

INTRODUCTION

DEMOCRACY AND THE POSSIBILITY OF A GLOBAL PUBLIC SPHERE

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Set in contrast to the manipulated mass opinion and ideological conflicts of the Western nation state, Jürgen Habermas found in the eighteenth century a model of rational communication and rational-critical debate that he called the public sphere. 'Private people come together as a public', as he defined that sphere, challenged the state to engage with them in reasoned argument (Habermas 1989 [1962]: 27). Parallel with and necessary to the economic interests of civil society, communication was also subject to rational principles. Since his intervention full and free communication has become ever more salient. It outstrips the principle of representation in contemporary efforts to reconstruct democratic theory.

As Habermas stressed, the public sphere has been in a permanent state of transformation as underlying social and economic conditions have changed, and even as he wrote Marshall McLuhan (1962) was exemplifying that by writing of the 'global village' that the new media technology made possible. Since then, advances in technology have given us global mass media and permitted private worldwide communication. Along with those developments civil society has become global. At the same time, as Mary Kaldor emphasizes in Chapter 2 of this volume, representative democracy in nation states has advanced throughout the world. Yet there is no global counterpart to national democratic institutions.

Without that counterpart the democratic nature of global communication appears very open to question. Did the private video recording and global dissemination of the last living moments of Saddam Hussein, as he was led to execution, help to undermine the authority of the new representative democracy of Iraq by publicising the deep factional loathing that tears at Iraqi society? Or does it show that institutions imposed by force of arms are vulnerable to an even stronger force of global public opinion?

Global civil society has reacted to the harassment that accompanied the execution with almost universal

indignation. Arguably, this was a vast global audience of disgusted observers communicating their abhorrence of the violence. But the interpretation of what was objectionable about the execution has diverged widely. British newspaper readers objected to the 'pornographic ghoulishness' of photographs and footage of the hanging (Mayes 2007: 29). In Kerala, South India, the main Muslim party and the locally powerful Communist party called a strike in response to Saddam's execution, even before the news about its vicious implementation had broken (Sebastian 2006). What was being objected to here was not the death penalty per se but either the victimisation of Muslims or the victimisation of everyone poor and non-Western, depending on your ideological outlook. In Latin America, as in India, in undoubtedly free and vibrant media environments, Saddam turned into Che Guevara.

And should the reactions to the Iraq war really be interpreted as an expression of the soft power of free and equal communication through the new media? The Bush Administration has provoked an un-reflexive anti-Americanism that is not the sole domain of civil society, but is hijacked and instrumentalised by political leaders as diverse as Hugo Chavez, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Jacques Chirac. Saddam Hussein, one of the worst dictators of the twentieth century, becomes a martyr in the process.

The Saddam images fed into a debate that immediately became global. But it has no global institutional locus. Is this the new global public sphere, where a global public opinion takes shape? Do the new communication possibilities realise democracy beyond the nation state or does the very proliferation of media channels result in a fragmentation that undermines any public sphere? Habermas re-centred the issue of democracy in the nation state on the possibilities of full and free communication in the public sphere. We ask whether developments in the media of communication and their use now require us to rethink democracy for global society. If we do now have a global public

sphere can we be sure that democracy will inspire its debates? These are our concerns in *Global Civil Society 2007-8*.

Communication, as Selchow reminds us in Chapter 11, is one of the primary human impulses. The sophistication of human communications defines and sets human beings apart from other species. As such, it is also foundational to any socio-political formation human beings create. Even Trappist monks would interrupt their silence to conduct necessary managerial meetings.

Because free speech is the antidote to thuggery (the pen is mightier than the sword, and the blog may be mightier than the missile), communication tends in political science to have positive connotations and be associated with dialogue, exchange of views, learning, and even democracy. Not so in media studies. There, we are constantly reminded of the use of communication as manipulation and spin, whether in nominally democratic or in authoritarian political settings. The multiple uses to which human communication can be put, which may even be in the eye of the beholder, have not fundamentally changed with the advent of global communications technology. But it may have eroded the force of monolithic messages from a single (state or religious) entity.

As academics, we may be inclined to equate communication with language, but this Yearbook has attempted to both describe (in language) and display powerful non-linguistic forms of global communication. Chapter 10 describes the use of fiction in semi-commercial Nigerian videos opening up a range of social issues, as well as the use of 'documentary' videos by radical Islamic militants to propagandise violent action in Iraq. Chapter 9 is devoted to a selection of very diverse cartoon art. These art works alert us to the problematic nature of the term 'global', highlighted by Selchow, which is constantly used in different combinations in the pages of this book. The selection is 'global' in that artists from different parts of the globe are represented, although certainly not every corner of the globe. More importantly, their messages transcend national boundaries, but at the same time we should be alert, as we discovered in the selection, that they are not universal: each of us will interpret them or respond to them differently, even if those cultural differences do not neatly map onto political borders. As such, they are precisely a reflection of the complex and contradictory

tendencies we try to capture with the inadequate term 'global'. We can illustrate this by the very term 'global democracy': do we mean democracy for the world's population as a single political unit, for some an ideal aspiration, or do we mean democracy in its different national and local settings worldwide? We trust we shall make clear which it is in each context.

Democracy in a global age

Kaldor draws our attention to the paradox that democratic institutions spread worldwide in the latter part of the twentieth century but have also suffered a 'hollowing-out' in the process. While in the 1980s and 1990s more and more states became nominally democratic and it has become a virtual taboo to espouse any other political system, there have been severe declines in the number of political party members, in attendance at party conferences, and in voter turnout in most established democracies. Anticipating the electorate at large, democratic theorists had already become increasingly disillusioned with representative democracy, calling it 'thin' or 'procedural' democracy (Pateman 1970; Bessette 1980; Cohen and Rogers 1983; Barber 1984).

Kaldor connects this paradox to globalisation. In the first place democratisation, in the sense of a spread of formal procedures, accompanies the expansion of Western market institutions and guarantees participation in the global economic system. A cynical reading is that this has nothing to do whatsoever with 'rule by the people'. Adherence to certain democratic procedures has become a badge of respectability, and more especially marketability, for state participation in the global neo-liberal order. Moreover integration into that order means that parliamentary democracy suffers the erosion of the substance of democratic participation and choice (see for instance Held 1995; McGrew 1997; Scholte 2001; Anderson 2000). David Held (2002) uses the phrase 'overlapping communities of fate' to express the fact that those who are affected by certain decisions are no longer found neatly in a single political entity controlled by a democratic process.

Ishkanian describes potently in this volume how such integration has taken place at the civil society level. Western governments in the last 15 years have sought to reinforce democratic legitimacy in nation states by co-opting organised civil society. Based on a particular reading of de Tocqueville (ignoring his

concern for social equality), influential scholars like Putnam, Fukuyama and Larry Diamond asserted a direct connection between the existence of numerous associations and the vibrancy of democracy. Applying such theories to transition countries, where they might not find the 'right' type of associations for promoting Western-style democracy, donor agencies would in Ishkanian's term 'genetically-engineer' NGOs through training and project funding. Under these conditions of global communication, the types of aid projects Ishkanian describes have provoked a backlash against the twin projects of 'building civil society' and 'democratisation', often and justly perceived as a form of neo-imperialism.

