international Media *research*

A critical survey

d by John Corner, Philip Schlesinger and Roger Silverstone

INTERNATIONAL MEDIA RESEARCH

A critical survey

Edited by John Corner, Philip Schlesinger and Roger Silverstone

London and New York

First published 1997
by Routledge
11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada
by Routledge
29 West 35th Street, New York, NY 10001

First published in paperback 1998

Typeset in Times by
Ponting–Green Publishing Services, Chesham, Buckinghamshire
Printed and bound in Great Britain by
Redwood Books, Trowbridge, Wilts

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication Data
International media research: a critical survey / edited by John Corner, Philip Schlesinger and Roger Silverstone.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
(alk. paper)
1. Mass media–Research. 2. Mass media and culture.
3. Mass media policy. I. Corner, John, 1943– .
II. Schlesinger, Philip, 1948- . III. Silverstone, Roger.
P91.3.I56 1997
302.23–dc20 96–17635

ISBN 0–415–09035–0 (hbk)
ISBN 0–415–18496–7 (pbk)

CONTRIBUTORS

Jean-Claude Burgelman is currently Associate Professor at the National Fund of Scientific Research, University of Brussels, Belgium, where he formerly worked as a full-time researcher. He is Director of the research centre for the Study of New Media, Information and Telecommunication (SMIT), which is dedicated to long-term research into the societal aspects of communication technologies and services.

John Corner is Professor in the School of Politics and Communication Studies at the University of Liverpool. He has written extensively on broadcast journalism, media audiences and cultural analysis. His books include the edited collections, *Documentary and the Mass Media* (1986), *Popular Television in Britain* (1991), the co-authored study *Nuclear Reactions* (1990) and the monographs *Television Form and Public Address* (1995) and *The Art of Record: Critical Studies in Documentary* (1996).

Peter Dahlgren is Professor of Media and Communication Studies, Lund University, Sweden. His research and his teaching emphasize social and cultural theory, television analysis, journalism and the public sphere, qualitative methods, and philosophy of science. He has authored a number of articles and published *Television and the Public Sphere* (1995). He has also edited two volumes with Colin Sparks: *Journalism and Popular Culture* (1992) and *Communication and Citizenship* (1991).

Elizabeth Fox has an internationally recognized record of achievements in the field of Latin American communications. She has worked as a journalist, directed international aid programmes, designed and conducted multi-country development research on communication issues, and managed an office of strategic planning for a US government agency. Dr Fox has written numerous books, articles and manuals on Latin American development, communications, and health promotion. She presently directs the communications programme for Latin America for the BASICS Partnership for Child Survival.

Daniel C. Hallin is Professor of Communication at the University of California at San Diego, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of

California, Berkeley. He is author of *The 'Uncensored War': the Media and Vietnam*, and has written on coverage of Central America and on the Gulf War.

Joke Hermes is a lecturer in Media Studies at the University of Amsterdam. She has contributed theoretical and substantive work to a number of books and journals, including James Curran and Michael Gurevitch's collection *Mass Media and Society* (1991) and the *European Journal of Communication*. Her study of readership, *Reading Women's Magazines*, was published in 1995.

Sonia Livingstone is Programme Director of the M.Sc. in Media and Communications at the London School of Economics. Her research interests focus on the media audience, particularly the audience for such television genres as the soap opera, crime shows, talk shows and children's media. She is author of *Making Sense of Television* (1995) and co-author (with P. Lunt) of *Mass Consumption and Personal Identity* (1992) and *Talk on Television* (1994).

Vincent Mosco is Professor in the School of Journalism and Communication at Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada. He received his Ph.D. from Harvard where he currently holds a research position with the Program on Information Resources Policy. His most recent book is *The Political Economy of Communication: Rethinking and Renewal* (1996) and he is a member of the editorial boards of academic journals in the USA, Canada, England and Spain.

Vanda Rideout is completing her doctoral dissertation in Sociology at Carleton University. Recent publications with V. Mosco, include, 'Communication policy in the United States' in M. Bailie, D. Winseck, S.H. Yoon (eds) *Democratizing Communication? Comparative Perspectives in Information and Power* (forthcoming), and 'Telecommunication policy for whom?', in *Alternate Routes* (1993).

