

Media mergers and regulatory complexity

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Context

- Economic recession
- Convergence
- Consolidation
- Driving new business models

Policy context

- Gradual loosening of ownership restrictions
- Procedurally/legally complex
- Communications review
- Competition policy review

Aims of ownership rules - Baker

- Democratic distribution of ownership
- Democratic safeguards
- Ownership and quality
 - This not factor on its own

Democratic distribution of ownership

- Media is a different industry - shapes peoples' opinions
- Functioning democracy needs marketplace of ideas
- Must therefore have diverse ownership to get diverse ideas

Democratic distribution 2

- Ownership is only a proxy for diversity
- Voice through public sector broadcasting
 - BBC, Channel 4
- Content rules provide balance in news
- New media provide diversity in opinion

Democratic safeguards

- Avoids danger of demagogic power
- Provide check on functioning of government/the powerful
- Greater dispersal means more difficult to corrupt
- Concentration creates conflict of interest problems

Are rules fit for purpose?

- Complicated and inconsistent
 - Newspapers versus media
- Is everything caught?
 - Newscorp vs Northern & Shell
 - Role of ministers
- Are relevant issues omitted?
 - Effect on production of news
 - Market developments as opposed to mergers

Institutional arrangements

- 5-6 at UK level
- 2 tests
 - Plurality and SLC
- Time consuming - once in the net...
- Openness?
 - Arguably the issues are ventilated

Going forward

- Should this be done simply on SLC?
 - This would simplify institutional structure
- Effect of various reviews
 - Is this an area where it would be better to remove the politicians?