

**Tim Congdon, Andrew Graham, Damian Green, Bill Robinson:  
The Cross Media Revolution: Ownership and Control**

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The debate on questions of media concentration and ownership is needed at this time when technology is revolutionising media opportunities. The BBC has commissioned four economists and policy advisers to look at competition in the UK media market and ask whether it will deliver the range of voices needed in a free society. The cases for reviewing media ownership laws are the technology transformation, the impending convergence of different media, the ending of spectrum scarcity, growth in channels and conditional access systems. The four articles in this book focus on the question of the identity of the new media. Central in the debate is the role of the government in the ensurance of plurality, first in "Ensuring that every household has the opportunity to receive the services needed for full participation in a democratic society" (p.5) and second "preventing the emergence of monopolies at any stage of the production and distribution" (p.6). To achieve these goals a mix of public service and commercial broadcasting may be better than a pure market model in maintaining Britain's democratic culture, according to Tim Congdon. This view is shared by Damian Green who argues that regulation will be an international matter. He supports the measures taken by the UK Government towards deregulation. According to Green, the

actions of the government need to be based on the 'objectively' measured media market. Thus for Green, revenue is a far more criterium than the number of viewers or audience viewing patterns. The problem of objective criteria is taken up by Andrew Graham, who argues that more regulation by the government is needed, and thus a different view of media is needed. Ownership restrictions should not be based on the total media market, but instead on a series of indicators determined market by market, since for example, entertainment differs from news. Instead of a distinction between public and private, guiding principles should depend on the form under which organisations want to participate in the media. There should be different rights and obligations for the 'impartial' organisations and those who clearly represent an interest. To ensure a democratic regulation there need to be three bodies: competition authorities, a body concerned with matters of taste and decency and a body dealing with 'public interest'. These issues are also examined in the fourth article by Bill Robinson. He explores the relationship between the market share and the influence of different media companies. Like Graham he argues that there is a difference in influence in, for instance, news and entertainment. He concludes that regulation on the media market, based on market share, can protect pluralism, but there are many different possible ways of measuring market share. None of these are perfect or unambiguous. This means that the use of a combination of measures is essential for the judgement of the regulator. These four articles show how the shifting media cause difficulties in determining the criteria on which regulation can be based. Especially the ways of considering the media, measuring the effects and influences of media or its forms of programs need to be examined. It is a pity that the writers of these articles neither focus on historical approaches towards media nor look at the specific interests and often complicated motives of particular participants such as technology and programm producers. This approach would lift the book's discussion of media out of the confines of a particular national context, and place it squarely in the middle of ongoing international debates. Nevertheless the most important issues are raised, in which the main question is what the cultural identity of media is.

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