

have had to invent national publics, and, in ways that seem to be becoming ever more complex, they will continue to do so.

So, it is one thing to talk about the public being 'at risk' in the advanced sectors of European life. It is worth stressing, though, that in many parts of Europe, the problem is how to create the elements of a public culture in the first place. To have a public that can actually be put at risk.

Starting afresh

During a recent trip to the Balkans, the most elementary dimensions of media freedom and responsibility were thrown into relief.

- The national broadcaster had not yet made the transition from a state system to a public service system. Its finances were in crisis because of widespread unwillingness to pay the licence fee, to a considerable extent due to poverty.
- There was no code or practice of professional autonomy to mediate the relations of broadcast journalists with the political world.
- For years there had been no media law, nor any other framework of regulation. This was being painfully negotiated in parliament.
- Political influence was either present everywhere or perceived to be ubiquitous, and regulatory structures were only just emerging. The state wanted to create a credible regulatory body that would act as a fair dealer and was looking at models from abroad.
- The society was ethnically and linguistically divided, and the conception of citizenship, and therefore of a common public, was extremely fragile.
- There was no assured factual basis for decision-making. There were no reliable audience figures for radio and television or readership figures for newspapers or other printed media. Advertising space and time was being sold not on economic criteria but by guesswork or by political preference. Nobody knew exactly how many media there were not, in some key cases, how they were financed.

These are only some of the more striking features that can be singled out. What they underline is how the creation of a public depends on a very wide range of conditions, only some of which are internal to the media themselves.

And that is simply another way of reminding ourselves that any discussion of the public at risk, or of freedom and responsibility in broadcasting, rapidly pushes us into talking about our societies as a whole. And it also takes us back to an insight that has been lost with the onrush of neo-liberal thinking. Namely, that in many respects you can read the social cohesion of a society — or the lack of it — through the practice and ideals of contemporary public service broadcasting. It is time to reassert this proposition and to draw the relevant political conclusions.

Note

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Media and democracy in the global order

Tore Slaatta

David Held, *Democracy and the Global Order*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995.

'A new fluidity in international affairs heralds the possibility of a new fluidity in political thought . . .', says David Held in the preface of his book on democracy in the global order. As often is the case when an original and important work presents elaborated thoughts on pressing problems, one wonders why no one has done it before. Writing and research on globalization and internationalization have been around for some time, so it seems urgent for political theorists to catch up with the problematics (Dunn, 1993).

This discussion on David Held's book will focus on how his presentation on the challenges for democratic theory in the global order links to an understanding of the democratic role of the media. The major argument will be that although Held connects globalization and internationalization to changes in communication and media technology, he does not give much attention to the democratic role of the media, either in his historical account of the emergence of the nation-state, or in his outline of democratic theory in the global order. Thus, his analysis could be complemented on these issues to provide a better understanding of (1) the way the media are connected to nation-state democracy and (2) how questions about democracy in the global order should be put before the media. Let me first discuss how Held sees media and communication as part of globalization processes, creating new imperatives for democratic theory.

Communication, media and new imperatives for democratic theory

Held sets out by examining the shortcomings of different models of democracy, drawing on his earlier studies and discussions (Held, 1987, 1993) presenting the republican, the liberal democratic and the one-party model and discussing their conditions of application to the present discussion. It is the liberal representative democracy model that is Held's major concern, but the models are used to highlight different aspects of ideas and forms of democratic theory. From the republican model is taken the idea of the active citizen. From the one-party model is taken the concern with social inequality and class interests. Held stresses the need for democratic theory to go beyond these models and acknowledge the importance of a number of fundamental liberal and liberal democratic tenets. The

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shortcomings of the models become even more evident when the processes of globalization are taken into account. The problems of democracy now extend beyond state borders and have to be dealt with accordingly.

The conventional thinking of democracy as a particular theory for the nation-state is criticized because it takes for granted that decision-makers in modern democracies are accountable only to the citizen-voters of the nation-states. According to Held, there are two problems with this view. First, '(t)he very process of governance can escape the reach of the nation state'. Second, 'there are major questions to be put about the coherence, viability and accountability of national decision-making entities themselves' (p. 17). In turn, these arguments raise questions central to ideas of democratic thought and practice, such as that of consent and the principle of majority vote, the question of who should be the relevant constituencies, and to whom decision-makers should be accountable. It thus becomes necessary to enquire into the conditions of enactment of different principles and procedures in global politics, as well as their character and dynamics and impact on democratic arrangements at various levels.

