

Media policy silences

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Types of policy *silences*

- Highly technical and complex areas (eg spectrum, licensing)
- Issues lack political urgency
- Policies are sidelined (eg 2010 Digital Economy Act)
- Policies are developed in secret (impact of lobbying or ‘moguls’)

Policy hyperactivity

- Rush to improve broadband access
- Coalition government's 'Action Plans' on radio and local media
- 'Industrial activism' of previous government's Digital Economy Act
- Ofcom's near 500 consultations since 2003

Emphasis on silence and 'non-decisionmaking'

- Bachrach and Baratz on 'nondecision making'
- Steven Lukes: power 'is at its most effective when least observable'

Neoliberal policy

- Non-intervention still dominant
- James Murdoch and a ‘bonfire of controls’
- Jeremy Hunt: need for a media ‘Big Bang’
- Non-intervention remains the default position apart from when ‘market failure’ takes place

Silences

- Who decides what constitutes ‘failure’?
- Why is the size of the BBC a problem but the size of BSkyB is not?
- Who holds definitional power inside policy networks?

A new approach

- Identify the ‘dominant values and political myths, rituals and institutions’ (Bachrach and Baratz)
- Jeremy Hunt: BBC ‘has to live on the same planet as everyone else’
- Silence refers to the options *not* considered, for example, prospect of levies to fund public service content

Conclusion

- Need to de-familiarise policy structures and assumptions
- Introduce alternative frames
- Pro-interventionist solutions are not unpopular and unattainable
- Challenge the 'barriers to the public airing of public conflicts' (Bachrach and Baratz)



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