But globalisation does not only take the form of enforced integration into Western governmental models. Even before the 1990s when Richard Falk (1993) gave recognition to globalisation from below, there were plenty of empirical examples of democratisation as the result of successful efforts of social movements in Eastern Europe, Latin America, and South Africa building transnational links and appealing to transnational norms in order to defeat the authoritarian state (Keck and Sikkink 1998; Kaldor 2003; Glasius 2003). This volume provides an example of those transitions: in Chapter 6 de Oliveira charts the transformation in Latin America where NGOs and social movements spearheaded the struggle for democracy in the 1970s and 1980s, but where now the vitality of what he calls the 'classical notion of civil society', its organised form, has declined. But they have left a legacy of democratisation at the very personal level: 'today, ordinary people tend to be more intelligent, rebellious and creative than in the past.' They are constantly called upon to make value judgments and life choices where previously there was only conformity to a pre-established destiny. This enhanced capacity of individuals to think, deliberate and decide is a consequence of the decline in diverse forms of authority based on religion and tradition. As he says, 'democracy is always work in progress, an unfinished journey.'

The Latin American case suggests that the very bonding of civil society to representative democracy propagated by Western capacity-building projects may already be inappropriate for the new social and economic conditions of the early twenty-first century. Perhaps partly because of a tradition of ideological resistance to the hegemonic power from which the

project mainly emanated, Latin America appears to have been less affected by the growth of genetically-engineered civil society than other parts of the world such as Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Africa. But de Oliveira finds that the institutional and organisational legacy of earlier democratic struggles is now subject to the challenges from an informed communicating public for whom new media of communication offer unprecedented opportunities to make their views known, and who demand openness and transparency. He now sees the main contest between authoritarian populism and an informed autonomous and diverse citizenry. Public disaffection with representative democracy runs deep and recent years have been marked by frequent depositions of elected leaders. Less-than-democratic populist leaders like Chavez exercise 'a sort of fascination over large sectors of Latin American civil society still enraptured by the revolutionary myth' (2008: XX). That fascination is enhanced, we might add, by the ability of the leader to project national identity through global media.

At the same time globality does not merely undermine liberal democracy in nation states. Kaldor and Kostovicova in Chapter 5 show how illiberal regimes are equally vulnerable to global connections. In their responses to the pressures of globalisation, most of these regimes have moved far away from the monolithic Orwellian ideal type. Instead of aspiring to eliminate civil society and monopolise communication, which is simply no longer possible, they tolerate some forms of civil society organisation as well as some forms of transnational communication. They either try to contain and control civil society, relegating it to the role of social policy sub-contractor, or found their own organisations, but without the old aspiration to a complete monopoly. In the realm of communications, Iran, Saudi Arabia or China now try to 'get the message out', becoming, in Monroe Price's term, sellers in the market for loyalties (see Chapter 3). These changed parameters may also have consequences for the old debate as to whether to isolate or engage rogue states. The 2008 Beijing Olympics, for instance, has become an occasion for bringing attention to a plethora of human rights-violating aspects of Chinese domestic and foreign policy (see Box 5.1 in Chapter 5). On the other hand, the murder of Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya suggests that in some of the self-declared democracies of the twenty-first century

there are those prepared to violate even the right to life in order to prevent exposure of murky dealings at the top. However, while protests against her murder were sparse in Russia itself, the murder of Hrant Dink in Turkey (see Box I.1) sparked an intense, if perhaps elliptical, debate that went to the heart of Turkish identity. A third journalist, Alan Johnston of the BBC, who had been kidnapped in the Gaza strip by a local gang and released through the mediation of Hamas, serves as another reminder that threats to free speech are now more diverse and complex, but no less daunting, than old-fashioned jailing by a dictatorial regime.

Civility now has to be entrenched globally before it can be guaranteed nationally and locally, but the guarantors of civility in the old nation state, a legal system, rights, a judiciary, police, political representation and administration under the law, have no global equivalents. Democratic behaviour then has to be lodged at a deeper level than in institutions alone.

Even before globalisation was widely recognised as a key contributory factor in the decline of democratic participation, political theorists were seeking a more satisfying normative underpinning for democracy than majority rule expressed in periodic elections, constructing models of radical, participatory or deliberative democracy (Barber 1984; Blaug 1999; Bessette 1980; Cohen and Rogers 1983; Gutmann and Thompson 1996). The most famous and broadly inspirational of these conceptualisations is probably Habermas' conception of the public sphere as a space of communication and deliberation where citizens identify and discuss social problems, forming a 'public opinion', which in turn informs the decision making of political actors (Habermas 1989; 1992; 1996). In such conceptions, the effectiveness of communicative action, not the density of associations, is the key measure of democracy.

In developing his theory over three decades culminating in *Between Facts and Norms* (German edition published 1992) Habermas built in lots of ifs and buts; in particular he was pessimistic about the role of the mass media in relation to the public sphere ideal. Since then, the development and use of new information and communications technologies has fuelled an enthusiasm for the notion of the public sphere that goes far beyond Habermas' own very cautious endorsement. A search on Google Scholar,

itself a product of these new technologies, for social science articles containing the phrase 'global public sphere' renders over four hundred results, few of which moderate the phrase with a question mark.

Apart from the notes of caution inserted by Habermas and others concerning the application of the ideal-typical concept of the public sphere to reality, the new enthusiasts also tend to miss the fact that for Habermas, and even in the seminal work on civil society by Cohen and Arato (1992), the only imaginable relevant context was the state. Their public spheres end neatly at the border, civil society is national, and the formation of public opinion only relates to decision making by government and parliament. Habermas saw 'the potential for self-annihilation on a global scale' (1989 [1962]: 235) as adding emphasis to Kant's call for a 'cosmopolitan order', but this was only within the frame of a world of nation states.

In this issue of the Yearbook we aim to encourage the reconsideration of communication in democracy in a world where global civil society challenges states to develop deeper relations with all their people and to respond to issues that transcend national boundaries. As Kaldor's Chapter declares, the deepening of democracy nationally and locally requires a negotiation of a global social contract. Democracies cannot escape global conditions, but the mere fact of global communication does not provide for such a contract. We have, therefore to examine the relations of democracy and communication in principle if global civil society is to contribute to democracy beyond the nation state.

