QUT Digital Repository:
http://eprints.qut.edu.au/

QUT

This is the accepted version of this journal article:

Flew, Terry (2009) The citizen's voice : Albert Hirschman's Exit, Voice and Loyalty and its contribution to media citizenship debates. *Media, Culture and Society*, *31*(6), pp. 977-994.

QUT

Flew, Terry (2009) The Citizen's Voice: Albert Hirschman's Exit, voice and loyalty and its contribution to media citizenship debates. *Media, Culture and Society*, *31*(6), pp. 977-994.

The citizen's voice: Albert Hirschman's *Exit, Voice and Loyalty* and its contribution to media citizenship debates

Terry Flew

QUEENSLAND UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, AUSTRALIA

Situating communications media in citizenship debates

Media theorists have long drawn links between communications and citizenship. From a historical perspective, Innis (1951), Chartier (1988), Anderson (1991), Schudson (1994) and Waisbord (2004) have drawn attention to the links between the rise of print and broadcast media as means of communication, and the formation and maintenance of nation-states and national identities, while Golding and Murdock (1989), Garnham (1990), Dahlgren and Sparks (1991) and Thompson (1991, 1995) have traced the contemporary interactions between systems of mass communication, media professions such as journalism, and representative democracy. Perhaps most famously, Jürgen Habermas's (1989) theory of the public sphere conceptualized the relationship between modern democracies, the rule of law and the means of communication, through the institutional structures, representational processes and practices of interaction and interpretation associated with the public sphere, by which the relationship of media to political deliberation and political will is constituted (Dahlgren, 1995, 2005). Gimmler describes the relationship between the public sphere and the formation of the political citizen in these terms:

> Since its Enlightenment beginnings, modern democratic theory has been preoccupied with the principle of publicity in the realm of law or the state, and with the participation of citizens in the process of discussion and decision-making. It is through the idea of the principle of publicity that the bourgeois individual is transformed into a genuine political actor, the citizen; and through the constitution of an

autonomous public sphere discussions over what is in the common interest are possible. The political subject … is more than simply the subject of individual rights … [but] is also the subject who attains a personal and collective identity as part of a complex of relationships with other individuals.… The public sphere, therefore, is an arena of political and social relations, a field where individual and collective identities both are expressed and become integrated. (2001: 22)

The growing interest in theories of citizenship among media and communications researchers has not, for the most part, been reciprocated by political theorists. It is a field in the social sciences where, as Nick Couldry has observed: 'media research remains quite marginal in academic hierarchies and reference points' (2006a: 11). There has been an implicit notion of citizenship incorporated in the development of media since its inception, particularly as it acquired a mass form with broadcasting and mass popular literacy in the 20th century, as seen in conceptions of the 'public trust' and 'public interest' in media policy (see e.g. Horwitz, 1989; Krasnow and Longley, 1978; Streeter, 1996), as well as in the rationales for public service broadcasting in terms of universal availability, public education and information provision to further democratic politics (Blumler, 1992; Garnham, 1990; Tracey, 1998). The explicit use of citizenship discourse became more pronounced in the 1980s and 1990s as a distinctive way of articulating public interest priorities, in light of a growing preference among policy-makers to understand media in economic terms and interpellate the user of media as a consumer choosing between goods and services in a marketplace (Cunningham, 1992; Curran, 1991; Golding and Murdock, 1989; Hesmondhalgh, 2007; Miller, 1993). Most recently, we find the consumer-citizen couplet enshrined in policy discourse, as seen in the Communication Act (2003) passed in the United Kingdom, while new possibilities for citizenship are identified in the development of the internet and interactive digital media (Coleman, 2005a, 2005b; Dahlgren, 2005; Gimmler, 2001), as well as with the 'citizen journalism' movement (Bowman and Willis, 2003; Gillmor, 2004).

This article critically appraises the distinctive take on citizenship and its relationship to the market and the political sphere developed by development economist Albert Hirschman in his 1970 book *Exit, Voice and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations and States*. In outlining Hirschman's argument on 'exit' and 'voice' as distinctive responses in both the economic and political spheres, I will point to ways in which it helps to advance discussion beyond some of the conceptual and practical impasses that can emerge in the consumer-citizen couplet. At the same time, I also wish to consider whether there is a greater significance now attached to questions of participation and what Hartley (1999) has termed 'do-it-yourself (DIY) citizenship', and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2007) terms the 'participative Web'. I will draw upon Couldry's (2006b) argument that media studies has tended to be overly focused upon highly centralized media, leading to an underestimation of the wider significance of developments taking place at the 'margins' of media production

and distribution. I will conclude with a discussion of how the concepts of exit, voice and loyalty may serve to shed new light on recent debates about citizen journalism and its impact upon news production and the media more generally.

Exit, Voice and Loyalty: the contribution of Albert Hirschman to an understanding of voice and organizations

Albert Hirschman (1915–) was one of the founding figures of post-Second World War development economics. A specialist in Latin American development, he was known in the 1950s and 1960s for developing the concept of 'unbalanced growth', arguing that the process of economic development will generate short-term inequalities that test the political will and capacity of states to reform social structures so as to enable reform and more equitable distribution of income and wealth over time (Hirschman, 1981). His perspective was an iconoclastic one, and his insistence upon understanding the historical particularities of developing countries distanced him from the positivist orthodoxies of both the development economics and development communications of his time. From his experience in development economics, and particularly his observations on the rise of political authoritarianism and economic stagnation in Latin America and elsewhere in the 1960s and 1970s, his later writings became more concerned with what he referred to as the 'micro or personality foundations of a democratic society' (Hirschman, 1995: 83).

