

## Veikko Pietilä The Public and the Audience

In the Anglo-American media reception studies the users of the media are usually spoken of with the terms *audience* and *public*. The talk of the public, however, has not come to realize to take full advantage of the viewpoint that publics are discursive-interactive collectives which are called into existence by issues arousing conflicting opinions as to how to deal with them. The article illustrates this viewpoint on the basis of thoughts put forth by Herbert Blumer and other theorists representing the so called discursive conception of the public. Hitherto, the media reception studies has been able, at the most, to see publics as one type of audience, contrasted to an audience of consumers as another type. This media-centered perspective has led the researchers to ask whether or not the media are capable of producing publics, that is, citizen audiences instead of consumer audiences. The article emphasizes that, from the perspective of the discursive conception of the public, it is more essential to ask how the various publics and the media interact during the publics' careers.

## Seija Ridell Provoking and promoting the public

Suggestions for conceiving audience as a discursive construct instead of an ontological category have aroused a lively debate within cultural media studies during the past decade. As a consequence the whole concept of audience has, according to some, landed in a crisis. The discussion on the nature and status of audience has remained, however, within the limits mass communication industry defines for people's relations with the media. In other words, cultural media scholars do not problematize the more or less

uniformly consumerist position offered to people by the industry but rather take it as given and even tend to present it as the only alternative for actually organizing as well as studying the ways people use and interpret the media in their everyday lives. Moreover, scholars do not discuss the notion of audience in connection with that of the public. Some go as far as making a distinction between audience as consumers (audience as audience) and audience as citizens (audience as public) but do this in a way that does not exceed the industrial framing. The notion of public itself is not seen to contain potential that would go beyond its traditional uses in normative theory and politically informed studies on, for example, public service broadcasting. Accordingly, public is not recognized to open up fresh theoretical and methodological avenues for cultural studies audience research.

The article proposes that the notions of audience and public should be conceived as two different – partly overlapping, partly competing – analytic perspectives on people's relations with the media. Whereas the perspective of audience frames these relations to be studied in a consumer oriented and media-centric way, the notion of public conceptualizes them in terms of participating publicly in collective conversation and negotiation on issues that are perceived important or problematic by people. Furthermore, the notion of audience allows researchers to produce knowledge of people's activities as audience members from a seemingly neutral outsider position, whereas researchers starting from the more utopian notion of public are required to assume a participatory and even an interventionist stance in research situations. The article presents Locality in the Global Net project, conducted in Journalism Research Center, University of Tampere, as a concrete research project where

the use of new communication technologies and computer networks (especially the Internet) is approached by starting from the notion of public(ness) instead of audience(hood). (URL: <http://mansetori.uta.fi>)

## Risto Kunelius Journalism on the way of conversation

The starting point of the article is John Dewey's sketch for a new 'method' for a more active and viable public life. In the article this profoundly dialogical suggestion is taken as a guideline both for journalism and journalism research. The text reports the interpretations of a journalistic experiment in which journalism searched actively a new kind of connection to citizens' discussion about local political issues. For journalism research, participation in such an experiment was also a question of dialogue between journalism and research. The article discusses briefly the potentials of the notion of 'conversation' as a way of rethinking journalism. It also reports the most interesting findings of the experiment with conversing citizens. The tentative conclusion is that journalism as a profession has a lot to learn if it wants to turn to the way of conversation and if it wants to stay out of the way of the democratic potentials embodied in citizens ability to public discussion.

## Heikki Heikkilä How to make thin journalism strong?

According to James Carey, there existed almost organic relationship between a newspaper and the public in postcolonial United States. Thus, "the public" consisted of males, who were stakeholders in the news and who also discussed the news rationally and critically. Since then news dissemination has been profoundly democratized, but at the same

time the relationship between the paper and its readers has weakened.

Currently news journalism is more likely grounded in 'representative logic' than in the public. This 'thin journalism' fails to address readers as stakeholders, ignores the relevance of their rationality based on everyday life, and denies them a forum for expressing their criticisms. Only through tackling these flaws news journalism could become 'strong'. This challenge has been explicitly stated and put into practice in numerous public journalism projects in the US. This article focuses on a series of such projects conducted in a semilarge Finnish newspaper *Savon Sanomat*. The experiments show that citizens gathered in discussion groups were more than capable of addressing public concerns and providing their rationality for public discussion. This potential was, however, inadequately utilized by the paper. This conclusion should direct further discussion on journalistic practices on a practical basis.

### **Mika Renvall and Esa Reunanen: Community in the hunt for truth**

In this article a view of journalism as a communal truth-hunt is developed. It is suggested, that journalism could be understood as communal, problem-solving discussion rather than as dissemination of ready-made truths. Another objective of the article is to find means to study the conversational aspect of journalistic texts. These ideas are developed using the theoretical frameworks of C. S. Peirce, Jürgen Habermas and the public journalism movement.

### **Markku Ihonen Novel as public sphere: The establishment of Finnish literary public sphere and discussion on novel**

Since 1809, Finland belonged to Russia as an autonomous Grand Duchy. Accordingly, the Finnish public sphere was established delayed and in a way of its own. During the process of institutionalising of the national

organisations, novel was seen as an essential part of public sphere. The establishment of novel as a literary genre occurred late in Finland, partly due to the hegemony of the archaic-like epic which was given the specific role of strengthening Finnish national identity. Being dialogic of its nature and capable to discuss every kind of questions evoking in a developing society, novel became, however, the very genre of modern nation-state. Finnish novels were few until the 1880's but foreign novels were discussed eagerly in Finland, especially in the 1840's and 1850's. Religious conservatives, afraid of demoralising effects of novel, nevertheless banished the genre entirely.

The first Finnish original novels in the 1840's, in fact, did not work as expected. They were either too melodramatic as well as too romantic, or full of historical sentimentalism. What is more, literature begun to institutionalise little by little in order to get a full autonomy as art. During the last decades, Finnish literature seems to have lost almost all of its power to participate public discussion.

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