In our institutions and in our thinking, world communication and democracy have historically been bonded in a set of complex and often contradictory relations. As we said at the outset, Habermas pointed to the continual transformation of the public sphere. One stage in that process was 'the plebeian public sphere' that flourished in the French Revolution (1989 [1962]: xviii). One can trace that back to what he calls Rousseau's 'democracy of unpublic opinion' (1989 [1962]: 98), a mass of popular prejudices. Given the fact that the mass media today reflect just that so much of the time, it will help our appreciation of the fraught relationships between the mass media and democracy, and the limits on full and free communication, if we retrieve some of their roots in Rousseau and his successors who framed the theory of modern public opinion

Public, community and communication in Western modernity

The dependency of democracy on communication is not a new theme. Indeed so fraught was it for the old democratic model of the modern sovereign state that it was frequently suppressed as a premise as well as in practice. We need initially, therefore, to give some attention to that context just to gain perspective on how the new communication media challenge the old model.

For brevity's sake let us simply take two paradigmatic contributions to modernity's thinking about communication and democracy. The first is from the mid-eighteenth century in Europe at the beginning of the coalescence of the modern nation-state order. The second, which references the first, is immediately after the First World War of 1914-18 when the potential for self-destruction of that order had become apparent.

The attempt to force Iraq to be free is at first glance startlingly evocative of Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-88) and his *Social Contract* (1762). As a citizen of the free republic of Geneva he was proud to think it followed in the best traditions of classic Greek democracy, but he feared the emerging mass national state was not going to secure the same kind of citizen attachment and involvement. He therefore made the early outstanding revolutionary appeal for a re-ordering of society to create a cohesive national state out of a mass population. He called for the whole people of a nation to be sovereign, constitutive of the state and bearer of a general will, constraining the dissenting individual 'which means nothing else than that he shall be forced to be free' (1895:113). (However, we note, that does not speak of one state imposing freedom on another.)

He understood communication was foundational and his approach was radical. Citizens had to be knowledgeable. They also had to share 'manners, customs, and above all opinion – a province unknown to our politicians, but one on which the success of all the rest depends' (1895: 148). The wise legislator provided for the unity of religion and the state, in which respect 'Mohammed had very sound views: he thoroughly unified his political system' (1895: 222). Rousseau concluded by advocating a civil religion avowing the deity, permitting many faiths and outlawing only religious intolerance.

It was the direct relationship of the individual to the collective and corporate existence of the state that

Rousseau exalted. It meant that he severely restricted the scope of intermediate associations: 'It is important then, in order to have a clear declaration of the general will, that there should be no partial association in the State, and that every citizen should express only his own opinion' (1895: 124). The general will depends on the people coming to a resolution 'when adequately informed and without any communication among the citizens' (1895: 122)

For our ideas of civil society and democracy today, the restrictions he imposed on free association and speech are breathtaking. Moreover we should note that Rousseau was contemptuous of the British representative government system of his day, should we be inclined to see that as modestly democratic for the time, precisely because it encouraged plural interests. He viewed it as faction breeding, divisive and anti-egalitarian.

There could be no legitimate collective interest apart from that of the sovereign people as a whole. We can thus discern in Rousseau already, modernity's fatal ambivalence towards communication: a way to disseminate the right ideas or the source of dissidence and discontent. Ironically his beloved democratic Geneva got the message only too well, promptly ordered his arrest and the burning of his book. The other elements in Rousseau's thinking are all palliatives for the fatal totalitarianism that infects his model republic. Recognising the illiberal danger he strove to thwart popular tyranny by asserting the need for rights, equality and civil liberty. He required the sovereign power to observe strict limits within its overall duty to protect its citizens and since him we have indeed come to regard rights, equality and liberty as necessary to, even constitutive of democracy itself. Yet his overriding concern to create a model not so much for democracy, which he regarded as suitable only for 'a nation of gods' (1895:160), but for a republican national state, a collective entity based on a direct relation with its citizens, provided a direct line to the excesses of the French Revolution and beyond. Rousseau speaks to our time in many different ways. His insistence on rights, equality and liberty is a permanent and strengthening feature of contemporary political discourse and, as a touchstone of democracy, it far outweighs the idea of representation that has fallen into as much disrepute with the public of today as it had for Rousseau. His idea of the general will has few admirers, but his

Box 1.1: A brief anatomy of a journalist's murder

On the afternoon of Friday 19 January 2007 a Turkish journalist of Armenian descent, Hrant Dink, was assassinated in Istanbul, outside of the offices of *Agos*, the weekly newspaper he edited. Internationally, commentators drew a comparison between Dink's murder and that of Anna Politkovskaya in Russia. Both journalists were awarded the '2007 IPA Freedom Prize - Special Award' posthumously in May 2007 by the International Publishers Association.

Nationally, Dink's murder sparked an intense debate, which focused generally on Armenian-Turkish relations and specifically on the perennial question of whether a genocide was committed in 1915 by the Ottoman administration against the Armenian population. Initial and subsequent reactions to the murder reflect the changing public discourse, which can be charted by examining media sources in the two-week period between the murder, the funeral and its immediate aftermath.

On the afternoon of the murder, the print media - through their Internet editions - were already broadcasting the news, with photos from the murder scene where there had been an immediate reaction by thousands of people who held a candlelit vigil in front of the newspaper office. One of the advantages of Internet newspapers editions is their provision for readers to post comments, and from the hundreds of comments posted that day the general shock and condemnation of the murder was clear. On one hand many people said that although they disagreed with Dink's views on the issue of the genocide, the act of murder was unacceptable in a civilised society. Others said that though they really did not know who Dink was or what he stood for, the killing of another journalist or intellectual represented the loss of another of Turkey's 'good children'. In this way they placed Dink with other journalists and scholars who have been assassinated in Turkey in the last 25 years. Such comments on Internet sites posted in this period generally agreed that Dink's murder was a conspiratorial act to hurt Turkey, which had been committed against all Turks and the country. Then, on the same day, media sources and television news channels broadcast the image of the suspected murderer caught on CCTV. Recognised by his family, the police caught the suspect later that weekend.

On Tuesday 23 January Dink's funeral took place in Istanbul attended by over 100,000 people, many of whom carried placards with the statement, 'We are all Armenians' or 'We are Hrant Dink'. Media coverage of this stimulated another change in people's views. While they condemned the murder still, they questioned the appropriateness of such slogans, and instead said, 'We are all Turkish'. Some questioned the sincerity of those who attended the funeral, suggesting perhaps that people were trying to create a good impression for the European Union and the US. Some asked, 'How many of these people had attended the funerals of soldiers killed in south eastern Turkey and claimed that they are Ahmed, Mehmet or Ali?'

In order to assess popular mood, the national daily, *Hürriyet*, conducted a nationwide survey through its website, asking the question: 'Was the slogan "We are all Armenian", right or wrong?' On 25 January, it was reported that, of the 320,958 people who responded, 52.2 % said it was wrong and 47 % said it was not wrong. There were thousands of comments posted on the websites of various newspapers about this issue, most of which questioned the rationale of this slogan and expressed their unhappiness about it, asserting their position in terms of Turkish national identity. Among the thousands of comments posted on websites, those who agreed with the slogan were not strongly represented.