In *Exit, Voice and Loyalty* (1970), Hirschman used the concepts of 'exit' and 'voice' in the first instance to discuss the potential and limits of market-based solutions to economic problems. Arguing that the problem of under-utilized economic resources, or a *slack economy*, is not simply a feature of less developed economies or economies in recession, Hirschman proposed that some level of slack is a pervasive feature of all ~~economic societies~~. It has a multitude of causes, including poor management practices, public or private monopoly, inefficient use of technologies or resources, regulatory failures or government mismanagement, and is often experienced in terms of poor-quality products and services, or a decline in their quality relative to price. In economic analysis, the most obvious response to such a situation on the part of consumers is that of *exit*, which in turn ~~will~~ set in train the self-correcting forces of the market and Adam Smith's 'Invisible Hand', either through firms adjusting their operations in response to such market signals, or their disappearance through loss of market share to more efficient and responsive competitors. The impersonal and indirect nature of such corrective mechanisms is seen as the cardinal virtue of the market system, and insofar as there are hindrances to the effective operation of markets and competition – as in the case of public or private monopolies, or inefficiencies that result from inappropriate public regulation of markets – the role of economists as policy advisers was seen as one of recommending to governments means by which a more competitive and responsive market situation can be established.

The counterpoint to exit is *voice*, defined as:

… any attempt at all to change, rather than to escape from, an objectionable state of affairs, whether through individual or collective petition to the management directly in charge, through appeal to a higher authority with intention of forcing a change in management, or through various types of actions or protests, including those that are meant to mobilize public opinion. (Hirschman, 1970: 30)

As Hirschman observes, voice has been a central concept to political theory yet a marginal one to economic theory, although the rise of the consumer rights movement, environmental activism and, more recently, shareholder activism, indicate its growing centrality to what is sometimes termed 'stakeholder capitalism' (Hutton, 1996), and it has certainly been central to industrial law since the rise of the trade union movement. Voice achieves its most concrete expression in the political sphere through the concept of citizenship. The right to participate in public life and to use one's voice to influence the affairs of state is a cardinal tenet of liberal democratic societies, and the development of institutional frameworks that enable extended participation in public and political decision-making processes is central to ensuring that 'rights … are practically enacted and realized through actual participation in the community' (Hall and Held, 1989: 175). As Jürgen Habermas put it: 'the institutions of constitutional freedom are only worth as much as a population makes of them' (1992: 7). Hirschman captures the importance of voice in conceiving of citizenship in liberal democracies by observing that: 'it has long been an article of faith of political theory that the proper functioning of democracy requires a maximally alert, active and vocal public' (Hirschman, 1970: 31–2).

Recognizing the nexus between citizenship, participation and democracy also draws attention to its limitations in practice as distinct from theory, most notably the difference between 'active' and 'passive' citizenship. Kymlicka and Norman refer to this as the distinction between: 'citizenship-as-legal-status, that is, as membership of a particular political community, and citizenship-as-desirable-activity, where the extent and quality of citizenship is a function of one's participation in that community' (1994: 353). Political theorists of the 20th century such as Max Weber, Joseph Schumpeter and Robert Dahl continually returned to the question of whether active citizenship was a necessary condition of effective political democracies, or whether the complexities of government and the existence of political passivity towards the state saw political influence aggregated upwards to political elites and organized political institutions such as parties and pressure groups (see Held, 2006: chs 5 and 6 for a summary of these arguments). This is accentuated by the nature of electoral competition, where there is a tendency among the major parties to take their activist base as being 'locked in' (i.e. unwilling to exit to another major party), and to seek the support of the less politically engaged citizens who primarily exercise influence through their vote, or by 'exit' (the so-called 'swing voter'). In his interpretation of the political science literature,

Hirschman observed that: 'a mix of alert and inert citizens, or even an alternation of involvement and withdrawal, may actually serve democracy better than total, permanent activism or total apathy' (1970: 32).

Hirschman drew attention to the limits of exit in economic theory as well as voice in political theory. He observed that if exit was too readily acted upon by consumers, then firms would lose the capacity to respond to market signals, as they would experience rapid decline in revenues before they could respond; firms rely upon a certain level of stickiness, or loyalty, on the part of consumers towards their product or service. Hirschman also observed instances where consumer exit has little impact on firms in a market as the latter pick up new customers while losing other ones, so that the corrective mechanism exerts little pressure. Consumers face the danger of 'diverting their energies to the hunting for inexistent improved products that might possibly have been turned out by the competition' (Hirschman, 1970: 27), rather than 'bring[ing] more effective pressure upon management towards product improvement … in a futile search for the "ideal" product' (1970: 28).

