

IAMCR Working Group on Global Media Policy

The Global Media Policy mapping project: from Stockholm 2008 to Mexico 2009

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Since 2007, the IAMCR Working Group on Global Media Policy has devoted most of its activities to develop the Global Media Policy mapping project. On the IAMCR website (<https://www.iamcr.org/content/blogcategory/37/148/>) you can find reports from each IAMCR Conference and a short summary of the project.

Here we present an update, that includes activities that have been carried on between the Stockholm IAMCR Conference (July 2008) and the IAMCR Conference that has taken place in Mexico city (July 21-24, 2009), as well as the way forward and a road map that should guide the GMP project team to the Braga IAMCR conference in 2010.

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1. Stockholm IAMCR 2008

In the GMP WG Report after Stockholm (available on IAMCR website) we summarized the discussions that have taken place in the pre-conference organized by the IAMCR Task Force on Global Media Policy and in the Working Group sessions, one introducing the project and the second featuring IAMCR members commenting on the project: Ulla Carlsson (Nordicom), Caroline Pauwels (Free University of Brussels), Barbara Thomas (EuroMedia Research group), Joe Bardoel (University of Amsterdam) and Ruth Tomaselli (University of Natal). At the WG business meeting in Stockholm, it was agreed to elaborate a small number of **consistent pilot projects**, in order to test:

- the framework (terminology, categories and typology),
- the methodology (the three layers and interconnection),
- the electronic tools (communication channels and electronic platform for data collection and elaboration).

The basics of the GMP mapping project at this stage (July 2008) were:

a) **An operational definition of Global Media Policy** (and Communication Governance)

"GMP includes includes all institutions, processes and interactions between various actors at different levels of the socio-political system, that operate with different degrees of hierarchy and autonomy, on the bases of implicit and explicit principles and norms, rules and procedures in the arenas of mass media, information and communication technologies and knowledge production and diffusion, with some repercussions on the trans-national sphere in terms of shaping actors' expectations and practices while, at the same time, directly or indirectly influencing individuals and communities".

b) Agreed upon **general objectives of the project**:

- I. fostering access to relevant information and reflections;
- II. enhancing actors' capacity to effectively intervene in relevant policy settings;
- III. reducing barriers to meaningful participation in the processes orienting future knowledge and communication societies through democratic practices.

c) **Specific objectives** and ideas on how to proceed:

- IV. building on and sharing the existent (knowledge, mappings, etc)
- V. contributing to a definition of GMP as a field of research and practice
- VI. stimulating worldwide expert collaboration

A) Mapping the maps: beyond existing repositories

We have been searching for mapping initiatives looking in three different directions: databases and archives dealing with information, communication and knowledge (to identify initiatives similar to the GMP mapping project); websites devoted to maps and mapping (to identify different modes of visualizations that are being developed in the web space, from the more traditional cartographies to experiments in on digital environment); atlases offering suggestions on how visualization of information concerning global issues could make information relevant to policymaking more accessible and understandable.

A1) Here is a list of information and communication-related databases and archives (including policy-oriented) that have been analyzed:

- UNESCO Observatory on the Information Society > <http://www.unesco-ci.org/cgi-bin/portals/information-society/page.cgi?d=1>
- IT for Change Information Society Watch > <http://www.is-watch.net/>
- The Communication Initiative Network > <http://www.comminet.com/en>
- Media, Law and Policy Advocacy Website (Annenberg School of Communication) > <http://www.global.asc.upenn.edu/index.php?page=165>
- Policy archive on media and telecommunication > <https://www.policyarchive.org/browse-topic?scope=Media%2C+telecommunications%2C+and+information-->
- Nordicom Media Trends > <http://www.nordicom.gu.se/eng.php?portal=mt>
- SSRC Media Research Hub > <http://mediaresearchhub.ssrc.org/>
- UC Atlas of Global Inequalities on connectedness > <http://ucatlas.ucsc.edu/communication/digitaldivide.php>
- National Geographic's trends in technology > <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/earthpulse/technology.html>
- Global Voices Online > <http://advocacy.globalvoicesonline.org/projects/maps/>
- Netdialogue (Clearing house on international internet governance) > <http://www.netdialogue.org/>

A2) Here is a list of maps and mapping websites:

- GOOGLE MAPS > <http://maps.google.com/>
- BING "decision engine" > <http://www.bing.com/maps>
- National Geographic Earth Pulse > <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/earthpulse/index.html>
- SEETY (London street by street) > <http://www.seety.co.uk>
- Atlas of Cyberspace > <http://www.mappedellarete.net> & <http://personalpages.manchester.ac.uk/staff/m.dodge/cybergeography>

A3) Here is a list of other global issues visualization initiatives:

- WORDLMAPPER > www.worldmapper.org
- UC Atlas of Global Inequalities on connectedness >

- <http://ucatlas.ucsc.edu>
- World Freedom Atlas > <http://freedom.indiemaps.com/>
- Global Internet Filtering Map > <http://map.opennet.net> & <http://opennet.net>
- Health Map (Global Disease Alert Map) > <http://www.healthmap.org/en>
- Initiative of alternative information concerning conflicts in the world > http://www.spazioindifeso.it/MOSTRA_FOTOGRAFICA/index.htm

Mapping and analyses of these initiatives and projects helped us realize that:

- a) there is a growing number of mapping initiatives and attempts to make use of digital technologies to map out and visualize global issues, which seems to respond to the need of making sense of complexities in the digital age;
- b) this richness is accompanied by an ever growing sophistication in the use of digital technologies, thus offering many examples and suggestions on how to conceive, elaborate and produce maps through the elaboration of data;
- c) most of these initiatives are not widely publicized nor easy to find in the Web (especially those related to communication);
- d) the richness of existing initiatives and websites is nevertheless seldom paralleled by sound theoretical and conceptual frameworks: information retrieval, the design dimension and the technical possibilities offered by digital technology seem to prevail over the heuristic potential of mapping existing knowledge in the digital age;
- e) the policy orientation of such initiatives is seldom made explicit and users are rarely assisted in utilizing the data and knowledge for policy-related purposes.

All this confirms the relevance of mapping-as-a-methodology that has been adopted as the starting point for the GMP mapping project: data collection, organization and elaboration can in fact be considered as a not only a descriptive function, but as having a proper heuristic potential as well as a policy-supporting one.

Mapping the maps thus allowed to further specifying the **rationale for GMP mapping** and elaborate a sound justification for the project.

What makes the GMP mapping different from other mapping projects:

- it is meant to be truly global in scope, integrating national, regional and international dimensions;
- it rests on an explicit conceptual framework that combines a theoretical approach to GMP with a unique methodology comprising project-based and user-generated data collection and organization, accessibility, and knowledge production;
- it proposes added value in the form of and scientific analyses of global media policy as a coherent object of study;
- it combines different ways of rendering the collected information - including visualizations of global media policy networks, processes,

- evolving discourses (through inbuilt tools in the digital platform) – thus making it accessible and meaningful to different audiences;
- it explicitly aims at combining collection of data, retrieval and visualization of data and policy-oriented functionalities.

B) Clarification and definition of concepts: the translation of the project framework into the structure of a digital platform to support an integrated database implied defining and refining categories, labels, taxonomy and terminology according to which the platform will be structured.

This was done keeping in mind some general aspects: a) accessibility to users and due consideration for their needs and competence; b) a consistent approach to Global Media Policy as a field of research and practice; c) clarity of language and consistency in reproducing the theoretical framework.

As for the platform taxonomy and structure, we have identified:

- four top **CATEGORIES - people, organizational actors, policy documents and resources:** these are the four labels through which data and information are articulated and a definition is being developed for each category. Each category is further articulated into TYPES (ex. people can be researchers, advocates or policy functionaries; organizational actors can be international organizations, transnational clubs, regional organizations ...);
- The refers to a number of macro **THEMATIC AREAS** that we assume as major components of GMP as a policy domain: mass media, telecommunications, ICTs, Internet governance, intellectual property rights, trade-related issues, development-related issues, culture-related issues, transversal and homeless issues.
- **TOPICS** are also included in the framework, but in an open ended list to accommodate all specific issues that are object of policy intervention: the open ended list includes the possibility to organize a folksonomy concerning issues that compose the field through the contribution of all users who will access the GMP platform.