The next major focus of media coverage on 1 February was a video of the suspect pictured between two police officers, holding a Turkish flag. Still photos taken from the video appeared in newspapers, galvanising another huge response on websites. The video and still images were presented by broadcast and print media as a scandal: a murderer, who had committed a crime against society, was associated with the national symbol. In other words, the images offended a broad spectrum of people, including those who had reacted against the slogans and those who joined the funeral. Also, the assassin's earlier statement, that he had committed the crime because of news about Dink that had stirred his nationalistic

feelings, created an important debate. Many argued that while they too had a strong national identity and feelings, killing someone because of their views did not play any part in that identity.

Throughout this period another set of issues regularly appeared among the Internet comments, which illustrates another aspect of the media's role in public debate. If Dink was such a patriot and working for the good of the country, these commentators asked, why was he not presented in the media as such before the murder. Others questioned the role of the media in conducting what they saw as inflammatory public opinion surveys. The former comments refer to an earlier episode, which led to Dink's six-month suspended sentence in October 2006 under the controversial Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code for the crime of 'insulting Turkishness'. In this period his comments on the genocide and the need for open debate about taboo topics in Turkey were treated sceptically by the media.

The public responses to the murder and how these were presented in the media demonstrates various roles played by the media. While different types of media act as a medium for participation in public debates, newspapers also contribute to the substance of the discussion as civil society actors. This is evident in newspaper websites and on YouTube where over 400 entries were posted after the murder. In the aftermath of the murder, new media provided public forums for broader discussion, which being virtual, allowed people outside Turkey to comment. The role of media as a public forum is a more subtle and long-term process. One aspect of this role can be observed in the way events are reported from the moment of the murder up until the above-mentioned survey. Another aspect can be seen from the ways in which the media have reported Dink's earlier trial, debates on the genocide issue, the trials of writers Orhan Pamuk and Elif Şafak under Article 301 in 2006, and pressures from the EU on these issues. Under these conditions, in terms of the comments that appear on websites, it is not clear whether the media are merely conduits for people's views, or whether the way they frame the debate has an entrenching influence on nationalism in society.

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anxieties about information, free association and shared values anticipated the dilemmas of a unitary nation state.

Fast forward to the 1920s and we find those dilemmas the focus of a famous exchange between Walter Lippman (1889-1974), regarded by many as the founder of media studies (Carey 1989), and John Dewey (1859-1952), the leading philosopher representative of American pragmatism. They addressed precisely the failings of the large-scale nation state that Rousseau had sought to forestall.

One hundred and sixty years of experience bore out Rousseau's worst fears. Human beings could effect democracy in small communities but both Lippman and Dewey saw it failing in 'the Great Society'. This was the title of the book (1914) by Graham Wallas (1858-1932), the first Professor of Political Science at the LSE, who viewed representative democracy as unable to create the same cohesion. He argued that specialised fields of knowledge and work became ever more complex and distant from citizens and each other, and that interest groups competed to exercise influence on government. Wallas addressed his book to Lippman, who had earlier attended his discussion class at Harvard. Lippman responded to him with his book *Public Opinion* (1922) seeking to find a remedy for the ills that he saw as coming to disastrous culmination in the Great War of 1914-18. The public opinion of the great national societies was a partial, compressed, distorted picture of a world beyond reach, formed into stereotypes to fit self-perceived interests, then easily manipulated and led into war.

The small rural community that inspired Jefferson's vision of democracy, 'guided somewhat by Jean Jacques Rousseau' (Lippman 1922: 267) confined consent and community within the frontiers of self-governing groups and correspondingly assumed that the only knowledge necessary was that available to a village jack-of-all-trades. But the knowledge required for a mass democracy in industrial society in Lippman's view necessitated a new political science, one that would inform the people's representatives and responsible administrators through a system of intelligence bureaux devoted to gathering and analysing social data. Expert judgement was to replace stereotype and public opinion was to be educated to the point of understanding its purpose.

Dewey agreed with the diagnosis, but not the

remedy. 'Till the Great Society is converted into a Great Community, the Public will remain in eclipse. Communication can alone create a great community' (Dewey 1927: 324). His communication was grounded not in public information but in 'relations of personal intercourse in the local community' (1927: 371). The articulate public Dewey called for depended on a responsive and vivid art of communication. It would take charge of the machinery of transmission and circulation, thus creating the free and enriching communion known as democracy (1927: 350).

Eighty years ago Dewey sounded utopian but his dispute with Lippman anticipates so many of the contested issues of our own day that we cannot simply regard it as of merely antiquarian interest. They may have written in a world dominated by competing imperialisms and intensifying conflict between nation states. But their formulations still intimated theoretical possibilities for a world that might, in the future, be organised in a different way.

Public spheres beyond the state

Translated now to the global level, in some ways Lippman's 'network of intelligence bureaux in politics and industry' (1922: 394) anticipates well the global policy networks of government officials, multilateral institutions and think tanks. But for many, including Noam Chomsky (Chomsky and Herman 1988), he is also the spokesperson for manipulated and manufactured public opinion. This is the dark interpretation of the phenomenon Monroe Price points to in Chapter 3, the way nation states are working hard to domesticate global broadcasting entities. States may even find global suppliers of news and information more congenial occupiers of airtime than homegrown opposition and, in a world where they accept the dominance of the global economy, less destabilising.

On the other hand Dewey, in spite of his nostalgic communitarianism, in our time of digital, interactive, Internet-based technology seems to speak as the animating spirit of civil society-led global communication. His local community was not cut off from the wider world by national boundaries. It was to be the vital node for transmitting democratic values. Anticipating Habermas, he declared 'The Great Community in the sense of free and full intercommunication' will only work through trans-local associations that feed into the intimate unions.

'Democracy must begin at home' (1927: 367-8). 'Fraternity, liberty and equality isolated from communal life are hopeless abstractions' (1927: 329).

We can argue whether Dewey would have considered web chat groups to be local but his sense of the mutual determination of technology and discourse should guard us against any tendency to treat new models of democracy as the reflex of technology. We can trace a direct line from him, through Habermas to the thinking about deliberative democracy that predates the Internet (Dryzek 1990, 2000; Held 2006: 231-55). But clearly, Dewey did not conceptualise democracy in exclusively national terms. The limits of such conceptualisations manifest themselves in two directions. First, as Ricardo Blaug has pointed out, the very abstracted preoccupation with the national level erodes the credibility of such theories. Little attention is paid to the actual small-scale group practices the theories are built on, the practices on which Dewey built his hopes. '[S]uch a lack is particularly troubling in deliberative democratic theory ... precisely because such fora are appealed to in order to provide the fair discursive input required for the state to be legitimate.' (Blaug 1999: 131)

Second, in their original version these 'island-polity' theories do not help in rescuing democracy under conditions of globalisation. But it appears that the concepts can be taken beyond the imagination of their creators. The current popularity of the notion of the public sphere, and of civil society conceived as having a primarily communicative political function, appears to be precisely related to processes of political globalisation. The fact that these are political concepts rooted not in the state but in society makes it possible and even desirable to begin thinking of them outside any necessary context of the state. Fraser advances this line of thinking by arguing that perhaps participatory democracy does not need a single public sphere, but multiple ones that contest each other (Fraser 1992).

