certainly hope that he will tackle at least some of these additional aspects in the near future.

Hernan Galperin, *New Television, Old Politics: The Transition to Digital TV in the United States and Great Britain*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. xv + 311 pp. ISBN 0-521-82399-4. US$80 (hbk)

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No social or economic theory survives intact when it receives excessive credibility from policymakers. It is rarely theorists who translate their own insights into rules for policy formation, but policymakers who do it for them. Theorists of the stature of Karl Marx and John Maynard Keynes feared the ability of political powers to codify their ideas, and produce hegemonic frameworks devoid of flexibility, uncertainty or contingency. Marx's famous declaration that he was 'not a Marxist' or Keynes's phrase that 'in the end, we are all dead' were attempts to apologise in advance, should their theories be converted into all-encompassing, ahistorical abstractions.

Policymakers need their hegemonic social frameworks. They provide comfort and direction to legislators, but they also enable them to hide their decision-making behind seemingly apolitical social sciences. Contingency, institutions and political will come to appear parts of the system, rather than creators of the system or potential critiques of it. Where this happens, the theorist must then mobilize contingency to illuminate cracks in the alleged system. The Frankfurt School of the 1930s saw aesthetics as the way to desystematize Marxism, while the Post-Keynesians of the 1990s used the influence of Wittgenstein on the young Keynes as a rebuke to the neo-classical systematizing of their New Keynesian rivals. The true heir to a social theory unsettles it in order to save it.

Hernan Galperin's book performs a similar service for the overarching narrative of the 'information society'. Together with its associated narratives of 'globalization' and 'the knowledge economy', the information society is an explanatory paradigm that is now orthodoxy in the English-speaking world, three decades after Daniel Bell's *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* first set out to formulate it. It has its grand theorists in Saskia Sassen and Manuel Castells, plus its political bridgeheads in figures such as Robert Reich and Anthony

Giddens, and think-tanks such as the Progressive Policy Institute in Washington and Demos in London.

Galperin places his approach within the tradition of new institutionalism. He explains that his 'basic theoretical assumption is that policy choices can be explicated by tracing back the nature of the policy formation and the set of institutional constraints within which they emerge. Public policies do not emerge ex nihilo' (p. 18). The narrative of the information society has never had a problem acknowledging the singularity of place, attributing competitive advantage to key cities and regional clusters. Nor has it particularly understated the singularity of individuals, albeit in the form of the entrepreneur. But specific policy institutions and traditions receive short shrift in discourses of post-industrial society. Galperin's analysis seeks partly to address this oversight.

Galperin's enquiry into the transition to digital television in the US and the UK uncovers what he believes to be a paradox. This is that:

> [A]t the same time long-established industry rules were being relaxed, critical decisions about digital TV standards, the timing for the introduction of equipment and services, and the allocation of radio spectrum, to mention a few examples, emerged from a political rather than a market-driven process. (p. 26)

The presumption that the technological and economic mechanisms of globalization require a scaling back of regulatory intervention is revealed as fundamentally flawed – at least in this context. According to Galperin, the causes of regulatory intervention in the digital television market must be sought within specific national broadcasting traditions.

Three political–economic forces underpin greater government intervention in this context, according to Galperin. First, fears for industrial competitiveness – elicited principally by the decline of American and, to a lesser extent, European consumer electronics industries – encouraged governments to stimulate uptake of digital TV, as a basis for national economic advantage. Second, the rhetoric of the 'information revolution' led the Clinton and Blair governments to view digital infrastructure as a national priority in itself, even if investment did not always match the enthusiasm. Third, digital television offered an obvious way of overcoming persistent spectrum limitations, exacerbated by the growth in mobile phones.

This much was true on both sides of the Atlantic. But Galperin's core aim is to indicate national difference, not similarity. The bulk of his book is given to a close examination of the unique historical and constitutional forces that shaped the transition in the two countries studied. The UK has achieved a swift transition that combines high market competitiveness with both a defence and a cooption of deeply embedded vested interests, notably the BBC's. Galperin links this to a greater concentration of government executive power in the UK, which makes competition far easier to engineer. The US, by contrast, has had

to deal with not only a greater separation of powers that makes effective reregulation very difficult, but a fragmented broadcasting sector, rooted in a large number of relatively autonomous local agencies. As a consequence, its transition to digital television has barely been governed at all, and competition and uptake have been low.

With immaculate detail, Galperin's book succeeds in demonstrating that 'governments have considerable autonomy to shape the transition in consonance with domestic policy agendas and protect established arrangements in the communications sector' (p. 284). This is a self-conscious rebuke to the information society ideologues who preach the demise of state sovereignty. After all, this is not simply the state propping up a few fading industries with a last desperate attempt at industrial policy, but evidence of the state determining how swiftly (if at all) nations move forward to a digital era that is often alleged to be their destiny. Policy institutions and traditions are forgotten sociological forces in this debate, partly because they themselves have embraced the inevitabilist social narratives that exclude them.

It is tempting to extrapolate Galperin's analysis and to attribute government policy-making institutions with a new-found primacy in what constitutes the 'information society'. But this would be to underestimate the degree of historical contingency that Galperin illuminates in his account. After all, the nation-state may survive as a useful mechanism for collective control over broadcasting, but this is no reason to believe that the same is true in other areas of telecommunication. Combating an inevitablist perception of digital technology requires similar analysis of the policies of cities, business parks, regions, continents and intergovernmental bodies.