As for consistency in the use of terminology, the project glossary is the following:

- By **ENTRY** we mean any specific object that is inserted within the database (each person or document, or resource... in general)
- By **RECORD** we mean the complete set of information concerning each query, which appears as a sheet/webpage once the query is done (all entries that appear)
- Besides TYPE and TOPICS, for each entry in the top categories, a set of further/advanced information will be available, constituting a **TAGGING** system through which info and data are organized and made available (see below proposals)

C) Initial collection of data to be inserted in the platform

Most of the search and analyses have been conducted as part of a pilot project focused on Internet Governance (with the participation of graduate students from the University of Padova):

- 120 organizational actors engaged in the Internet Governance Forum process have been mapped and general information has been collected;
- 4 people, 4 organizational actors, 4 repositories or archives – all relevant to the Internet Governance global debates – have been mapped on the web and retrieved information discussed in view of its relevance to the GMP mapping platform.

The collected information is available with the project team and will be inserted into the platform as soon as the digital space is ready.

These activities were conducted in view of reflecting on the availability and quality of data retrievable on the Web, on the relevance of data to be inserted in the platform, on the appropriateness of the grids elaborated by the GMP project for data collection (also in comparison with other archives): all this contributed to develop a reflexive approach as we proceeded in structuring the GMP mapping platform, and suggested ideas to develop visualizing functionalities in the platform, responding to the project overall plan and objectives (the three layers, visualization tools, wiki-type spaces for open contributions etc.).

The pilot, thus conducted, helped testing and developing ideas for the improvement of:

- the conceptual framework,
- logic and organization of content,
- the structure and functionalities of the digital environment organized for the GMP mapping project,
- accessibility and usefulness of such a space,
- meaning and possibilities to turn information and tagging into visualization of data and knowledge.

3. Venice 2009: engaging with different expertise

At the end of June 2009 - and following up a first seminar held in April 2008 – a second international seminar was organized in Venice by the University of Padova, titled: *Networks and change in global media and communication governance*. Part of the seminar was devoted to introducing the GMP project to experts from different fields: network theory, digital technologies and social transformations, communication policies and internet governance, trends and transformations concerning participation and civil society organizations in the global context.

Participants in the seminar were: Claudia Padovani (University of Padova), Marc Raboy (McGill University, Montreal), Elena Pavan (University of Trento), Annabelle Sreberny (School of Oriental and African Studies, London), Mario Diani (University of Trento), Noshir Contractor (Northwestern University, Chicago), Mauro Calise (University of Naples), Helmut Anheier (UCLA, Los Angeles & Heidelberg University), William Drake (Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva), Derrick Cogburn (Syracuse University, NY), Lorenzo Mosca (University of Roma Tre).

A number of relevant **comments and suggestions** were made in relation to the project, recognized by participants to be very ambitious but also relevant and timely. Here we summarize issues that have been raised and discussed and will inform future activities of the project:

a) **Resources** needed and sustainability

- A long-term vision and project plan needs to be developed.
- Sustainability should be considered from both the provider side and from the user side
- Realistic assessment is needed on funding and audience

b) Further **expertise** that may become relevant as the project evolves

- natural language processing, in addition to data processing
- Interface issues and human computer interaction to allow various audiences to participate (cfr. citizens' science)

c) Issues about **intellectual property** of the project should be considered in advance: what IP rules to be set around this project? different license according to what material; open standards as main choice...

d) Consult, learn from, and potentially collaborate with other **relevant experiences**, such as ICPSR Michigan, Global Civil Society Yearbook, Global cultural future project, etc.

e) specific **functionalities** to be developed in GMP mapper, e.g. search recommendations to be provided to users according to their queries

f) **Funding** agencies: development of a funding plan for different parts of the project

g) The GMP could also be developed as a **mentoring** project, i.e. as a way for junior researchers to get involved

h) **Classification** system: revision of taxonomy, ontology, tagging, folksonomy

i) explore **opportunities for future cooperation** with, amongst others, IAMCR, ICA, APSA, ECREA, ECPR, GIGANET

4. GMP mapping activities at the Mexico IAMCR Conference 2009

At the IAMCR conference held in Mexico City (21-24 July 2009) the Working Group on Global Media Policy devoted its three sessions to the GMP mapping project.

A) GMP discussion sessions

In the first two sessions the project was once again introduced (a power point presentation is available on the IAMCR website) and recent developments discussed with a very engaged audience of some 30 people. The tone and direction of the discussion showed the project has moved forward substantially since the Stockholm Conference and is now more precise and sound in its rationale, organizing logic and goals. Comments from the audience (including John Downing, Ruth Tomaselli, Robin Mansell, John Straubhaar, Jens Cavallin, Andrew Calabrese, Sophia Kaitatzi, John Sinclair, and others) no longer referred to the theoretical framework that underlies the mapping project, which seems to offer a satisfactory and flexible conceptual structure articulating GMP as a field in terms of actors, processes, issues and levels of policy interventions.

