing GMP studies through a critical research agenda. Here, a combination of scientific reflection, knowledge production and collaborative generation of policy-oriented recommendations would develop into a *cognitive* mapping of the field. This can be seen, in some respects, as the intellectual added value of the GMP mapping project, as scholars coming from different disciplinary fields and epistemic communities join with research-sensitive actors from policy-making and policy-advocacy constituencies.

A critical “Atlas of GMP” could then be the outcome of this encounter between conceptually consistent data collection and organization, technology-based visual maps and high level scientific interpretive elaborations: an evolving tool to call into question ingrained acceptance of the global order of contemporary communications and its governance; a tool to “provoke new perceptions of (GMP) networks, linkages, associations and representations of places, people and power” (Mogel & Bhagat 2008, 6).

On this ground, the GMP mapping project can become a collective effort to focus on power relations in the global environment, on issues pertaining to interest formation and configurations of actors involved in global media policy processes, and on issues of equality, participation, justice and democracy that emerge within and as a result of relevant global arrangements. In this light, our attempt to frame and define global media policy is a contribution toward more inclusive and participatory governance of media and communication.

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<sup>39</sup> Different techniques and tools are available to produce visualizations. In the context of the GMP mapping project, we are particularly interested in software that allows the retrieval and re-organization in visual forms of digital information, including data that are dispersed in the web-sphere. Useful classifications of existing tools have been provided by the Digital Method Initiative (<http://wiki.digitalmethods.net/Dmi/ToolDatabase>) and the MACOSPOL project (<http://www.macospol.com/>); see also <http://www.demoscience.org/resources/index.php>.

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