

**Hopeton S. Dunn (ed.)**

*Ringtones of Opportunity: Policy, Technology and Access in Caribbean Communications*. Kingston: Ian Randle, 2012. xx + 300 pp. (Paper US\$ 29.95)

From telecenters, “One Laptop Per Child,” and “WiMAX” to e-learning and “Free and Open Source Software” movements, Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) represent key tools in global and national efforts to reduce poverty and promote sustainable development. Within this context, ICT policies and regulations play a pivotal role in creating the conditions and frameworks for the successful integration of ICTs within a variety of national and regional contexts. *Ringtones of Opportunity* explores the way policy practitioners are grappling with the development of Caribbean-relevant frameworks across a range of industries.

Highlighting the dynamic pace of ICT change and challenges of keeping up to date with the latest platforms, services, and innovations, Hopeton Dunn begins with an excellent overview of key policies over the past decade. The first of the volume’s three main sections, “Strategic Issues,” then focuses on trends with respect to regulatory frameworks and policy making across the region, including discussions of broadband access. The second section, “ICT Application and Society,” addresses the potential of different applications and programs, ranging from literacy programs, the use of cybercenters for education and training in Jamaica, the integration of mobile phones in the work of fisherfolk in Trinidad and Tobago and farmers in Jamaica, the emergence of telework across Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, and Jamaica, and the use of the internet by Civil Society Organizations. The final section, “Legal and Environmental Issues,” analyzes interconnection agreements, intellectual property, cybercrimes, and the role of ICTs in contributing to climate change.

The chapter by Dunn, Michael Thomas, and Allison Brown is particularly seminal in setting an agenda for twenty-first-century policymaking. Beginning with a review of the history of ICT policy making in the Caribbean, they introduce policy as a dynamic, complex, and “living” endeavor that reflects the ways in which human-centered policymaking occurs in practice. Many of the subsequent contributions, especially those dealing with applications and legal frameworks (e.g., Arlene Bailey’s chapter on community access and Dianne Daley and Nicole Foga’s call for Intellectual Property Rights reform), deftly reinforce the intricacies of ICT-driven policies and initiatives. Yet, as in many edited volumes, a few chapters fit less neatly into the broader focus, most notably Pieter Fourie’s on new paradigms in media and communication research; while valuable for its introduction of a critical framework and the latest scholarship, it might better have been integrated into the introduction, situating the vol-

ume and parsing some of the parallels and distinctions between ICT policies across Latin America and the Caribbean, Small Island Developing States, and the global South.

One of the strengths of the volume is its collective ability to address the striking changes in the ICT environment and the uses of ICTs such as mobile phones across the region. However, the depiction of the region is often uneven. While the overview and comparative chapters in the first section integrate statistics from countries such as Cuba and Suriname, most of the case studies remain focused on the Anglophone Caribbean. This is partly a product of the state of coordinated policy ventures in the Caribbean as well as the base of the consortium of researchers at the University of the West Indies. However, the fine-grained and historically-contextualized analyses of legal and regulatory frameworks stand as a pivotal reminder of the complexity of the region. Given the national focus of many of the articles on former British colonies and the acknowledgement that “ICT policy in the Caribbean has therefore evolved from its colonial roots” (p. 71), it would be fascinating to explore other countries with different legal legacies as well as countries such as the British Virgin Islands and Caymans that have long, established histories of regulatory policies tied to financial services. The growth of platforms and services such as mobile money in Haiti after the earthquake of January 2010 as well as Geographic Information Systems used by local and transnational NGOs may also provide interesting examples of some of the innovative policy practices and their environment. Finally, greater focus on creative industries such as music or films that are widespread and utilize digital formats may also deepen and nuance discussions around intellectual property and cybercrimes.

*Ringtones of Opportunity* will be useful to scholars interested in ICT4D, ICTs and development, ICT policy and regulation, and the changing media and communication environment in the region. While greater diversity of case studies and examples across the Caribbean would have been welcome, the volume takes significant strides in clarifying the importance of understanding the needs and aspirations of the Caribbean, while simultaneously illustrating the success of Dunn’s efforts to address the “dearth of credible home grown research work to influence policy decision making” (p. 79). Moreover, through attention to practices and contexts, the contributors provide fresh perspectives on policy and effectively challenge many of the monolithic and linear narratives about development. *Ringtones of Opportunity* does an excellent job of representing “the state of the field” of ICT policy and development in the Caribbean and beyond.

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