Keane describes global public spheres as:

sites within global civil society where power struggles are visibly waged and witnessed by means other than violence and war: they are the narrated, imagined non-violent spaces within global civil society in which millions of people at various points on the earth witness

the powers of governmental and non-governmental organisations being publicly named, monitored, praised and condemned, defying the old tyrannies of time and space... [but] few of these are reducible to the dynamics of rational-critical argumentation about matters of sober truth and calm agreement. (Keane 2003: 169)

A recent volume edited by Peter Wagner has pointed out that, once Hegel is left out of the picture, there is in fact a historical tradition of civil society theory less predicated on the state. It defines civil society as 'a virtual space for deliberation that contains a plurality of yet undecided possibilities.' Civil society does need political institutions to consolidate and enforce decisions, but 'it is equally central...to think about this question in problematic terms. Civil society's need for institutions opens possibilities to which the already constituted contemporary state is only one of the many responses' (Wagner 2006: 231-232). However, it is not sufficient to just take the concepts of 'civil society' and 'public sphere' as found in the state-based tradition and stick the word 'global' in front of them. Selchow shows how such 'natural' usage of 'global' may only entrench what are primarily national outlooks, as in the US government's 'global war on terror'. Far more theoretical and empirical research is necessary before we can begin to understand how, or even whether, civil society in its communicative, legitimising aspect might function under the current much more confused political dispensation. We are, however, convinced that the old conceptual usages confined to nation states are now of strictly limited relevance.

In Chapter 6, de Oliveira urges national politicians to change their tune and engage differently with emancipated citizens and their technologies. We doubt whether they have the ability to do so. It is not just a matter of personality or style of governance: to some extent, they simply inhabit the wrong framework. First, is doubtful whether it would be possible under any circumstances to reform the command-and-control structure that is paradigmatic of the modern state into a more dynamic, horizontal, network-driven political structure. Second, the crisis of representative democracy cannot be separated from globalisation processes. Contemporary national governments have neither the capacity to deal with border-crossing phenomena that nowadays affect almost every area of politics, nor do they have the

policy space to deviate significantly from neo-liberal prescriptions. It is therefore inadequate to think of the public spheres and public debates de Oliveira describes primarily in national terms. Instead they can begin to be a response, from global civil society, to the 'overlapping communities of fate' problem in contemporary politics.

The fact that we are only beginning to theorise the relationship between global civil society and the global public sphere expresses itself in the loose and varied use of the two expressions in the emerging literature. In Habermas, the associations of civil society are mediators between private individuals and the public sphere, distilling, transmitting, institutionalising discourses and inserting them into the public sphere (Habermas 1996: 367). In Keane on the other hand, just quoted above, multiple global public spheres are located inside global civil society. For Kaldor, the global public sphere is 'a global space where non-instrumental communication can take place' (Kaldor 2003: 8), while global civil society is the medium through which the social contract is negotiated. Eventually, after perhaps another decade of scholarship, this conceptual jumble on the relationship between our three key terms, global civil society, global public sphere and democracy will crystallise itself into more sharply defined positions. At this point, where we are all collectively groping towards a clearer comprehension of the emerging concepts and realities, we have left the field completely open for each author in this Yearbook to formulate their own understanding of the concepts and their interrelations.

Most authors in this volume treat both global civil society and the global public sphere either as an existing reality, or at the least as an achievable ideal. But are such assumptions at all justified? Critiques of global civil society have been aired in many previous Yearbooks. Here, we give some attention to the trenchant critiques of the notion of the 'global public sphere'.

Critiques of the global public sphere

In Habermas' ideal public sphere, 'access is guaranteed to all citizens' (1989: 136). But access is in fact limited in many ways. First there are those who explicitly exclude themselves from deliberative fora they deem illegitimate. As Iris Marion Young puts it, they typically 'make public noise outside while deliberation is supposedly taking place on the inside',

although sometimes they 'invade the houses of deliberation and disrupt their business' (Young 2001: 673). These disrupters, well-known figures in global civil society, can still be considered as part of the public sphere. They do after all 'aim to communicate specific ideas to a wide public' (2001: 676). They do, however, test the limits of the public sphere-related conception of civil society, particularly when the method of disruption is violent (see Albrow and Anheier 2006). Much more numerous are those who cannot participate.

First, access to global public spheres is still restricted by governments (see Chapter 5). Beyond deliberate obstruction by states, there is a wider problem with participation. As Ricardo Blaug puts it wryly:

Whether due to there being simply too many of us, to the excessive complexity and interdependence of the problems we face, to a perceived inefficiency of deliberation, or to a perceived lack of ability and motivation on the part of the demos, democratic theorists since Plato have taught us that the people, while being sovereign, require structures that limit their participation (Blaug 1999: 132).

The UN Panel on UN-Civil Society Relations follows in this tradition. It describes participatory democracy as a process in which 'anyone can enter the debates that most interest them, through advocacy, protest, and in other ways' (UN 2004: paragraph 13). But a few pages later it acknowledges that there are practical constraints: 'if the United Nations brought everyone relevant into each debate, it would have endless meetings without conclusion' (2004: paragraph 23).

Not only is participation limited, it is typically limited in ways that confirm existing power imbalances: 'under conditions of structural inequality, normal processes of deliberation often in practice restrict access to agents with greater resources, knowledge, or connections to those with greater control over the forum' (Young 2001: 680). Even at the very local level, Young sums up a number of barriers to participation by 'anyone with an interest':

Even when a series of public hearings are announced for an issue, people who might wish to speak at them need to know about them, be able to arrange their work and child care schedule to be able to attend, be able to get to

them, and have enough understanding of the hearing process to participate. Each of these abilities is unevenly present among members of a society. (Young 2001: 680)

These constraints are of course multiplied at the global level. Discussions of inequality of access to public debates often focus rather crudely on geographical representation. The 'North' is over-represented, the 'South' muted. But many more subtle exclusions also operate. Almost without exception, the 'voices of global civil society' belong to an English-speaking, university-educated, computer-literate middle class. Within that class access to information is limited again by the commercial logic of websites and search engines. As Vincent Price points out in Chapter 1, Google channels the bulk of users to a set of sites produced mainly by the big media corporations. James Deane in Chapter 8 provides an extensive review of the tendencies towards the appropriation of communicative power and the consequent contraction of the public sphere. He highlights the use of the 'war on terror' to restrict freedom of expression, the concentration of media ownership, dependency on advertising, and a growth in the number of outlets that actually stifle genuine diversity of opinion.