But what exactly is new about the situation? Some have claimed that there is nothing new in the idea that nation-states are globally interconnected (Miami, 1993). And as theories of world systems and world economy have long pointed out, domestic and international politics are interwoven throughout the modern era. But others have claimed that political thought today faces a wholly novel set of political circumstances, closer to that of the medieval era than that of modernity (Bull, 1977). Between these two views, Held takes the middle ground, agreeing that a new 'international order' has developed through dense networks of regional and global economic relations which stretch beyond the control of any single state and:

... extensive webs of transnational relations and instantaneous electronic communication over which particular states have limited influence; a vast array of international regimes and organisations which can limit the scope for action of the most powerful states. (p. 20)

Held sees globalization as 'a homogenising force eroding political difference and the capacity of nation states to act independently in the articulation and pursuit of domestic and international policy objectives' (p. 92). But, against those who herald the end of the state, Held argues that they fail to recognize the enduring capacity of state apparatus to shape the direction of domestic and international politics. Globalization is seen as a process reaching back to the earliest stages of the formation of the modern state which continues to shape and reshape politics, economics and social life. Hence, Held argues that nation-state sovereignty is not going away, but it becomes important to analyse how far the 'effectiveness and viability of the sovereign, territorially bounded nation-state [is] ... in question' (p. 98).

Still, it soon becomes clear that communication networks and new media play a crucial role in providing Held with a 'turning point'. To counter expected criticism regarding the importance of communication networks in premodern societies, Held argues that although ancient empires could link distant populations together by maintaining communication networks, they were heavily dependent on face-to-face communication. By contrast, contemporary developments in the international order now link people, communities and societies in highly complex ways and can, 'given the nature of modern communications, virtually annihilate distance and territorial boundaries as barriers to socio-economic activity' (p. 20).

Here, Held is drawing on Giddens's concept of 'action at distance' (Giddens, 1990) as a major form of globalization. This particular form can be observed in two distinct phenomena: first, in the way that political, economic and social activity are becoming world-wide in scope. Second, through the observation of how different levels of interaction and interconnectedness within and between states has intensified. Thus, what is new about the modern global system is particularly:

... the stretching of social relations in and through new dimensions of activity --- technological, organisational, administrative and legal, among others --- and the chronic intensification of patterns of interconnectedness mediated by such phenomena as modern communications networks and new information technology. (p. 21)

Later into Held's analysis, five 'external disjunctures' are presented, the three first as disjunctures within the *global order I* (Chapter 5), the two last as part of the *global order II* (Chapter 6). Held gives few theoretical clues to guide our interpretation of this separation. On the one hand Held seems to suggest two different global orders, the first remaining in the inter-state system of the modern nation-state, the second as drifting towards something else. On the other hand he seems to be stressing lines of continuity. Thus, the disjunctures must be interpreted as indicating a turning point between the effect of the various disjunctures on political change from modernity to late modernity, although Held seems to be avoiding discussions on the periodization of modernity. Disjunctures are said to be operating between the idea of the sovereign state and global politics. They 'indicate the different ways in which globalisation can be said to constitute constraints or limits on political agency in a number of key domains; and to what extent the possibility of a democratic polity has been transformed and altered' (p. 99).

Most important is the disjuncture concerning national identity and globalization of culture. Here, Held somewhat makes up for his earlier disregard of communication networks and new media technology. Not only are they said to be important in producing effects on identity formations and cultural reflexivity by mediating the particularities of place and individuality. The new communication systems are at the same time seen as a vehicle for the processes of change documented in the other disjunctures. Held focuses on the impact of communication networks on culture, arguing that communication networks 'extended the range and scope of individual reflexivity and ... contributed to the creation of collective pools of information --- in the spheres of economics, culture and politics --- upon which people could draw despite being spatially separated from one another' (p. 122).

