

growth. In light of decreasing acceptance of climate change in both the political sphere and the general public (mostly due to a lack of legitimacy of the responsible organizations and institutions), a sufficient or even major change in consumption pattern is unlikely. Thus, the actual challenge is to find ways to improve the energy balance and yield, which can to some extent be passed on to the scientific community that is most knowledgeable in that field.

Another point is the issue of measurement. Most – if not all – economic policy decisions are based on measurements and statistics about economic performance. The framework of indicators and measurements that is currently in use was developed after the great recession in the last century. However, as Coyle describes, the economy has changed and shifted in various ways in recent years, so much that a new index of economic performance has to be developed in order to accurately assess the state of an economy not only with respect to monetary matters, but also the social state and the sustainability of the trends.

Similarly, Coyle claims that market failure is not due to inherent problems of the economic models, but rather because of a drastic divergence between the values that some markets – e.g. the financial markets – are supposed to be based on and which they do on fact act accordingly to.

Coyle’s “Manifesto of Enough” – the final chapter- Coyle presents a set of suggestions for an approach to solve or mit-

igate the crisis. Some may criticize these as too half-hearted, but radical changes are most of the time a very difficult endeavour, since the consequences of our behavior are in the future and even then may not be immediately obvious to the majority of citizens. For instance, a complete cease of paying pensions and welfare benefits may help reducing the budget deficit in the short term, would however not be accepted by the general public and even if, it would in no way tackle the root cause of the unsustainability of pensions schemes. In that respect, I agree with the majority of suggestions as they are aimed at the underlying reasons for failures of government or markets. Unfortunately, the proposed measures to take do not incorporate the concept of an *economy of enough* as much as could be expected from the overall setting.

The book reads, despite the worrying information, not at all alarmist and has a rather rational tone. That coupled with the wide range of information makes the book well worth reading in order to get a broad, reasonably detailed idea of the problems we face globally. Of course, a knowledgeable reader who is engaged in that subject area anyway is unlikely to gain a lot from this book, although some ideas Coyle points out are worthy of further discussion.

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Public Policy and Mass Media: The Interplay of Mass Communication and Political Decision Making

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Book review of *Sigrid Koch-Baumgarten and Katrin Vlomer* (Eds.) (2010). *Public Policy and Mass Media: The Interplay of Mass Communication and Political Decision Making*. Routledge.

“Do the media govern?” – This question, raised in previous scholarly work, seems to be a great concern among political actors, who commonly claim that media influence has increased and effectively turned into a problem as a result of round-the-clock pressure from the press. Sigrid Koch-Baumgarten and Katrin Vlomer, editors of *Public policy and mass media: the interplay of mass communication and political decision making*, point out that the subject has so far received little attention from researchers. The book gathers contributions on a wide range of topics and attempts to advance in filling this research gap by exploring whether, to what extent and under what circumstances the media affect public policy.

From the theoretical perspective, one of the linkages discussed by the authors is the indirect effect media may have on

policy-making through its ability to influence public opinion. It is argued that the impact of the media on public opinion is of crucial importance for political actors because of its potential electoral consequences and changes in the political environment as a whole. For the same reasons, however, policy-makers can certainly profit from influencing the media in an attempt to gauge support for their own agenda.

As a consequence of these two general mechanisms relating media and politics, research has been so far dominated by a dichotomy between the agenda-setting thesis (“the media tells politicians what to think about”) and the indexing thesis (“politicians tell the media what to write about”). The authors aim at contributing to a different, more complex framework of analysis that takes into consideration the nuances of this relationship.

The book draws an analytical distinction regarding the influence of the media on two dimensions of policy-making: the policy debate and the policy institutions. The former is strongly associated with how policy issues are defined and

interpreted. The starting hypothesis of the book is that the media exercise a more direct influence on this dimension; great attention is given to the role of framing and information processing. The policy institutions, on the other hand, refer to the structural setting of policy-making, especially the actors involved. It is expected that the media may exercise indirect influence on this aspect by integrating new stakeholders to the debate and thereby helping open up the policy arena to a wider range of actors.

Each chapter contributes with an empirical analysis of media reporting and documents from political institutions, in order to characterize the degree of media influence over policy-making in different contexts. The topics which the book covers are multifarious – they range from explorative analysis on how party manifestos of winning and losing parties are affected by media coverage in Belgium to more theoretical reflections on media influence's on gender and anti-discrimination policies in Germany. The findings of the book reveal that the media's influence varies according to the specific nature of different policy fields and also to structural conditions of the policy process, from which different patterns of influence can be observed in different political systems. According to the authors especially innovative and controversial policy fields are subject to media influence; additionally, the number of actors involved and the level of dissent among them is a powerful determinant of media intervention in the debate.

The book succeeds in showing that media's influence has changed over time and may take different routes. It also provides clear support to the claims that the relationship between media and politics is neither unidirectional nor straightforward, due to a fundamental mismatch between how media and policy-making operate. In this sense, the authors get their message across in terms of the inherent complexities of the subject. However, although they claim to effectively move beyond the traditional analytical dichotomy, it is not substantially challenged and the original theoretical categories are

applied. The evidence in the book supports both the agenda-setting and the indexing theses, only to distinguish some of the circumstances in which each of them is more prominent.

The basis mechanism for the agenda-setting thesis is fully acknowledged in the conclusion in a discussion of how the media undeniably portrays a “social construction of reality”, through the selection of events that are reported and how they are framed to fit its logic of personalization and sensationalization of issues. Therefore, the media does influence the public's perception of political issues by partly setting the lenses through which they are seen. This discursive power is what gives the media such strong potential influence on policy making. On the other hand, some situations are identified in which the media functions as a mere amplifier of how political actors frame and transmit certain issues to the public. One example is media reporting on the Iraq war in the United States, in which the story line defined by the government was not challenged.

Altogether, it seems that the initial question of the book – **whether and to what extent political decision-makers adopt media's constructions of reality in their own perceptions and evaluation** – remains open. The book cannot reject that political professionals might be immunized against media influence due to their access to numerous alternative sources of information. Therefore, it cannot disprove that the political intervention on part of journalists might as well only be peripheral. Media is a source of information and power and the book showed the growing power of media in public policy, but this power and influence is also limited and confined. However, at the same time the book raises important questions for future research agenda and contributes with perspectives for empirical research. It is also an interesting initial literature on current issues and debates in the realm of political communication.

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Mehr Bürgerbeteiligung wagen. Wege zur Vitalisierung der Demokratie

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Rezension von *Beck, Kurt/Ziekow, Jan* (Hrsg.) (2011). **Mehr Bürgerbeteiligung wagen. Wege zur Vitalisierung der Demokratie**. Wiesbaden: VS-Verlag.

Nach den Auseinandersetzungen um Stuttgart 21 hat sich ein breiter gesellschaftspolitischer Konsens herausgebildet. Spitzenpolitiker aller Parteien kündigen an, in Zukunft für mehr Bürgerbeteiligung sorgen zu wollen, und auch außerhalb der Parlamente herrscht seltene Einigkeit. Vom Bund für

Umwelt und Naturschutz bis hin zum Bundesverband der Deutschen Industrie – überall lautet der Tenor: Die Bürger müssen frühzeitiger und umfassender bei so großen politischen Entscheidungen einbezogen werden. Doch ob sich aus diesen Appellen eine tragfähige Reformpolitik entwickeln wird, ist derzeit noch ungewiss.

Vor diesem Hintergrund erscheint der von Kurt Beck und Jan Ziekow herausgegebene Sammelband hochaktuell. Die