This raises for Hirschman a wider issue of the consequences of situations where: 'the presence of the exit alternative can therefore tend to atrophy the development of the art of voice' (1970: 43). Whereas the exit decision is one that requires little more than the existence of effective competition, the exercise of voice:

> … depends also on the general readiness of a population to complain, and on the *invention* of such institutions and mechanisms as can communicate complaints cheaply and effectively … while exit requires nothing but a clear-cut either-or decision, voice is essentially an *art* constantly evolving in new directions. (1970: 43)

Hirschman's emphasis upon the 'art of voice' is affirmed in the literature on citizenship and participation, which observes that participation not only rests on a *fairness* argument – the right of people to be involved in the making of decisions that affect them – but also an *instrumental* argument that better decisions can result from wider participation and consultation, and a *developmental* argument, which focuses upon the political skills acquired by individuals through participation as part of more fully realizing the potential to effectively act as citizens (Richardson, 1983). In relation the policy process, Considine has argued that:

> Participation describes three types of action: it facilitates rational deliberation; it creates and communicates moral principles; and it expresses personal and group affects and needs. When all three forms of action are available, then participation provides a means for the creation of social capital from which all central democratic objectives spring. (1994: 130)

Hirschman notes that 'different organizations are differently sensitive to voice and exit' and that there may be cases where 'competition does not restrain monopoly as its supposed to, but *comforts and bolsters* it by unburdening it

of some of its more troublesome customers' (1970: 59, 74).[1] The articulation of voice is more complex than exit because active participation and exerting influence is a skill and an art that typically requires some form of institutional support. It is also often overlaid by questions of *loyalty*, and consideration of the relationship between loyalty and voice introduces new complexities to the relationship of people to organizations. On the one hand, Hirschman observes that 'the likelihood of voice increases with the degree of loyalty', and that 'as a rule, loyalty holds exit at bay and activates voice' (1970: 77, 78). There is a reciprocal relationship between loyalty and voice in organizations, particular when it can lead to effective influence on its conduct:

> … a member who wields (or thinks he wields) considerable power in an organization and is therefore convinced that he can get it 'back on track' is likely to develop a strong affection for the organization in which he is powerful. (1970: 78)

Yet this has clear limits, as the barriers to exit that arise from loyalty, while real, are ultimately finite; this is what distinguishes loyalty from faith. The question of whether to remain loyal to an organization, a company, a political party or a system of government, can be readily triggered by those who manage these entities since:

> While feedback through exit or voice is in the long run interests of organization managers, their short-run interest is to entrench themselves and to enhance their freedom to act as they wish, unmolested as far as possible by either desertions *or* complaints of members. Hence management can be relied on to think of a variety of institutional devices aiming at anything but the combination of exit or voice which may be ideal from the point of view of society. (Hirschman, 1970: 92–3)

Whether voice is enhanced by the threat of exit will vary between individuals and organizations. Aside from any personal costs to the individual – which can range ~~form~~ denunciation to death, depending upon the nature of the organization, political party or nation-state they are defecting from – the individual threatening exit faces the concern that the organization may become even worse if they, and people like them, exit. They therefore face the difficult choice between seeking voice from within and voice from outside. The danger of seeking voice from within is that it may lead to what Hirschman referred to, in the 1960s context of Democratic Party critics of the Vietnam War nonetheless remaining loyal to the Johnson administration, as the *domestication of dissenters*, whose position becomes predictable and hence discountable. The danger of seeking voice from outside is, of course, that one's voice can be ignored, since loyalty to the organization is terminated on exit.[2]

Exit, Voice and Loyalty **and the consumer-citizen debate**

The usefulness of Albert Hirschman's exit, voice and loyalty framework for media and communication studies is that it provides new insight into what is

now commonly referred to as the consumer-citizen couplet (Yúdice, 2004).
The liberalization of media systems throughout the world through the 1980s
and 1990s gave a greater significance to ratings data and commercial adver-
tising as drivers of broadcasting, as 'competition for the eyeballs' became
increasingly important in countries that had previously had monopoly public
service broadcasting (PSB) systems. At the same time, greater competition
for PSBs from commercial services challenged many of the often implicit
assumptions of loyalty that had existed between broadcasters and their
publics that underpinned their status and contribution to national culture. As
broadcasting has increasingly been digitized through multi-channel cable and
satellite services, and globalized through transnational service delivery, the
significance of consumer 'exit' as the driver of programming has, for better
or worse, increased greatly throughout the world over the last 30 years.

At the same time, a presumption of voice has long existed in media policy
and regulation, particularly in the government regulation of commercial media.
What were variously referred to as public trust, public interest, participation,
accountability, diversity and pluralism can be read as proxies for citizenship
in a number of countries. In the United States, the concept of 'public interest'
has historically anchored broadcasters to public good requirements and was,
as Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Chair Newton Minow
observed, 'the battleground for broadcasting's regulatory debate' (quoted in
Krasnow and Longley, 1978: 16), even if it was, as critics such as Streeter have
argued, in practice primarily grounded in 'faith in expertise and administrative
process' (1996: 107). Freedman's (2001) account of the Annan Committee's
deliberations on British broadcasting policy in the 1970s observes that the
establishment of such an enquiry met 'demands for increased accountability in
public policy-making … [as] a challenge to the lack of democracy and trans-
parency in British broadcasting' (2001: 198). One difficulty in understanding
these developments through the prism of citizenship is that it requires us to
retrofit citizenship discourse onto media institutions and policies that devel-
oped in different times for different reasons. While terms such as 'public trust',
'public interest', 'participation', 'accountability', 'diversity' and 'pluralism'
can be interpreted as proxy categories for citizenship, I would argue that they
can be better understood through Hirschman's concept of voice. Historically,
voice has often been presented in media policy as the institutional counter-
weight to which the public can appeal if exiting from one channel to another
or from one programme to another was insufficient to guarantee the quality
and diversity of programs sought.