Following the arguments of Meyrowitz (1985) and Giddens (1990), Held notes how new communication systems are changing the relevance of geopolitical boundaries, opening up a possibility for new social and cultural experiences among individuals and groups. Although national cultures and identities are seen as

... deeply rooted in ethno-histories, ... the growth of global communications, above all of television, video and film, gives people new ways of 'seeing and participating' in global developments. In principle this opens up the possibility of new mechanisms of identification. (p. 124)

Held is giving the media an important role through its capacity to distribute common 'pools of memories' to their audiences. The argument echoes that of Benedict Anderson and his theory of print capitalism as first establishing the conditions for coordination across time and space within specific territories and communities. The effect of the media is here referred to as their technical ability to

mediate across distance in a shorter and shorter time. Thus, it is first and foremost the increasing speed and capacity of the electronic media that provide Held's model with a 'turning point'. It is on this basis that Held argues that coordination now takes place across the traditional boundaries of the nation-state and backs up this claim with observations of a burgeoning international civil society, which although in its early formation, is taken as a sign of a growing global political orientation. But, the opposite observation is also acknowledged: new communication systems might generate an increasing awareness of difference in 'the other', which by no means guarantees intersubjective agreements. Held is eager to stress the ambiguous outcomes they might wash up on the shores of the existing national cultures. According to Held, the new media are probably less capable of going beyond language borders and existing pools of memories than his theoretical discussion leads him to argue.

Thus the effects of new media technology on the emerging political order in Europe have to be understood and analysed at the various levels of the political order. In my view, Held here draws the correct conclusion against the post-modernist idea of a global technopolis and the coming of a new media age with a possibility to transform political identities and public spheres at a global level (see for instance Poster, 1992, 1995; Keane, 1995). Although one should not downplay the role that new media technologies might have in changing social communication patterns in the longer perspective, I think it is reasonable to remain somewhat sceptical towards predictions of the emergence of new political orders on the pure basis of technological determinism (Webster, 1995; Schlesinger, 1997: 387). New media will not make the old media disappear, like for instance the news media. But they will probably have an impact on their production technology, their distribution and potential markets and thereby also their contents, but these impacts need to be analysed empirically. The impact of new media on collective identity formation will in the foreseeable future remain modest, and will probably first of all make existing organizations and institutions, like national media, parties and civil society groups, become more efficiently able to network within the existing boundaries of the nation-states. But this conclusion is not easily derived from Held's own discussion.

On the one hand, Held relies heavily on the potentials of communication networks and new media to explain the emergence of a new international order. On the other, he stresses the ambiguous outcomes they might wash up on the shores of the existing national cultures and political systems. In my view, this ambiguity necessitates a better discussion of the link between media and the political orders. I will argue on the basis of the next section, that since Held does not analyse the role of communication technologies and social communication practices in the historical developments of the political orders, the significance and the role of media and communication in creating the 'turning point' are left somewhat unexplained.

Media, democracy and the formation of the nation-state

In the historical section Held sets out to analyse the idea of nation-state sovereignty and the embedded idea of the inter-state system. Held first gives an account of the emergence of the idea of a sovereign state that appeared in late medieval and Renaissance Europe. Held draws heavily on Skinner's presentations of the Political thought of this formative period in European political history (Skinner, 1978). The emergence of the modern state signalled a 'new discursive terrain, embodying claims to sovereignty, independence, representativeness and legitimacy' (p. 37). But early theories and claims of political accountability and legitimacy remained incoherent and left basic questions of both state and popular sovereignty unsettled.

To Held, it is this formative moment in European history, when the notion of sovereignty was uncoupled from the fundamentalist idea of absolutist, divine rule, that opens up the field of modern political thought on the nation-state and democracy. It is through this initial discourse that the modern state later becomes 'a site in which competing collectivities and groups sought to struggle over rule systems and scarce resources' (p. 46).

Held thus already has given strong emphasis to discourse, but so far without acknowledging the role of the media and communication technology in which discourses take place. This is surprising, since Skinner's account of the period depends methodologically on the increasing flow of private letters and early printed books on the issue of sovereignty that so remarkably shows the ideas of the period coming into being. As will be discussed later, the remarkable role of books and pamphlets in the development of political thought is important, and obviously becomes even more important when the modern technique of print is invented with the Gutenberg press (Eisenstein, 1979; Anderson, 1983; Thompson, 1995). In Held's account of the emergence of the nation-state system, these processes are hardly mentioned, although there is no doubt that many of the arguments and assumptions that Held makes about the crucial factors in the coming of the nation-state rest upon an understanding of media and communication technologies and their connection to the political order.

Held's account mainly follows the Weberian tradition of sociological history that emphasizes the role of war and the mobilizing of military power, together with the logics and practices inherent in a capitalist economy discussed by scholars such as Michael Mann, Charles Tilly and Perry Anderson. But Held is not trying to give a full account of the development of the nation-state. Rather, the theme he concentrates on is the historical features *within* the nation-state that became important for democracy to develop *within it*. Thus, I will argue, he loses track of how the media work as an enabling technology to construct the political space, mediating between the inside and the outside.

