



## How to use the Platform, build 'Islands', and create a *Mapping Global Media Policy Initiative*

### The Platform

The platform [www.globalmediapolicy.net](http://www.globalmediapolicy.net) helps scholars, activists and advocates to monitor, categorize and analyze key issues, significant developments and recent trends in the governance of media, information and communication on a global level. It allows users to:

- develop a resource base for policy information and documents in specific thematic fields
- identify relevant actors, processes, outcomes and resources, as well as the interactions between them, through an interactive database
- analyze a variety of dimensions and dynamics of global media policy through visual mapping tools
- develop scientific analysis on key issues, current trends, best practices, and research gaps

The overall goals of the project *Mapping Global Media Policy* are:

- fostering access to information and reflections on global media policy
- building and sharing knowledge on the complex field of global media policy
- enhancing actors' capacity to effectively intervene in relevant policy settings and reducing barriers to meaningful participation
- stimulating collaboration between scholars and stakeholders worldwide

### Types of Use

1. **Scientific Research:** Scholars and research groups can use the platform to analyze a particular policy field or process, or connections between different fields, as well as current trends, best practices, and policy gaps. The platform can be a resource base for finding and connecting research material, and a tool for classifying and systematizing available data, as well as for interrogating data through various visual mapping tools. It can thus enhance the understanding of issues and help representing findings in different ways.
2. **Education and Training:** Teachers and trainers may use the platform to illustrate the complexities of global media policy and to identify the latter's relevant components. Interrogating the database and exploring connections between profiles may advance students' understanding of specific policy fields and their actors, dimensions and interactions. Student projects may include data gathering and organization, as well as the creation of visual maps on particular policy topics. The platform can thus be applied at various points of the learning process and stimulate innovative training methods.
3. **Policy Interventions:** The platform allows activists and advocates as well as epistemic communities to access information and scholarly reflections on a policy topic that they want to learn more about or a policy process that they want to participate or intervene in. It also enables them to share policy statements and publicize their own analysis of policy issues or debates. It thereby enhances their capacity to effectively bring their concerns into policy debates, and it supports the process of agenda-setting.

## What is an 'Island'?

Analyzing a media policy field for research, education or advocacy purposes usually involves the creation of new content on the platform, according to a specific (research) question or (advocacy) objective. This new content will constitute a dedicated section of the platform, and it will thus form an *island* in the broader *ocean* of (data on) global media policy.

An *island* will typically focus on a clearly defined *topic* or a discrete *policy process*. A *topic* would be a distinct and sufficiently limited issue in global media policy, such as 'community radio legislation in Latin America', 'surveillance of email traffic', or 'child protection guidelines in Europe'. A *policy process* would be a debate or negotiation amongst a variety of actors on a particular theme or problem of media and communication policy, limited in time and space, and leading to binding or non-binding rules in the form of laws, conventions, declarations, standards or norms. *Policy processes* would be, for example, the net neutrality debate in the US, the development of the audiovisual services directive in the European Union, the international negotiations on the counter-feiting agreement ACTA, or specific thematic debates at the Internet Governance Forum.

In some cases, an *island* may exclusively focus on one institutional actor (and its network relations, or its policy output), or on a set of related policy documents, or a certain type of resources (e.g., summer schools dealing with media development). In other cases, the *island* may combine different such categories. In the case of a larger research project, the *island* will likely include a more extensive landscape of information on organizations, documents, resources etc., whereas a small research or class project will produce an *island* with narrow boundaries.

As more *islands* emerge on the platform, bridges between them will appear. Building an *island* not only allows you to analyze your own field of interest, but to connect your data and your maps with those of others, conduct comparisons and explore relations. If your *island* focuses on Europe, someone else may already have gathered similar data about Latin America; if it deals with radio content, someone else may just be working on online content; and if you focus on civil society participation in a policy process, another *island* may deal with business interventions into the same process. In this context the collaborative nature of the project is crucial in order to collectively populate the platform, thus enhancing the value of each piece of collected information.

## Creating a Mapping GMP Initiative

The process of building an *island* involves several steps. Together, these steps form what we call a *Mapping GMP Initiative*. In the following, we illustrate the core stages of an *Initiative* as well as ideas for possible complementary stages.

### Core Stages

#### 1. Identify an *island*

Choosing an *island*, i.e. a specific *topic* or *policy process*, means to identify its boundaries and all relevant components, in order to create a meaningful pool of information that can be analyzed. The *island* should have clear and unambiguous limits. Its size should allow for exhaustive and consistent gathering of all relevant data.