Another problem with presenting consumer and citizen as alternative dis-
cursive positions is that citizenship is presented in highly normative terms, and
usually as a positive counterpoint to commercialism and the market. Collins
(1993) observed the limitations of this in his commentary on Garnham's (1990)
equation of the public sphere with public broadcasting. Collins pointed out
that it is based upon a normative ideal of pubic service broadcasting rather
than the actual conduct and performance of PSBs. Moreover, it strongly

equated PSBs generally with particular variants, most notably the British
Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), thereby neglecting the various hybrid
forms of PSB that exist worldwide, most notably those that combine taxpayer
funding with commercial advertising. Finally, Collins argued that, in mixed
broadcasting systems, PSB institutions are shaped by their interaction with
the commercial sector, particularly in their competition for audiences, and
that this has had a positive influence in making them more responsive to audi-
ences, through what Hirschman would refer to as the 'exit' option. Jacka
(2003) has also argued that this mapping of discursive categories onto insti-
tutional types runs the risk of downplaying or ignoring the contribution of
commercial broadcasting services to media citizenship goals. There is also
the risk, in equating 'quality' with 'non-commercial' media, of generating a
dichotomy between popularity and 'worthiness' that throws into question the
actual reach of broadcast media programming associated with citizenship
goals among audiences (Hawkins, 1999).

Livingstone et al. (2007) have evaluated the rise of the citizen-consumer as
an object of policy and regulation in the United Kingdom in the context of the
Communications Act 2003. They note that the newly created communications
'super-regulator', the Office of Communications (Ofcom), has the concept of
the citizen-consumer enshrined in its mission statement: 'Ofcom exists to fur-
ther the interests of citizen-consumers through a regulatory regime which,
where appropriate, encourages competition' (Livingstone et al., 2007: 613).
Livingstone et al. observe that Ofcom has tended to operate with an implicit
hierarchy, with protection of consumer interests being presented as its pri-
mary objective, and citizen interests being associated with secondary respon-
sibilities aligned to community standards. Indeed, they note that in the draft
communications bill, Ofcom was seen as having a primary function to 'further
the interests of the persons who are *customers* for the services and facilities
in relation to which Ofcom have functions' (quoted in Livingstone et al., 2007:
619). The ensuing debate saw the term 'customer' disappear, but a mapping
of the relationship between consumer and citizen interests was developed that
took the following form:

Consumer interest	Citizen interest
Economic focus	Cultural focus
Networks and services	Content
Individual	Community
Consumer panel	Content board
Legacy: Oftel	Legacy: Independent Television Commission, Broadcasting Standards Council

While the final form of the Communications Act 2003 actually gives
primacy to citizen interests in communications, and the citizen-consumer
coupling is understood as 'two sides of the same coin', Ofcom has in practice

understood 'civic values' as providing the basis for its goals, and economics as constituting the principal guide for policy outcomes. As a result, Livingstone et al. have observed that 'the term "citizen-consumer" is viewed by critics as a means of re-coding the primacy of economic regulation, not so much "both/and" or "different but equal", but merged together, with "citizen" subsumed into "consumer"' (Livingstone et al., 2007: 627). They conclude that the citizen-consumer coupling, rather than 'future-proofing' the legislation, ensures that the terms 'consumer' and 'citizen' will continue to be deployed strategically by different stakeholder interests, since 'the oppositions are unstable because "citizen" and "consumer" have emerged as a discursive set-tlement concerning some fundamental but rarely explicated issues concerning the balance of power between state and market, regulator and public' (Livingstone et al., 2007: 630).

Participation and the de-centring of contemporary media

Looking back at Albert Hirschman's *Exit, Voice and Loyalty*, it is striking how prescient it was as an analysis of the scope and limitations of markets, as well as the 'political market' of voting, as a mechanism for furthering productive relations between individuals and institutions. Given that Hirschman wrote in 1970, before the twin revolutions of deregulation and privatization really took off around the world, his work identifies the ongoing significance of 'voice', and the importance of institutional mechanisms that enable it to be effective in shaping conduct. As the UK discussion about the Communications Act 2003 discussed above illustrates, concepts of citizenship and 'voice' have returned to prominence after over two decades in which discourses that see consumer 'exit' as the primary driver of reform and innovation in business, including the media and communications business, predominated.

At the same time, the context in which Hirschman's book was written points to a significant limitation in how he understands voice and its relation-ship to participation when viewed today, in that it sees voice and participation as being exercised primarily through large organizations and institutions. Writing in 1970, this is perhaps not uprising. The late 1960s and early 1970s were, in retrospect, something of a high-water mark of large, concentrated organizations in both the economic and political spheres. Economists such as J.K. Galbraith were arguing that corporate planning was superseding the mar-ket in what he termed the 'new industrial state' (1972), while Lash and Urry (1989) have identified this the epoch as one of *organized capitalism* charac-terized by industrial concentration, high levels of trade union membership, corporatist bargaining agreements around economic planning and prices and incomes policies, and the growth of state bureaucracy. In *Bowling Alone*, Robert Putnam (2000) observes that 1970 was the year in which the highest percentage of Americans were members of trade unions, civic organizations

and professional associations. It was the era before Thatcherism and Reaganomics, the movements for privatization and deregulation, and the winding back of trade union influence and membership. It was also an era that preceded the internet, where the scope to be an independent media producer was greatly circumscribed by the technological and capital barriers to entry ~~into the media sector~~ at any level of distribution beyond a very small scale.