The discussion thus focused on: a) the possibility to improve and integrate the framework and related platform structure, b) the relevance of the project for GMP research and practice and c) opportunities for future cooperation.

a) Possible improvements and integration

- introduce a historical dimension to the mapping by inserting a transversal section in the platform, where reflections, written works and links relevant to a historical understanding of GMP can be collected and made available;
- provide space for other relevant aspects of GMP, including transnational investments and financing, considering the influence of private investment on governing arrangements. This specific focus would strengthen the political-economy dimension of the project;
- the overall understanding of "the global" as it emerges from the mapping project: avoid the ambiguity of using "global" to indicate "regional" or other levels of policy intervention. The project framework and platform do assume a multi-level approach to policy analysis, which needs to be carefully articulated as we proceed;
- include "policy from below" (through the activities of social movement media or invisible media): strengthen focus on civil society organizations and groups, and specific topics, such as alternative or community media;

b) Relevance of GMP mapping

- users and audience: will the mapping platform provide information in unintended ways, for example to media giants and military agencies? The project team aims at developing a tool that fosters more

transparent and inclusive participation in policy processes and offers relevant knowledge for that purpose;

- the risk of offering easily accessible data to surveillance policies and practices: here again the explicit choice for transparency is the best antidote;

c) Opportunities to cooperate

- several participants discussed their own work on policy analysis and mapping in relation to the GMP mapping project and provided important insights for improving the platform

B) GMP business meeting

The business meeting of the Working group focused on how to structure upcoming activities in order to come to the 2010 IAMCR in Braga (Portugal) with a fully functioning and already tested platform to be shown to and implemented by IAMCR members.

The discussion focused on three main aspects: a) communication channels to facilitate collective networking and cooperation among project participants as well as with broader interested audiences; b) sustainability and concrete challenges; c) timeline between Mexico and Braga.

a) As for **communication channels** it was agreed to make full usage of the tools already available (IAMCR working group web page, mapping project mailing list, skype connections, wiki spaces to elaborate documents and keep track of project evolution, including technical developments of the platform).

b) As for **challenges**, participants recognized the need to consolidate the multi-user concepts and work on the platform keeping in mind the needs of different users (including policy makers, researchers, advocates, lawyers...); furthermore various funding opportunities were discussed.

c) a third relevant topic was the idea of a **beta test for the platform**, inviting selected people with different expertise to use the platform, edit content, comment on the structure and functionalities. This beta test should precede a last revision of the platform before opening it up to public use for both inserting content and retrieving data. The beta test idea helped in defining a **time line and road map** for the project team and interested contributors, between autumn 2009 and summer 2010.

5. Next steps

The project team aims at finalizing the design and implementation of the platform during autumn 2009, to start with beta tests at different levels to which selected testers will be invited to collaborate (in this first stage on the editing side, to be followed by a second stage of testing, from the user side). To this end, we are currently:

- revising the grids for data collection in order to refine the structure of the RDB in the platform;
- preparing a tutorial on the database for invited testers, introducing the platform, its logic and functionalities, and useful Q&A. This will be a first version of a tutorial for future users (editors as well as "simple" users) to be made available on the platform;
- organizing the beta test phase for the project in autumn/winter 2009/10 (this will involve a group of 10-12 people with different competences - technical aspects, similar initiatives, specific content in media and communication policy – who will be invited to test the digital space, its conceptual structure, its functionalities before opening the platform to a broader audience and issue selected calls for cooperation);

Some of the theoretical challenges that accompany the evolution of this project will also be addressed: conceptualizing the global in the context of Global Media Policy; articulating mapping-as-methodology from a theoretical and empirical point of view; defining the nexus between data available and possible visualizations as a way to make sure that visualization techniques and tools to be built into the platform will respond to users' needs.

While working on the RDB and platform, developments will concern the visualization modes of the collected data: suggestions have already been made to provide options for visualizing social networks, issue networks, semantic maps, information flows. Mapping existing tools and contacting potential partners for cooperation are activities foreseen for the period September 2009 – February 2010.

Finally, the period September 2009 – May 2010 will also see the project team engaged in the preparation of a properly articulated proposal to move the GMP mapping from its pilot stage into a fully developed global project.