#### 2. Gather and organize data

The next step is to identify organizations, people, policy documents and resources that are relevant for the *topic* or *policy process*, typically because they are actors that have a stake in or have influenced the debate, or because they are documents and resources that serve as important

statements, studies, inputs or outcomes. For each of these, the user or researcher will create a *profile* by inserting information about the particular organization/document/etc. in the database. In doing so, he/she will create a comprehensive resource base for understanding and analyzing a particular *topic* or *policy process*. The resource base – or *island* – will grow with the number of *profiles* that are inserted. The more *profiles* are created, the more accurate the following analysis of the *topic* or *policy process*, and their connections to other topics and processes, will be.

### 3. Analysis

The data that is inserted in the database can be interrogated according to a broad variety of criteria and research questions, such as:

- relations between profiles: strength of linkages amongst organizations and individuals; production of policy statements by different actors; etc.
- thematic and geographical clusters: emphasis as well as gaps within thematic or policy debates; gaps in the geographical distribution of actors dealing with a particular topic; etc.
- content analysis: vocabularies and frames used in policy documents; relations between policy inputs and policy outcomes; etc.
- tracing policy perspectives and interests: cross-influences between people, organizations, resources, policy inputs and policy outcomes
- identifying emerging trends

The platform will support the interrogation of data by providing visual mapping tools. Visual representation offers a fresh perspective on data and allows users to process complex information; relate and compare data; explore properties, patterns and trends; test assumptions and uncover hidden dimensions. Users will be able to create multiple visual maps according to their specific interests and research questions.

## Complementary Stages

### 4. Communication Tools

The user or researcher may decide to develop dedicated communication tools, such as a separate website, a blog or a twitter topic, that update the interested public about the progress of the project. This may be useful particularly in the case of a more extensive *initiative* (i.e. a larger *island*). It may concern both communication within the *initiative*, e.g. through social networking tools, and publicity and news services about the *initiative*. External communication tools would be used for this, as the platform currently does not include (micro-)blogs or social networking.

### 5. Workshop or Conference

An *initiative*, as described here, can be complemented by one or more workshops and conferences, bringing together scholars and other relevant stakeholders, such as civil society activists and policy-makers, to discuss current trends, best practices and challenges concerning the particular *topic* or *policy process* which the initiative deals with. A physical event or other form of exchange (such as a tele-conference) can advance critical thinking and policy development, and can create a community around the specific issue. It may also help to enlarge the initiative through further collaborative work.

### 6. Knowledge Dissemination

Outcomes of each *initiative*, based on the data, visual mapping and other analytical methods, may be disseminated through academic publications, policy recommendations, or reports. In the collaborative logic of the *Mapping GMP* project, these outcomes should be publicly available. They can be published on the platform. In the case of external publications, e.g. in academic journals or as policy white papers, we encourage (re-)publication of results or summaries on the platform (where a specific section is available to host such materials).

## Management

A *Mapping GMP Initiative*, as described above, is a collaboration between the specific researcher or team – e.g., you – and the Steering Committee of the *Mapping GMP* project – an independent project initiated by the Global Media Policy Working Group of the International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR) and hosted and supported by a consortium including McGill University, University of Padova and Central European University.

The exact shape of the collaboration is decided case by case, with different levels of engagement and responsibility. Typically, tasks would be divided in the following way:

- *Researcher/team*: Develops the initiative, identifies the *island* as well as goals and research questions, and implements or leads the different stages of the initiative. An initiative will require at least one researcher who gathers, organizes and analyzes data (stages 2-3) or, in the case of a larger initiative, a coordinator who oversees the core stages and adds complementary aspects (stages 4-6), if appropriate.
- *Mapping GMP Steering Committee*: Provides the technical and structural framework, including a user account to the platform and training on how to use the platform; provides support during all stages of the initiative, from the development of an appropriate *island* to the dissemination of outcomes.

If appropriate, funding applications for project resources will be done in collaboration between the researcher/team and the *Mapping GMP* Steering Committee. Larger initiatives that receive funding for investigations using the platform may consider contributing to the technical development of the platform itself (adding new functionalities, upgrading existing tools) in cooperation with the Steering Committee.

Data that is inserted in the database, and visual maps that are created through the platform, become part of the platform, with a Creative Commons license. The role of the researcher/team will be highlighted on the platform and their contributions will be clearly marked.