In this context, participation is understood as seeking a voice in the conduct of institutions that are managed by others, be they government, government agencies, public broadcasters or large commercial media organizations. This is consistent with media systems where the mass communications model predominates. Mass communications media are characterized by, among other things, the institutional separation of producers/distributors and receivers of media content, an asymmetrical power relation between the two, and relations that are, for the most part, largely impersonal, anonymous and commodified (McQuail, 2005; Thompson, 1995). The great change in media from the 1970s to the present is, of course, the rise of the internet and networked information and communication technologies (ICTs), which promote participatory media culture, do-it-yourself (DIY) or do-it-with-others (DIWO) media, and many-to-many communication that is horizontal as well as vertical or top-down. As Deuze has observed:

> … people not only have come to expect participation from the media [but] they have increasingly found ways to enact this participation in the multiple ways they use and make media … the Internet can be seen as an amplifier of this trend. (2006: 68)

In relation to media, this can be seen as reflecting the problem of what Nick Couldry (2006b) has termed the *myth of the mediated centre*. The concern here is less with the issue of media-centrism, or what Couldry identifies as a tendency to overstate the influence of media on everyday lives and systems of knowledge, culture and belief, than the: 'tendency in media studies … to assume that it is the largest media institutions and our relationship to them that are the overwhelming research priority, so that any media outside that institutional space are of marginal importance' (2006b: 182). Couldry identifies media-centrism in media studies in the focus on national or transnational media over local media, concentration on the media forms that attract the largest audiences or readerships, and the relative neglect of what are variously referred to as 'alternative', 'community' or 'citizens' media' (see also Atton, 2002; Downing, 2001; Rodriguez, 2001). Media-centrism is associated with the political question of how to change the institutions, structures and practices of the largest media organizations, and an associated dismissal of smaller-scale transformations in media practice and alternative production, distribution and reception models as, to use Nicholas Garnham's phrase, 'productivist romanticism' (2000: 68). Couldry has instead proposed that we can see in new forms of media participation enabled by the internet and user-generated

content: 'new hybrid forms of media *consumption-production* … [that]
challenge precisely the entrenched division of labour (producers of stories
versus consumers of stories) that is the essence of media power' (2003: 45).
To recognize the transformative potential of new forms of media participation
in an environment that is shifting rapidly away from the mass communica-
tions model is not to downplay those forms of media activism and media
reform that seek new forms of citizen voice, whether around media ownership
laws, the future of public service media or development of communications
infrastructures. Rather, it is to recognize, as McChesney (2008) observes, that
campaigns for the democratization of media policy-making, the development
of alternative media forms, and support for the autonomy and independence
of media workers within large-scale media organizations all constitute
elements of a politics of media reform, and there should not be a privileging
of one over the other.

Citizen journalism and citizen media: reframing the debate

There have been high hopes for the internet as a means of revitalizing politics
through its impact on the public sphere. A combination of factors have been
commonly identified, including: the scope for horizontal or peer-to-peer com-
munication; the capacity to access, share and independently verify information
from a diverse range of global sources; the comparative lack of government
controls over the internet as compared to other media; the ability to form
social networks based around interest and affinity and unconstrained by geo-
graphy; the capacity to disseminate, debate and deliberate on current issues,
and to challenge professional opinions and official positions; and the
potential for political disintermediation, or communication not filtered by
political organizations, 'spin doctors' or the established news media (Blumler
and Coleman, 2001; Hague and Loader, 1999). Coleman (2005a, 2005b) has
argued that liberal democracies in the 20th century refined the politics of indi-
rect representation (politics as elite competition between heavily resourced
parties and organizations) and virtual deliberation 'whereby professional
politicians and journalists tended to dominate political discussion on behalf
of the public' (2005a: 195). He argues that 'an atmosphere of crisis surrounds
virtual deliberation and indirect representation in the early 21st century', char-
acterized by distrust of political representation, disenchantment with main-
stream media coverage of politics and 'a post-deferential desire by citizens to
be heard and respected more' (2005a: 195). If 'the framing of 20th-century
politics by broadcast media led to a sense that democracy amounted to the
public watching and listening to the political elite thinking aloud on its behalf',
the rise of interactive online and networked media 'opens up unprecedented
opportunities for more inclusive public engagement in the deliberation of
policy issues' (Coleman, 2005b: 209).

A similar sense of cautious optimism regarding the impact of the internet for citizenship and the public sphere can be found in political philosophy. Arguing that Habermas's theory of the public sphere effectively outlines the relationship between communications media and the possibility of deliberative democracy, Gimmler proposes that the internet ~~can strengthen the public sphere and deliberative democracy as it~~ promotes more equal access to information, interaction among citizens, and 'a more ambitious practice of discourse' among citizens, through a medium which active promotes 'a pluralistically constituted public realm' as it is 'still rhizomatically constituted and not segmented or organized hierarchically' (2001: 31, 33). Dahlgren (2005) also identifies the positive contribution of the internet to facilitating democratic discourse and civic culture for a wider range of citizens, even in the context of a singular, integrated public sphere giving way to multiple, heterogeneous communicative forums and practices (see also Papacharissi, 2002). Observing the criticism that civic participation through the internet may lack a connection to structures and processes of political decision-making (Sparks, 2001), Dahlgren nonetheless maintains that there has been a positive contribution of new media to the structures, representations and interactions that are central to the public sphere and the communicative spaces of deliberative democracy. In particular, he highlights the contribution of the internet to activist or advocacy forms of politics:

> The Internet has a more compelling role to play in the advocacy/activist sector of the online public sphere, in the context of extra-parliamentary politics. Political discussion within these organizations strives … to attain some degree of collective identity, and for political mobilization.… [T]he thrust of their political address toward power holders in the political or economic realm is not to attain consensus, but rather to have an affect on policy. Toward political society at large, they seek to stimulate public opinion. (Dahlgren, 2005: 157)