As if universal access was not a tall enough order, a functioning public sphere also requires that all voices must be equally able to make themselves heard. As Benhabib has formulated it:

each participant must have an equal chance to initiate and to continue communication; each must have an equal chance to make assertions, recommendations, and explanations; all must have equal chances to express their wishes, desires and feelings; and finally, within dialogue, speakers must be free to thematize those power relations that in ordinary contexts would constrain the wholly free articulation of opinions and positions (Benhabib 1992: 89).

Inequalities in status based on gender, race, class, education or income are to 'bracketed', i.e. for the purposes of the dialogue they are to be treated as if they did not exist.

Finally, the public sphere requires the actors in it (to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the theorist) to be willing to abide by particular rules of process, and display a certain measure of respect for

each other. At the minimum this would involve a rejection of using violence against each other. The nation state was to some extent capable of enforcing such respect, and excluding those who would not follow the rules of the process. In global civil society there is no such enforcement, and contributions to our book clearly show that conceptualisations of actually existing global civil society as prepared to voluntarily observe such rules are naïve. The National Rifle Association, discussed by Clifford Bob in Chapter 10, may be willing to abide by rules of non-violent debate, even if its ultimate aim is to arm everyone, but for the producers and publishers of *Jihad* videos, described by Thomas Keenan in the same Chapter, violence itself is the means of communication.

Much academic critique has been addressed to removing any lingering notion that these ideal conditions existed, or exist today, in liberal democracies (Fraser 1992; Benhabib 1992; Young 2001). The notion that equal access, equality of expression and mutual respect can exist in the uneven and fragile spaces of actually existing global civil society seem preposterous by comparison. These conditions can indeed only exist among a 'nation of gods'. They do not obtain on earth or in cyberspace.

Finally, even if an ideal-typical public sphere were taking shape in global civil society, one may wonder how it could eliminate the tendency to concentrate power. Instead of the kind of formal equality of access that the ideal type of the global public sphere requires, what is developing, in Monroe Price's analysis, are precisely the kind of inequalities of power that correspond to the formal equalities of market capitalism. Everyone going around expressing opinions, even freely and equally, is not enough. A democratic theory must also have something to do with decision making. In Habermas' conception, public opinion was somehow informing governmental decision making. How this link operated was always a problematic aspect of the theory, but it has not been theorised at all for the messy power landscape of political globalisation.

Building a global public sphere

These critiques seem to undermine the possibilities for new democratic forms based on civil society-as-communication. But there may be a rescue from a quarter that political theorists tend to neglect: actually existing global civil society. The ideal of a public sphere, or multiple spheres, of decision

making based on communication and deliberation, has escaped from the clutches of the theorists into the real world. Global civil society as-is may not correspond to the ideal of a public sphere where free and equal deliberation takes place between all global citizens. But what one does find in global civil society is some adherents to the ideal, and numerous shaky attempts to practice it.

The new social movements of the 1970s already showed some affinity with this ideal, causing Habermas to revise his view of the public sphere from something once briefly glimpsed in the Enlightenment that could never return, to a 'less pessimistic assessment' of an ideal for which one could strive in practice (1992: 457). Since then, the newer global movements that have emerged have even more explicitly sought their salvation in an alternative politics of communication. The 'hacker ethic' of the first generation of computer geeks launched a wholesale attack on the foundations of modernity: the work ethic, the notion of private property, and command-and-control structures of governance (Himanen 2001). But the most enduring characteristic of that ethic has been the emphasis on 'open access' and free flows of information and communication, which has to date determined the architecture of the Internet. Beside this paramount achievement, the broad movement has spawned numerous other civil society initiatives built on the same norms, including the earliest internet worked email networks, the free software and open source movements, the Indymedia centres, Wikipedia. These are all expressions of, and contributions to, 'an emerging techno-political ethos' (Juris 2005) in global civil society. This ethos has now spread far beyond the original Western left-wing hacktivists: Box 1.2 describes how the resistance of a single couple of Chinese homeowners to property developers became a *cause celebre* by moving from the blogosphere into the Chinese and Western mainstream media.

But the ideal has not only inspired cyberspace. The opening phrases of the World Social Forum Charter, now adopted by hundreds of regional, national and local social forums, could have been written by Habermas or Benhabib themselves. According to the Charter, a social forum 'is an open meeting place for reflective thinking, democratic debate of ideas, formulation of proposals, free exchange of experiences' etc. As the social forums chapter in

Global Civil Society 2005/6 put it, they 'give rise to uneven attempts to practise politics in horizontal, network-based ways that are meant to be more participatory and democratic than conventional structures' (Glasius and Timms, 2006: 190). Six years on from the first World Social Forum, our data suggest that the majority of social forums tend to survive, and new ones continue to be founded. (see map in record 9) Deliberative democracy has flown off the pages of the theorists' scholarly works and become a real-life aspiration for civil society activists.

In their transnational practices and focus on global issues, such as Darfur, climate change, or the Iraq war, these activists enact themes that have been central to theories of public opinion formation. As Vincent Price points out, the discursive model of public opinion formation sees it 'as part of a multifaceted social response to the widely shared problems recognised as issues.' The highly differentiated nature of this public with civil society activists as leaders and mass audiences is entirely congruent with global opinion formation under globalised conditions.

Moreover that discursive model has its impact in turn on the practices of NGOs, sensing the demands of a global public opinion and responding to the urgings of activists. In Chapter 7 Helmut Anheier's and Amber Hawkes' review of the shifting locus of accountability shows the backlash against the gross excesses of capitalist organisations like Enron has gathered pace and extended to NGOs, and joined up with a broader sense of social accountability that informs debate about new kinds of democracy for a globalised world. The self-critique of capitalist organisations looks suspiciously like the demand for participatory democracy and the checks and balances that advocates of communicative power to the people have long demanded. We might say 'suspiciously like' of course, because this rapprochement between the agents and critics of the global corporation looks very like a replay of the earlier compact between governments and NGOs. The rise of private equity that bypasses the constraints on public corporations suggests new power strategies by the owners of capital. We may now be moving to a new stage of the continuing struggle to sustain democracy: a kind of democracy-lite in the form of accountability being forced upon and embraced by the corporate sector.

It is in the practices of activists themselves where

Box 1.2: 'China's Last Nailhouse'

In 1999, the term blog – literally 'web-log' – was coined. Since then, blogging has burgeoned – an estimated 75.2 million blogs have been indexed by Technorati (Technorati 2007). Blogging is enabled by the standard format software of the Web 2.0 user generated content platform, which allows anyone with a computer and Internet access to create, and easily update, their personal website or diary. It is not only the number of bloggers around the world, but the nature of this new sphere of communication that has important implications for global civil society, the mainstream media, governments of all political hues, and democracy.