Philip Schlesinger is Professor and Director of the Stirling Media Research Institute at the University of Stirling, Scotland. He is also a Professor of Media and Communication at the University of Oslo and is presently engaged in research on political communication and democracy and on Europeanization and national identity. Among his recent books are *Media, State and Nation* (1991), and the co-authored studies *Women Viewing Violence* (1992) and *Reporting Crime* (1994). He is an editor of the journal *Media, Culture and Society*.

Roger Silverstone is Professor of Media and Communications at the London School of Economics and Political Science. He is the author of *The Message of Television: Myth and Narrative in Contemporary Culture* (1981); *Framing Science: the Making of a BBC Documentary* (1985); *Television and Everyday Life* (1994); and is the editor of *Consuming Technologies: Media and Information in Domestic Spaces* (with Eric Hirsch) (1992); *Communication by Design: the Politics of Information and Communication Technology* (with Robin Mansell) (1996); and *Visions of Suburbia* (1996).

Colin Sparks works at the Centre for Communication and Information Studies of the University of Westminster. His current research is concerned with the restructuring of the media, particularly television, in the former communist countries. He has published widely on this subject, on the UK press and television industries, and on cultural theories. He is a member of the editorial board of *Media, Culture and Society*, and a director of the European Institute for Communication and Culture.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book began in discussions between the editors following an approach by Routledge to produce a reference work for media research. We felt that the appropriate response should not be an encyclopaedia but a book, or a series of volumes, which would aim to provide authoritative reviews of recent developments in key areas: to report, to reflect and to comment. This is the outcome.

The fact that the editing of this volume has been demanding could no doubt be warmly testified to by our authors. Despite having experienced a detailed level of editorial intervention, they have been patient and cooperative in reworking their material. Indeed the complexity of the editorial process only gradually emerged as we realized that, in trying to define the standards that might be attained by a book of this kind, we were asking more of our contributors than was perhaps customary.

For each of the chapters we have sought comprehensiveness and clarity. At the same time, we have not asked authors to write to a formula. We have encouraged them to speak with a distinctive voice regarding their objects of analysis and to bring a balanced assessment to bear so that the reader would come away from any given contribution with a good sense of a range of approaches and findings. Most of the essays are followed by annotated bibliographies intended to highlight the key works for those who wish to study further the themes covered. Occasionally, the individual writer has done the essential bibliographical work in the chapter itself, and in those cases we have judged it unnecessary to carry a separate bibliographical section. It is our intention that the book will be used both by media researchers and teachers in higher education institutions internationally, offering some authoritative reviews of the literature which are at the same time strongly personal statements of what is important in the areas selected.

We have chosen our authors with care. Each of them is an established and accomplished scholar in the field and together they provide a broad and, above all, an international array of perspectives on some of the key areas of recent and contemporary media research.

We would like, finally, to record our thanks to the two associate editors, Marjorie Ferguson and Jérôme Bourdon, and to our editor at Routledge, Rebecca Barden, each for their patience and their help.

CONTENTS

1

EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

John Corner, Philip Schlesinger and Roger Silverstone

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

In recent years, media research has enjoyed explosive growth as the centrality of the media to contemporary societies has increasingly imposed itself on our consciousness. It has become more and more obvious that, with the internationalization of media institutions, products and consumption, media research cannot be limited to what happens within given, national frontiers; at the same time, the rapidly expansive nature of recent academic investigation, while most often still profoundly steeped in national traditions, has been on an increasingly international scale as the field entrenches itself more widely in all continents.

The pace of work has been such as to allow little time for reflection within the research community on the factors that have shaped specific areas of investigation, and in particular, those where we have shed most light, and those patches of darkness that still remain. Despite the plethora of monographs, edited collections and journals that have appeared, there has been much less by way of considered assessment of overall findings in the most densely researched areas than might be expected. The conventional forms of publishing have simply not provided sufficient space for extended analysis on the scope and limitations of existing achievements. Bearing this perspective in mind, the present collection is the beginning of an attempt to provide the necessary elbow-room for a wide-ranging set of individual explorations.

So this book responds to our sense that it is now time for a deeper evaluation of the present state of media research than is customary. We think of this collection of lengthy essays not as complete in itself but rather as the first of several such surveys of the field over the coming years, and ask our readers to interpret it in that light. Clearly, therefore, we do not intend the book to be taken as an exhaustive account of the present state of play but rather to be read as a contribution that will both illustrate and illuminate several major themes judged to be both of interest and importance for those engaged in media scholarship.