There are also significant claims made for new media as transforming journalism, particularly with the rise of *citizen journalism*. Bowman and Willis refer to the rise of 'participatory journalism', defined as:

> … the act of a citizen, or a group of citizens, playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing and disseminating news and information … [with] the intent of this participation [being] to provide independent, reliable, accurate, wide-ranging and relevant information that a democracy requires. (2003: 9)

Atton points to the capacity of new forms of online news media to 'invert the "hierarchy of access" to the news by explicitly foregrounding the viewpoints of … citizens whose visibility in the mainstream media tends to be obscured by the presence of elite groups and individuals', thereby 'challenging the status of the journalist as the sole "expert" or definer of "reality"' (2004: 40, 41). McNair (2006) has argued that we are moving from information scarcity to information abundance, and from closed to open information systems, which in turn challenges the entrenched authority of both political institutions and

established news media organizations. As the capacity to produce and distribute news, information and opinion, or to undertake some form of journalism, is becoming more available to an ever growing number of people, this proliferation of voices and opinions enabled by new media generates 'a significant augmentation of the degree of diversity of viewpoints available to users of the globalised public sphere', and 'produces an environment where information cascades become more unpredictable, more frequent, and more difficult and more difficult for elites to contain when they begin' (McNair, 2006: 201, 202). This in turn takes us closer to the citizenship ideal espoused by the South Korean online news site *OhMyNews* that 'every citizen is a reporter', the argument of the British journalist and editor Ian Hargreaves that 'in a democracy, everyone is a journalist … because, in a democracy, everyone has the right to communicate a fact of a point of view, however trivial, however hideous' (2005: 4), and John Hartley's argument that 'so-called "user-led innovation" will reinvent journalism, bringing it closer to the aspirational ideal of a right for everyone' (2008: 50).

All of these scenarios concerning new media and the expanded possibilities for 21st-century citizenship and civic and political participation are intuitively appealing. Yet they remain open to criticism through reference to the counter-factual, ~~or~~ where abstract normative ideals fail to correspond to grounded empirical realities. The most commonly cited points here are the question of access to digital media technologies and unequal capacities to participate in a digital public sphere (Golding and Murdock, 2004; Sparks, 2001), and whether internet tools and technologies are in fact transforming political communications techniques, as they are being used primarily by established governmental, political, news and economic organizations, so that 'there is an extensive political life on the Net, but it is mostly an extension of political life off the Net' (Margolis and Resnick, 2000: 14).

An example of the argument of rebuttal by counter-factual is seen in Knight (2008), who uses the case of vitriolic personal attacks on the blogger Kathy Sierra to argue that the line between bloggers and journalists is that it is only the latter whose conduct is governed by codes of practice, codes of ethics and widely recognized professional standards stressing accuracy, fairness and balance. On this basis, Knight concludes that while the internet enables everyone to be a publisher, 'not everyone has the skills or training to be a journalist; defined by their professional practices and codes of ethics', and that 'journalists should still be the best equipped to deliver such information [and] if they do so, journalists will adapt to the Internet, in the same ways they embraced the telephone, the telegraph and the printing press' (2008: 123). Another example of rebuttal by counter-factual is found in Hindman, who observes that a relatively small number of blogs account for a large percentage of total blog traffic, and that most of these 'A-list' bloggers come from elite educational and other backgrounds~~, to conclude~~ that these trends in online media are not 'good news for other democratic values [such as] media diversity, a broad public sphere, and equal participation in civic debates' (2007: 29).

The other difficulty with citizenship discourse relates to the potentially protean nature of the concept of citizenship. Kymlicka and Norman have noted that 'the scope for a "theory of citizenship" is potentially limitless [as] almost every problem in political philosophy involves relations among citizens or between citizens and the state' (1994: 353). Linking new media to the highest ideals of citizenship and the public sphere is a commonplace, and relates to what Rawnsley refers to as a 'revolution of rising expectations' (2005: 183) concerning the relationship of the internet to political democracy. Moreover, invocation of citizenship as the evaluative framework for such initiatives draws attention to the extent to which citizenship as a concept in political theory is bifurcated between what Held refers to as the tradition of *developmental republicanism*, which stresses the intrinsic value of political participation and the equality of all citizens as a pre-condition of democratic self-determination, and *protective republicanism*, which stresses the instrumental value of political participation and the division of powers as the basic condition for the maintenance of personal liberty (Held, 2006: 36–49). Both of these traditions – which could also be understood in terms of Isaiah Berlin's (2001) distinction between positive and negative freedom – are so fundamental to the history of citizenship as a concept in political theory, yet point in such different directions, that it is probably impossible to expect media of any form to simultaneously meet the expectations surrounding citizenship in both of these historically and philosophically grounded conceptions.

By thinking in terms of voice and participation, some of the pitfalls and dualities that arise from all-or-nothing thinking associated with citizenship discourse can be minimized. No one would seriously deny that there are instances of unethical behaviour among bloggers; the issue is rather one of whether a commitment to professional ethics remains a sufficient criterion through which to differentiate professional journalists as an elite group from other participants in the online media sphere. Similarly, there are 'A-lists' in the online environment and evidence of 'long tail' economics in terms of site traffic; the question is whether there is the scope for new and unpredictable forms of empowerment that can arise from networked access to the online means of media production and distribution. By thinking of 'voice' as a potential that has greater scope for realization through digital online media, and recognizing Papacharissi's (2002) distinction between a new public space and a new public sphere, and that the enabling of discussion that the internet generates as a new public space may provide – but not necessarily – the basis for a new public sphere, we can develop new ways of thinking about the relationship between voice and citizenship in the new media environment. Albert Hirschman's *Exit, Voice and Loyalty* is certainly a text from a time before the internet, but it continues to provide fruitful ways of thinking through some of the questions that new media technologies present for more deliberative and democratic political communication.