Held briefly comments upon nationalism and national identity as part of the problematics, supporting the idea that nationalism was mainly constructed as a means of control of (1) inclusion/exclusion of membership and (2) legitimization of state actions. Held sees the construction of national identity as being 'part of an attempt to bind people together within the framework of a delimited territory in order to gain or enhance state power' (p. 58). The instrumental role of national identity that Held outlines at this point probably adds to the general understatement of the role of communication and media technologies in the historical understanding of the emergence of the nation-state. For instance, 'print capitalism' is a crucial factor in Benedict Anderson's explanation of the 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1983) and the role of the media and the formation of collective identity has been particularly addressed by Schlesinger (1991, 1995; Slaatta, 1996). Held also seems to deliberately shy away from the use of the notion of the 'public sphere', although embracing Habermas's normative theory on universal pragmatism and communicative actions (Habermas, 1984, 1987). In Held's account, it is the struggle between civil society and the state that produces the dynamics towards the entrenchment of democracy within the nation-state. But is he not disregarding the very institution, the very site where these struggles were taking place? In Habermas's (1989) account, the emergence of liberal democracy is linked to that of the creation of the public sphere, thus opening up a focus 'upon the indissoluble link between the institutions and practices of mass public communication and the institutions and practices of democratic politics' (Garblum, 1992: 360). Since Held puts much emphasis on the role of the media as an agent of change, I believe his

account would be strengthened by a more developed account of the role of the media in creating the national public sphere.

Reconstructing democratic theory

The 'principle of autonomy' is the core of Held's democratic project, expressing two basic ideas: '[t]he idea that people should be self-determining and the idea that democratic government must be limited government' (p. 147). Following Rawls, Held argues that the rationale of the principle is 'political' in the sense that it can be derived from "intuitive ideas" that are embedded in public political culture in an "overlapping consensus" that includes opposing philosophical, moral and religious doctrines' (p. 148). Hence, the principle is struggling away from fundamentalism, although it admittedly is embedded within liberal democratic theory.

To briefly sum up, the principle of autonomy should be thought of as a principle of political legitimacy. For the principle to be fulfilled, several terms must obtain. First, all persons should enjoy a common political structure of political action. Second, rights must be thought of as 'creating an equality of status with respect to the basic institutions of a community: that is, they are an entitlement to claim and be claimed upon' (p. 154). Third, the particular rights that empower the principle of autonomy must be seen as a foundation and a constraint upon public life -- the constitutive basis of what Held calls 'democratic public law'. Fourth, citizens must be able to participate in a process of deliberation, open to all on a free and equal basis. Rights should protect against the risk of autonomous self-determination at the expense of others. Hence, there is an entitlement to autonomy within the constraints of others. Hence, there is an entitlement to autonomy within the constraints of community, which Held labels 'democratic autonomy'. Held emphasizes the need for delimitation of political action and a self-binding mechanism of democratic institutions. 'In order for democracies to be sustained, the powers of decision-makers, of citizens and representatives alike, must be constrained' (p. 157). Hence, there is no room for anarchy or politics without a state. It is impossible for Held's account of the principle of autonomy to dispose of the state as an 'artificial person' in the form of a *'rechstaat'*; the democratic legal state. Hence, there is a form of statism embedded in his thinking, which makes it impossible also to let go of the principle of sovereignty.

If sovereignty is the rightful capacity to take political decisions and to enact the law within a given community with some degree of finality, it must be entrenched in certain rules and institutions from which it cannot free itself. (p. 157)

For Held, there is no romanticism about a community without a state, or a polity without politics. But it then becomes a question whether he at the same time has taken the nation-state back as the major guarantee for autonomy and the proper place for democracy. The concept of sovereignty seems itself to be inextricably tied to the theory of the nation-state (Bartelson, 1995; Der Derian, 1995).

To avoid this fallacy, the analytical tools for the global order of democracy are laid out through a presentation of seven 'sites of power'. The argument is made against liberalism that it tends to overemphasize the governmental site of electoral and representative politics, parallel to a fallacy of the Marxist tradition that overemphasizes the site of the market and economic powers of ownership. In the global order, democracy has to be rethought against the analysis of several sites of power, catching up with the fragmentation and diverse forms of power that are exercised in various spheres and domains. The seven sites of power that Held addresses are (1) the body, (2) welfare, (3) culture, (4) civic associations, (5) the

economy, (6) the organization of violence and (7) the sphere of regulatory and legal institutions (the state). Held sets out to define the 'nautonomies' in each of these sites, referring to the 'asymmetrical production and distribution of life chances which limit and erode the possibility of political participation' (p. 171; emphasis in original).