In this introductory chapter we want to look, first, at some features of the field as it has been constituted historically, noting not only the difficulties in achieving a coherent intellectual and academic identity but also the continuities with current concerns. We then want to comment briefly on three themes that we identify as

of particular significance and which are developed in different ways throughout this book. These are: the comparison between circumstances in North America and Europe; the changing form of the linkage between states, markets and media systems; and the perennial question of the relationship between research and policy. In a final section we look at some prospects (and some problems) for future enquiry before introducing the chapters themselves.

THE HISTORICAL FORMATION OF THE RESEARCH FIELD

As John Durham Peters has recently remarked, 'the future of the field depends in many ways on coming to terms with the past of the field'. This is a past not only of routes taken but of routes ignored and, indeed, sometimes of routes actively discouraged. Towards the end of this introduction we look at the present shape of media research, but it may be useful here to reflect briefly on key elements in its making.

There is a sense in which 'mass communication' (or more recently 'media research') is, internationally, a project which has been in a sometimes precarious state of formation for over fifty years. Its history is far less a matter of tracing a narrow, continuous strand of specialized enquiry than of looking at a rather disparate and still not fully documented succession of theoretical projects, empirical engagements and often heated debates. Right from the start, in the separate kinds of intellectual response in Europe and North America to the emergence of modernity, public communication and 'mass culture', the field has never consolidated itself fully as an international academic enterprise.

The separate national and historical contexts occasioned by, for instance, the propaganda campaigns of 1930s European fascism, by American preoccupations post-World War II, both with public opinion and with the world's most aggressive young advertising industry, and by the longstanding concern of the British literary intelligentsia about declining cultural values, produced radically different starting points for enquiry. We may note, however, that some form of anxiety about some form of influence was a factor held in common across the diversity and it is only recently, as we shall discuss later, that this has become less so.

Even in the United States, where from the 1930s onwards the most sustained and ambitious programmes of research into 'mass communication' were undertaken from within the social sciences, there was a running anxiety about the coherence of the field, related to an eagerness (which has continued through to this day) to spot 'convergence' wherever it showed itself. So much so that Bernard Berelson, albeit with polemical intent, was able to offer an obituary for the entire enterprise in his famous *Public Opinion Quarterly* essay of 1959, 'The state of communication research'. He argued that the main problem was excessive fragmentation combined with a perceived absence of significant new ideas after the developments of the previous decades (for instance, the work of Lazarsfeld *et al.* on mediated influence, and of Hovland on persuasion). However, as many

commentators have since pointed out, Berelson painted a more gloomy picture than was perhaps justified by exaggerating the number of relevant 'bits' that ought to cohere.

In 1950, the publication of the volume which he edited with Morris Janowitz, *A Reader in Public Opinion and Communication*, had signalled a major point in the emergence of an interdisciplinary project. As well as the roll call of North-American-based pioneers – Lasswell, Blumer, Katz, Cantril, Lazarsfeld, Lippmann, Hovland, Löwenthal among them – the collection drew extensively from the work of writers who would not easily have recognized themselves as researching from 'within' its ostensible boundaries. *Post-facto* recruitment of 'outside' researchers is still, of course, an important way in which the field reconfigures and develops. It is worth noting here just how important certain anthologies have been, as acts of attempted consolidation. Twenty years later in Britain, Jeremy Tunstall's *Media Sociology* (1970) performed a rather similar function, as did Denis McQuail's *Sociology of Mass Communication* (1972), the latter indicating at its margins the arrival of 'new' critical and cultural theory to supplement, and at times to contest, the social science emphasis.

Such a tradition of concern over shape and direction, divergence and convergence, should not be seen simply as the 'failure' of a research specialism to establish itself properly. It is a reflection both of the increasing centrality of media-related issues to a whole range of studies in the social sciences (and latterly, in the humanities too) and also of the way in which study of the media has a tendency, because of the interconnections between questions of structure and agency, process and meaning, to draw attention to the limitations of particular theories and methods which are applied to it. In doing so, it acts to ferment both dissent and development, pulling in new ideas and new approaches to the perennial question 'What is it important to look at and how should we look at it?' with the same energy as it rejects others. The very dynamics of media developments themselves – the rate and scope of change across the technological, institutional and cultural realms – have in a sense determined the awkward character of media research's lineage. Our chapter assessing the work of Elihu Katz (chapter 2) brings out well some of the detail of this in the course of plotting one highly distinguished career.