Notes

1. One example of an 'atrophying of voice' that Hirschman describes concerns middle-class families moving their children from public to private schools, as ~~it~~ was occurring in the United States in the 1960s, as an 'exit' option adopted as a response to the perceived decline in quality of public school education. One difficulty arising from ~~the~~ movement is that, in many cases, the parents who leave are those 'who care most about the quality of the product and who, therefore, are those who would be the most active, reliable, and creative agents of voice', and hence those who could be the most articulate ~~interests~~ for change (Hirschman, 1970: 47).

2. Hirschman gives the example of how Latin American dictatorships encouraged political dissidents to emigrate, recognizing that they were less likely to influence domestic politics from outside the country. He also discusses the moral dilemmas faced by critics of East German communism in 1989 as an example of the choice between 'private exit' and 'public voice'; they had the opportunity to leave the country, but were mocked by the government as being people for whom 'not a single tear would be shed' on their departure (Hirschman, 1995).

References

Anderson, B. (1991) *Imagined Communities*, 2nd edn. London: Verso.

Atton, C. (2002) *Alternative Media*. London: SAGE.

Atton, C. (2004) *An Alternative Internet: Radical Media, Politics and Creativity*. Edinbugh: Edinburgh University Press.

Berlin, I. (2001) 'Two Concepts of Liberty', pp. 127–36 in N. Warburton (ed.) *Freedom: An Introduction with Readings*. London: Routledge.

Blumler, J. (ed.) (1992) *Television and the Public Interest: Vulnerable Values in West European Broadcasting*. London: SAGE.

Blumler, J. and S. Coleman (2001) *Realising Democracy Onine: A Civic Commons in Cyberspace*. London: Institute for Public Policy Research.

Bowman, S. and C. Willis (2003) *WeMedia: How Audiences are Shaping the Future of News and Information*. Washington, DC: The Media Centre, American Press Institute.

Chartier, R. (1988) *Cultural History: Between Practices and Representations*, trans. L.G. Cochrane. Cambridge: Polity.

Coleman, S. (2005a) 'The Lonely Citizen: Indirect Representation in an Age of Networks', *Political Communication* 22(2): 197–214.

Coleman, S. (2005b) 'New Mediation and Direct Representation: Reconceptualizing Representation in the Digital Age', *New Media and Society* 7(2): 177–98.

Collins, R. (1993) 'Public Service versus the Market Ten Years On: Reflections on Critical Theory and the Debate on Broadcasting Policy in the UK', *Screen* 34(3): 243–59.

Considine, M. (1994) *Public Policy: A Critical Approach*. Melbourne: Macmillan.

Couldry, N. (2003) 'Beyond the Hall of Mirrors: Some Theoretical Reflections on the Global Contestation of Media Power', pp. 39–54 in N. Couldry and J. Curran (eds) *Contesting Media Power: Alternative Media in a Networked World*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

Couldry, N. (2006a) *Listening Beyond the Echoes: Media, Ethics and Agency in an Uncertain World*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.

Couldry, N. (2006b) 'Transvaluing Media Studies: Or, Beyond the Myth of the Mediating Centre', pp. 177–94 in J. Curran and D. Morley (eds) *Media and Cultural Theory*. London: Routledge.

Cunningham, S. (1992) *Framing Culture: Criticism and Policy in Australia*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin.

Curran, J. (1991) 'Mass Media and Democracy: A Reappraisal', pp. 82–117 in J. Curran and M. Gurevitch (eds) *Mass Media and Society*. London: Edward Arnold.

Dahlgren, P. (1995) *Television and the Public Sphere*. London: SAGE.

Dahlgren, P. (2005) 'The Internet, Public Spheres, and Political Communication: Dispersal and Deliberation', *Political Communication* 22(2): 147–62.

Dahlgren, P. and C. Sparks (eds) (1991) *Communication and Citizenship: Journalism and the Public Sphere*. London: Routledge.

Deuze, M. (2006) 'Participation, Remediation, Bricolage: Considering Principal Components of a Digital Culture', *The Information Society* 22(2): 63–75.

Downing, J. (2001) *Radical Media*, 2nd edn. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Freedman, D. (2001) 'What Use is a Public Inquiry? Labour and the 1977 Annan Committee on the Future of Broadcasting', *Media, Culture & Society* 23(2): 195–211.

Galbraith, J.K. (1972) *The New Industrial State*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Garnham, N. (1990) *Capitalism and Communication: Global Culture and the Economics of Information*. London: SAGE.

Garnham, N. (2000) *Emancipation, the Media and Modernity: Arguments about the Media and Social Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gillmor, D. (2004) *We the Media: Grassroots Journalism by the People, for the People*. Sebastopol, CA: O'Reilly.

Gimmler, A. (2001) 'Deliberative Democracy, the Public Sphere and the Internet', *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 27(4): 21–39.

Golding, P. and G. Murdock (1989) 'Information Poverty and Political Inequality: Citizenship in the Age of Privatized Communication', *Journal of Communication* 39(3): 180–95.