Again, I will exclusively discuss Held's presentation of the third site of power, that of 'culture', which most directly links to the democratic role of the media. Held is expanding his concept of culture; it here seems to take on a broader meaning than in the earlier discussion on communication, culture and identity. The site of culture is comparable with Habermas's notion of the public sphere, referring to:

... those realms of social activity where matters of public interest and identity can be discussed, where differences of opinion can be explored and where local custom and dogma can be examined (see Habermas 1989). These realms can be ordered formally through churches, the media, or the state's efforts at public relations, as well as informally through local meetings and interchanges. (p. 180)

Hence, although Held is avoiding reference to Habermas in the historical account, the idea of the public sphere is endorsed as an important site of power. Rather than using Habermas's notion, Held defines culture as a 'domain' where symbolic orders, norms, standards and types of discourses denote 'the organisation of concepts and categories of meaning which are essential to the mobilisation of a community' (p. 180). The major 'autonomy' occurring in this domain is related to access to the production and distribution of interpretive schemes and practices, as well as rhetorical abilities and skills.

Where systems of signification or meaning are mobilised to sustain asymmetrical power relations in the interest of dominant or hegemonic groups, distinctive forms of ideology can take root. Such circumstances are in marked contrast to a situation where, for example, each section of the population has access to, or has its own, organs of communication and is able, in principle, to participate in public deliberation and to criticise existing conventions and dogmas openly. (p. 181)

In the paragraph above, much seems to rest on what is meant by participating 'in principle'. But Held does not provide us with details on this matter. It is important for the understanding of 'nautonomies' that they are not operating only within one domain or site of power. Rather, they connect across different sites in complex and varied ways. Hence, it is obvious that the understanding of 'autonomy' in the cultural domain is closely linked to 'nautonomies' of access and hierarchy in the site of civic associations, as well as the market economy and the state. Thus, 'autonomy' is not a very exact analytical concept, but a flexible notion that captures various dysfunctional or contradictory mechanisms within various systems of social interaction. And Held does not venture on a detailed analysis of how the different 'nautonomies' in various sites of power interact or link to each other.

Democracy and the media in the cosmopolitan order

In Held's vision, the cosmopolitan community is located between the principles of federalism and confederalism, becoming something more than an agreement for cooperation and coordination among sovereign states, and something less than a federation that presupposes a common global culture, a common universe of discourse and a single form of global citizenship. The latter, according to Held,

would seem dangerously naive. States and national polities will not become redundant, but they 'would be "relocated" within, and articulated with an overarching global democratic law' (p. 233). The concept of sovereignty itself has to be redefined as 'an attribute of the basic democratic law, but it could be entrenched and drawn upon in diverse self-regulating associations, from states to cities and corporations' (p. 234; emphasis in original). But although sovereignty is acknowledged in a wide range of bodies and organizations, his model remains 'a state-centred or sovereignty-centred model of international politics' (p. 270).

In Held's vision of the cosmopolitan order, it becomes important to define appropriate levels of decision-making. To solve the puzzle, each level of governance must be based on the cosmopolitan democratic law, secure a common political structure for all individuals and hence, 'ensure the accountability of all related and interconnected power systems, from economics to politics' (p. 267). For this to function, Held believes that it is possible to derive agreements on what issues belong to different levels of governance. Hence, it should be possible to locate the different levels of governance with the right competence on the assigned issues. To guide policy issues to the different levels of governance, Held suggests the three 'texts of extensiveness, intensity and comparative efficiency' (p. 236) but does not give detailed instructions on who should be authorized to perform these tests, or in what kind of discourse the criteria for the tests should be discussed. Thus, they remain solutions that seem to reduce the nature of politics to technical problems of assigning issues to levels of governance. Two forms of criticism could be launched against this view. First, it misrepresents the way issues and agents are inseparable in political discourse. Issues become international or global after a long history of debate and criticism, fought by strong-minded individuals and oppositional civic associations. Issues are defined and constructed on the basis of differing interests, values and knowledge and are intentionally constructed and communicated on to various political agendas through strategically defined communication strategies, adapted to the culture of political communication and the media system that is best connected to the governance system. Second, Held seems to overlook the way various actors will have different interests in locating issues according to their range of power within a governance system, and the way others, for the exact opposite reasons, might want to bypass one level of governance to another (Keane, 1992).