One of the most beneficial and important effect of blogs must be the provision of alternative sources of information to the mainstream media, particularly in countries where traditional print and broadcast outlets may be censored (Pain 2005). The window bloggers open on events not covered by state-controlled media is of interest to activists, journalists and ordinary citizens alike, both within and beyond the country concerned. The fact that journalists in the mainstream media pay attention to blogs, and vice versa, and that newspapers and broadcasters encourage readers and listeners to respond and engage in online debates, indicates the extent to which the interactivity of the blogging phenomenon is changing how we communicate.

In non-democratic contexts, where blogging has proved a particularly attractive tool for dissidents and activists, the targeting of bloggers has increased in the last five years (see Boxes 5.4 and 5.5 in Chapter 5 of this volume). In such contexts, it would be easy to portray the blogger-state relationship as one of David and Goliath in the battle for freedom of expression, but the reality is more complex. Extremist views and incivility are inevitable in a system that is neither regulated nor mediated. Some commentators (admittedly mainstream journalists) argue that backbiting and lack of purpose is stalling the development of the blogosphere, which according to journalist Tim Dowling, is 'a seemingly intemperate, foul mouthed, grotesquely misogynistic community where no-one can spell and everyone is blessed with a surfeit of time' (Dowling 2007).

Such issues have met with two main responses. First, the creation of blog 'consolidators', which select blogs from around the world, aggregate them, and encourage debate that is regulated. Global Voices Online (URL) is one such initiative, founded in 2004 by Harvard Law School's Berkman Center for Internet and Society, which welcomes comments from anyone but moderates posts to weed out spam, hate speech and pornography. Second, and more ambitious, are proposals for self-regulation, most recently by Tim O'Reilly (who coined the phrase Web 2.0) and Jimmy Wales (founder of Wikipedia). They proposed a 'Blogger Code of Conduct', 'to promote personal expression and constructive conversation,' with kite-marks for those who comply (Blogging Wikia URL). However, this idea met with a predictable response from those who believe the lack of regulation is a key principle of the blogosphere (see for example Freedland 2007).

With so many and varied effects, it may be too soon to evaluate definitively the impacts of this young and evolving sphere of communication. However, its rich complexities and often unexpected effects encourage examination of a single, much-blogged incident in 2007, selected from a myriad possible examples, in the hope of better understanding some of the implications of the blogosphere – in particular for ordinary people.

'China's Last Nail House'¹ was first reported by bloggers in China on 27 February 2007. They relayed the story of couple Wu Ping and Wang Yu who since 2004 had fought against the demolition of their modest house to make way for a new development in the city of Chongqing, south west China². Bloggers differed over the history and details of the story. But there was greater consensus about one thing: Wu Ping's feisty resistance of the developer and the authorities in defence of her rights made for a compelling story. Striking photographs of the slim, ramshackle building, perched atop the last unexcavated sliver of land in the midst of a huge construction site, doubtless kindled people's curiosity and appeal for the media – the house, adorned variously with protest banner and Wang Yu waving the Chinese flag, could be seen clearly from Chongqing's railway station.

From Chinese blogs, the story entered the mainstream media, both local and national, print and broadcast. Even the state run *China Daily* reported the story (URL). An illustration of the seamless traverse of information between

¹ *Ding zi hu* literally 'nail house' in Chinese, refers to a household or person who refuses to vacate their home to make way for property development. Nail houses literally stick out like nails in an otherwise modern environment, and their owners, just like nails, refuse to be beaten down, to give in. See http://www.virtual-china.org/2007/01/shanghai_stron.html

² Many blogs, in English and Chinese, posted this story. For English language blogs, see <http://venture160.wordpress.com/2007/03/08/chinas-most-incredible-holdout/#comment-7> <http://www.globalvoicesonline.org/2007/03/22/china-homeowners-hold-their-ground/>

mainstream media and blogosphere was provided by blogger 'Matt', of *The Coffee House* (URL), who translated and posted the *Peering Into the Interior* post of 8 March (itself a translation of the *Southern Metropolis Daily* report), only to find the Chongqing Nail House pictured in Britain's *Daily Mirror* on 14 March (and in Metro Online edition of 11 March URL). 'Amazing how news stories go from obscurity to a global audience in a relatively short time frame these days. It's the Google thing ... and now anyone can play reporter!' says Matt (*The Coffee House* URL). This was the beginning of what was dubbed 'a media frenzy' over an incident that had been 'frothed up like crazy on the Web', according to Chongqing Mayor Wang Hongju (Gaofeng 2007). Newspapers and broadcasters around the world featured the story including, to name a few, *The New York Times*, *The International Herald Tribune*, the BBC, CNN, *The Globe and Mail*, and *The Guardian*. And in the 1,380,000 hits Google returns for 'China's last nail house' there must be many more media reports.

Debates in the blogosphere about this mainstream coverage ensued, not all of them complimentary. However, despite frequent disparagement from both sides, the relationship between bloggers and journalists is perhaps more mutually beneficial than either are prepared to admit – at the very least, as illustrated above, information flows rapidly between these spheres, adding to knowledge and magnifying interest. A catalyst to the 'Last Nail House' story spiraling around the world was Zola Zhou, 26, who arrived in Chongqing to investigate further, inspired by a self-professed sense of justice and the fear that coverage would be soon be censored (Zuola URL). John Kennedy, of Global Voices, translated the 23 March blog of Zhou, dubbed the 'nation's first citizen reporter':

As everyone knows, some reports of news like this which involves the government will surely never be reported, and [online] stories will be deleted at the request of unknown 'relevant departments'. There had been a Sina blog reporting 24 hours a day on the situation, but that blog later disappeared. That's why I realised this is a one-time chance, and so from far, far away I came to Chongqing to conduct a thorough investigation, in an attempt to understand a variety of viewpoints. (Kennedy 2007)

Indeed, the Chinese government reportedly attempted to suppress mainstream media coverage of the story and blocked online access to it via Google (Qiang 2007). Zhou's thorough and insightful investigation, during which he stumbled upon an unexpected discovery, may have contributed to the authorities' concern about the implications of the extensive media coverage (Global Voices URL). He found that people from as far away as Zhuhai, Chengdu, Xian and Shanghai, had come to Chongqing in the hope of publicising their stories of lost homes, inadequate or no compensation, and sometimes forced evictions. Among them was Mr Chen, from Zhuhai, Guangdong, who told Zhou that his home was torn down after residents were lured out of the building and beaten; and Ms Lui, of Chongqing, who protested against the inadequate compensation for her house in Huaxin village, Yu district (Global Voices URL).

Mr Chen heard about Chongqing's Nail House on Phoenix Television. It seems that the extensive coverage and passage of a new law guaranteeing private property rights (which Wu Ping used in her defence), galvanised others who felt similarly wronged to vent their feelings in a bid for redress. According to Yang Zhizhu, assistant professor at the China Youth University for Political Science, 'It was precisely the universality across the country of this brutal eviction and demolition, of insufficient or delayed compensation, that generated such sympathy and support for the "toughest nail house"' (quoted by Bandurski 2007). Struggles between residents and developers are common in China's rapidly developing cities, and the implications of the agreement reached eventually over the Chongqing Nail House for citizens' rights and the public sphere were discussed widely online and in print.