Golding, P. and G. Murdock (2004) 'Dismantling the Digital Divide: Rethinking the Dynamics of Participation and Exclusion', pp. 261–85 in A. Calabrese and C. Sparks (eds) *Toward a Political Economy of Culture: Capitalism and Communication in the 21st Century*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

Habermas, J. (1989) *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Habermas, J. (1992) 'Citizenship and National Identity: Some Reflections on the Future of Europe', *Praxis International* 12(1): 1–14.

Hague, B. and B. Loader (1999) 'Digital Democracy: An Introduction', pp. 3–22 in B. Hague and B. Loader (eds) *Digital Democracy: Discourse and Decision-making in the Information Age*. London: Routledge.

Hall, S. and D. Held (1989) 'Citizen and Citizenship', pp. 173–88 in S. Hall and M. Jacques (eds) *New Times: The Changing Face of Politics in the 1990s*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Hargreaves, I. (2005) *Journalism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hartley, J. (1999) *Uses of Television*. London: Routledge.

Hartley, J. (2008) 'Journalism as a Human Right: The Cultural Approach to Journalism', pp. 39–51 in M. Löffelholz and D. Weaver (eds) *Global Journalism Research: Theories, Methods, Findings, Future*. New York: Peter Lang.

Hawkins, G. (1999) 'Public Service Broadcasting in Australia: Value and Difference', pp. 173–87 in A. Calabrese and J.-C. Burgelmann (eds) *Communication, Citizenship and Social Policy*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

Held, D. (2006) *Models of Democracy*, 4th edn. Cambridge: Polity.

Hesmondhalgh, D. (2007) *The Cultural Industries*, 2nd edn. London: SAGE.

Hindman, M. (2007) 'Political Accountability and the Web's "Missing Middle"', paper presented to Princeton Conference on Changing Media and Political Accountability, 30 Nov.–1 Dec., Princeton, NJ.

Hirschman, A. (1970) *Exit, Voice and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

Hirschman, A. (1981) *Essays in Trespassing: Economics to Politics and Beyond*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Hirschman, A. (1995) 'Exit, Voice, and the Fate of the German Democratic Republic', pp. 9–44 in A. O. Hirschman, *A Propensity to Self-Subversion*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Horwitz, R.B. (1989) *The Irony of Regulatory Reform: The Deregulation of American Telecommunications*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Hutton, W. (1996) *The State We're In*. London: Vintage.

Innis, H.A. (1951) *The Bias of Communication*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Jacka, E. (2003) '"Democracy as Defeat": The Impotence of Arguments for Pubic Service Broadcasting', *Television and New Media* 4(2): 177–91.

Knight, A. (2008) 'Journalism in the Age of Blogging', *Journalism Studies* 9(1): 117–24.

Krasnow, E.G. and L.D. Longley (1978) *The Politics of Broadcast Regulation*, 2nd edn. New York: St Martin Press.

Kymlicka, W. and W. Norman (1994) 'Return of the Citizen: A Survey of Recent Work on Citizenship Theory', *Ethics* 104(2): 352–81.

Lash, S. and J. Urry (1989) *The End of Organized Capitalism*. Cambridge: Polity.

Livingstone, S., P. Lunt and L. Miller (2007) 'Citizens and Consumers: Discursive Debates during and after the Communications Act 2003', *Media, Culture & Society* 29(4): 613–38.

Margolis, M. and D. Resnick (2000) *Politics as Usual: The Cyberspace 'Revolution'*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

McChesney, R.W. (2008) *The Political Economy of Media*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

McNair, B. (2006) *Cultural Chaos: Journalism, News and Power in a Globalised World*. London: Routledge.

McQuail, D. (2005) *Mass Communications Theory*, 5th edn. London: SAGE.

Miller, T. (1993) *The Well-tempered Self: Citizenship, Culture and the Postmodern Subject*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) (2007) *Participative Web: User-created Content*. Paris: OECD.

Papacharissi, Z. (2002) 'The Virtual Sphere: The Internet as a Public Sphere', *New Media and Society* 4(1): 9–27.

Putnam, R.D. (2000) *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Rawnsley, G. (2005) *Political Communication and Democracy*. Palgrave: Basingstoke.

Richardson, A. (1983) *Participation*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Rodriguez, C. (2001) *Fissures in the Mediascape: An International Study of Citizens' Media*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.

Schudson, M. (1994) 'Culture and the Integration of National Societies', *International Social Science Journal* 46(1): 46–64.

Sparks, C. (2001) 'The Internet and the Global Pubic Sphere', pp. 75–98 in W. Lance Bennett and R.M. Entman (eds) *Mediated Politics: Communication in the Future of Democracy*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Streeter, T. (1996) *Selling the Air: A Critique of the Policy of Commercial Broadcasting in the United States*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Thompson, J.B. (1991) *Ideology and Modern Culture*. Cambridge: Polity.

Thompson, J.B. (1995) *The Media and Modernity: A Social Theory of the Media*. Cambridge: Policy.

Tracey, M. (1998) *The Decline and Fall of Public Service Broadcasting*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Waisbord, S. (2004) 'Media and the Reinvention of the Nation', pp. 375–92 in J. Dowling, D. McQuail, P. Schlesinger and E. Wartella (eds) *The SAGE Handbook of Media Studies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Yúdice, G. (2004) *The Expediency of Culture: Uses of Culture in the Global Era*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Terry Flew is Professor of Media and Communications at the Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia. He is the author of *New Media: An Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2008) and *Understanding Global Media* (Palgrave, 2007). From 2006 to 2009, he has headed a research project on citizen journalism in Australia, funded through the Australian Research Council's Linkage-Projects program, with industry partners including the Special Broadcasting Service, Cisco Systems Australia and the National Forum.