Other, equally important requirements are needed for the cosmopolitan democracy to develop. Among them, Held suggests that new forms of communication should be brought under better democratic control. But most of Held's suggestions are of a general kind. In short, Held thinks that the UN Charter system has some potential, but is presently not an effective transnational legislative and executive, which is needed at regional and global levels. Held also gives credit to the attempts to establish regional forms of democratic governance, as for instance through the EU. Held suggests that other regions such as South America and Africa should also establish regional parliaments and governance structures as a step towards the full entrenchment of democracy on a global scale. Finally, Held suggests rather optimistically:

'Extensive use of referenda, and the establishment of the democratic accountability of international organisations, would involve citizens in issues which profoundly affect them but which — in the context of the current lacunae and fragmentation of international organisations — seem remote. (p. 273)

Held distinguishes his model from a world state or, taking into consideration the criticism from Hayek, among others, who claims that this will only lead to an

enormous bureaucracy and information overload on the citizens. But it seems that Held's model will also depend on effective means of communication that can establish communicative spaces for deliberation among citizens and representatives to take place at the various levels of governance. Held does not engage in this problematic, but it seems to be at the heart of his project. For although Held criticizes traditional liberalism for being too occupied with the governance system and the participation of citizens in election of representatives, his own suggestions for the cosmopolitan order go in the same direction. By suggesting mainly political institutions of representative bodies, cross-cutting referenda and accountable organizations, partly checked by elected expert committees, Held seems to give little weight to the need for the public to stay informed and engaged in public debate in public media about global issues. Thus, without thinking through how the media system could be restructured to facilitate a global democratic community, there is a danger that the democratic creed in the cosmopolitan order will be of an elitist kind.

We have to ask whether it is possible to envisage a system of public spheres or communicative spaces that can be linked to a complex system of governance. In particular, we must find out what need there is for an overarching public sphere that connects across states, organizations and nations — and in what communication network and media system this could best be brought about. And we need to discuss how these communicative spaces should be linked to each other and be regulated in terms of 'democratic control'. Here, it seems, Held's account needs to be complemented. Two questions are of particular interest: first, deducing from the normative vision of a cosmopolitan democracy, we must ask what it will take to produce a media system that can cope with the ideals of Held's vision. And, second, in a more empirical investigation we must analyse what obstacles would most probably and most immediately be observed if the cosmopolitan democratic good was put to the test in the present context of European media systems.

In an alternative account of how the media and communication networks link to the problematics of democracy, the notion of the public sphere could be seen as describing a most important political institution. By providing the major means for mediation of social knowledge in society, the public media and communication networks distinguish the national from the international, and construct and mediate between *the inside* and *the outside*, between *us* and *them*. Hence further investigations into the structure and mechanisms of the public sphere in the age of global politics is required.

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It would not be unreasonable to assume considerable similarities between these two books. Both titles suggest a similar object of discussion and similar focus — the audience. However, the many differences between them, both in perspective and approach, illustrate two main points. First, the diversity of ways in which the audience can be discussed, and, second, the relationship between empirical audience reception studies and the theoretical framework into which it is incorporated. The premise of reception research is audience activity, that viewers are not passive receivers of the media and thus cannot be usefully regarded as a homogeneous mass. The nature of that activity — of the interaction between viewer and text — is, however, subject to constant debate. Nevertheless, audience reception studies alert media and communications research to the heterogeneous character of the audience. Giving a voice to 'the audience' adds to the body of research into which the audience perspective is being incorporated, and contributes further to an understanding of audience-text interaction. Thus, *Trash Aesthetics: Popular Culture and its Audience* is

... committed to taking audiences and their pleasures seriously. Going beyond either castigating them for poor taste or worrying obsessively about the effects of popular culture, it asks instead what real, unruly, socially situated readers and viewers do with texts. Audiences are no longer envisaged as passive consumers but as active producers of popular culture. (p. 1)

The second book lays out a similar objective albeit from a much more empirical perspective, and in reaction to the quantitative approach of institutional ratings research:

... a purely quantitative ('number crunching') approach was somewhat limited and far too unidimensional. Even if such gross numbers that were regularly collated were in any sense accurate they would still not speak of the 'appreciation' of content, performance or genre, nor would they tell us anything about the 'how' of viewing. (p. 2)

The conception of the heterogeneous audience in the two books is very different. The edited book contains a collection of theoretical essays focusing on minority,