In addition to catalysing ordinary citizens in China, the Chongqing saga encouraged the exchange of similar experiences over the blogosphere. For example, 'Louise' describes a struggle between Brooklyn developers and residents:

The situation is not that different here in Brooklyn, USA. Developers want to seize six homes that residents claim are part of the Underground Railroad of the Civil War era. The City has tried all sorts of tactics to discredit the residents. It seems like the same story gets repeated over and over: 'selfish and possibly crazy holdouts preventing progress.' (Virtual China URL)

The blogosphere is a communication space where the struggles over rights, hitherto defined as national, involve an appeal to an aspiration for transnational, or global, standards.

Fiona Holland, Centre for the Study of Global Governance, LSE

¹ As of 15 April 2007.

we find responses adequate to the challenge posed by the unprecedented levels of the power of capital. For instance, as Victor Pickard describes in Chapter 10, Indymedia is committed to radical democratic practices in its networks both locally and globally, yet whether this is adequate to the task of democratising global governance is open to question when, as Clifford Bob shows, the same technologies are open to the National Rifle Association and, as Thomas Keenan describes, are central to the idea of global *Jihad*. Deane shows that activists are now going beyond attempts to practice deliberative democracy within their own spaces, to address global governance structures with the new norm of a 'right to communicate.' Yet that right has to be guaranteed in some way and the dilemmas around which the debate between Lippman and Dewey revolved, between management of information, individual participation and democratic decision making, are ever more acute in a world confronted with global issues that require collective responses. Global civil society is forced to engage with state structures if it is to secure their democratisation. It has to take communicative democracy to the centre of state power if it is to build global governance and redress the inequalities that stand in the way of adequate action on a global scale.

The climate change debate: evidence for a global public sphere?

The climate change debate is an interesting case for the hypothesis of a global public sphere, in that mutual accusations of shutting down debate are an integral part of the debate itself. There is no doubt that the environmental mainstream would in fact like to close part of the debate, namely that part that still questions whether climate change is occurring and whether it is caused by human behaviour, in order to move on to discussing policy and behavioural change. Continuing to give air to the climate change sceptics gives politicians somewhere to hide, and obstructs progress on the latter half of the agenda. But from the vantage point of the public sphere as a form of democratic practice, any attempt to shut down other voices is problematic. What, if any, should be the limits to what can be debated in a global public sphere, and who sets the limits? Holocaust denial is criminalised in many countries, although in Iran it is government policy. But can climate change denial really be likened to Holocaust denial? Climate

sceptics see such equivalence as only a first step, and warn darkly of eco-dictatorship, predicated on the notion that human beings will not adapt their consumptive behaviours willingly.

In an ideal-typical public sphere, attempting to shut down the 'whether' debate would not only violate the rules, but also be unnecessary. Faced with all the available evidence presented on both sides, the freely deliberating public would naturally make the 'right' choice, and public opinion would move on to discussing remedies. In Europe, the debate is indeed moving in that direction. According to de Oliveira's optimistic assessment, if the debate remains open and vibrant, no 'eco-fascist' measures will be required: in energy consumption as in other areas, the public, having understood what is necessary, is capable of profound behavioural change (see Chapter 6). This remains to be seen.

Of course, the climate change debate does not fulfil the ideal requirements of universal access and equality of voices anywhere in the world. But it is important to note that it is much more unequal in some places than in others. In the United States, the Union of Concerned Scientists found that ExxonMobil had funnelled nearly \$16 million between 1998 and 2005 to a network of 43 'climate sceptic' advocacy organisations in order to influence the debate (Union of Concerned Scientists 2007). Additionally, a majority of climate scientists working at federal agencies surveyed reported constraints in climate-related work, documenting 435 incidents of political interference over the past five years (Monbiot 2007). In such circumstances it takes the crowbar of a former US Vice-President's feature documentary to even open the debate.

How, or whether, the climate change debate is developing in other parts of the world is more difficult to assess. A poll by Worldpublicopinion.org renders some surprising results, which would appear to negate any relationship between general openness of the political climate and inclination to take action on climate change. According to this poll, Indians are least concerned, followed by Russians. Among the Chinese polled, on the other hand, 42% approve immediate action even at significant cost, and another 41% believes the problem needs to be tackled gradually with low cost policies (Worldpublicopinion.org 2007a). However, as Vincent Price warns, global polls of this kind come with severe methodological health

warnings, the usual problems of methodological variation, leading questions, and unrepresentative samples being compounded by cultural differences of understanding. And Africans, expected to experience the worst consequences of climate change, are not included in the poll.

It does seem likely that there are multiple global public spheres when it comes to climate change, partly determined by political boundaries and partly by political predilection, but they do stand in connection with each other. The reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, for instance, may be presumed to penetrate into the different spheres. The subject has in all likelihood gone beyond the level of the attentive public, and begun to impinge on the awareness of what Price calls 'mass audiences'. While the debate on 'whether' is polarised into two camps, the debate on remedies is far more varied, lively, and indeed deliberative. However, participation is very uneven, causing actors in global civil society to do much perilous speaking 'on behalf of' potentially threatened populations in parts of Africa or the Pacific islands. Meanwhile, it is clear that, probably due to a combination of influential reports and unusual weather, the climate change debate has experienced a sudden elevation to the higher regions of political agendas. To what extent policy and citizen behaviour will be affected remains open.

Conclusion

In the networks and forums surrounding global issues, civil society finds a powerful way to challenge governments and has discovered the full potential of rights to free speech and association that hitherto were national preserves. Even as governments resist the possibility of developing representative democracy for the globe, so the communicative democracy of civil society gains in legitimacy.

The possibilities this opens for the development of new models of democracy for the global age is one of the most exciting frontiers of knowledge and practice. Industrial society and nation states produced parliaments, elections and representation as modernity's characteristic institutional form, both in liberal or totalitarian states. Whether the global information society will generate an equivalent institutional locus for democracy is the big issue that this Yearbook leaves open.

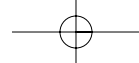
By addressing this issue civil society, as we now

know it, may find that it is the answer and not as Rousseau thought the problem. Even he conceded grudgingly that if there had to be private associations of citizens in the state, then it would be better for there to be more rather than fewer, 'that the people may not be deceived' (1762 [1895]: 124). It is the associational diversity of civil society that provides the basis for communicative democracy and a fertile contrast with the monolithic citizen-state relationship of representative democracy.

On past experience the new institutions will only develop and become adequate for the tasks ahead if global civil society debates democracy and communication for itself and the world at large as explicitly as did theorists of democracy for the modern age that has past. The Yearbook is our contribution to promoting that debate.

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