In nearly every national academic system, media research has been an inter-disciplinary or multi-disciplinary endeavour (only quite recently with any roots in significant undergraduate teaching) and thus has never really acquired an institutional identity strong enough to keep its boundaries tidy. One might argue that such an ambition, were it to develop, would be self-defeating anyway.

Thanks largely to Paul Lazarsfeld's perceptive – but by no means disinterested account, one aspect of earlier conflict has attained widely recognized status internationally – namely, the division between 'critical' and 'administrative' research. This dichotomy, essentially one between a European-influenced commitment to placing media processes within a framework of political scepticism and critique and a dominant (but by no means exclusive) tendency towards assessing the functionality of media systems within 'given' policy parameters in the USA,

has been revisited many times. It has been variously revised and refuted, although its continuing use as a reference point must indicate a certain suggestiveness. Allowing for the simplistic nature of the division, it is certainly not hard to see on which side the greater possibilities for research funding lie. With this come greater opportunities for at least some form of sustained investigative relationship with institutional practices and processes. We consider the question of the relationship between media policy and media research a little later.

So even the briefest of genealogical sketches produces a rather turbulent picture, though a fascinating and valuable one for intellectual history, in which continuities are less apparent than differences and disjunctions at each new stage in the development of media technologies. Although media research has always been overdetermined by the interplay between the different economic and political perspectives on modernity, in its analyses and enquiries over the years it has engaged with an astonishing range of conceptual shifts and methodological reappraisals. In the last two decades, perhaps the most important of these have concerned the re-positioning of many strands of research within a larger project investigating the changing shape of late modern 'culture'. The European contribution here, theoretical and empirical, has been stronger in determining the general character of the field than at any previous stage in its development. A number of our contributions connect with this point and we return to it ourselves below.

THREE THEMES

Making comparisons

When we were considering the overall design of this book, we were concerned to ensure that a comparative element was built into it. This was not a quest for individual essays that engaged in formal comparison so much as for the collection as a whole to provide sufficient diversity of content to bring into relief international similarities and differences both in the style of media research and in its objects of study.

The reader cannot fail to be struck by two broad sets of comparisons that inform almost all of the essays. One grand line of distinction concerns Europe and the Americas. And there is a further division within each of these broad geographical categories: first, our contributions cover both North America (with its own significant fissure between the USA and Canada) and then Latin America; they also deal with the 'advanced' Europe centred upon the European Union and with part of the post-communist Europe that awaits entry to the EU. Each of these areas is characterized by distinctive relations between the national state, the market, and the media, in which the historical weight of inherited institutional patterns, political and economic practices and cultural norms should not be underestimated. And it is this matrix of relations which holds the interpretive key to the developments that are assessed in these pages.

As we noted earlier, the United States has been the first and foremost locus of media research in historical terms. The USA has also made the running in the reshaping of the media environment, most notably in terms of technological advance and deregulatory policies whose impact has been felt both in the Americas and also across the Atlantic, as well as further afield. Despite its proximity to the United States, Canada's federal government has striven to use media and cultural policies to shore up the state's distinctiveness. Hence, the theme of politico-cultural power relations, and how these are underpinned by media economics, is a central issue for debate. But this question traverses all the Americas and resonates far beyond, as the stand-off between the European Union and the USA over GATT in late 1993 showed. That said, proximity to the USA produces an especially sharp reaction to the question of cultural sovereignty. Much media development and policy-making in Latin America has been shaped by the pattern of US investment and cultural exports to that continent and this has interacted with indigenous factors to produce some unique results.

In the European Union and its member states, so far as questions of media and cultural policy are concerned, the USA has been both a model at times to be emulated and at others to be rejected. On the European continent itself, the expanding European Union has provided an aspirational model for the transitional national states of the post-communist era. For such aspirant outsiders the EU signifies modernization, the market economy and pluralistic democracy. Looked at from within, however, the drive to integration has hardly been without contradictions between the economy and culture, and institutional differences rooted in the distinctive histories of the member national states continue to hold sway over the Union's development. These differences are manifest in the field of media policy and will continue to be so. One way of looking at this is to say that there is therefore no single 'European' model for the media, as the weight of the national state remains decisive in the shaping of media institutions. Nevertheless, by comparison with the United States, there is still a different range of possibilities in Europe for the relations between state, market and media. Hence, moving from the west of the continent to its centre, it is apparent that the post-communist states are being profoundly shaped in their development patterns by 'European' constraints and possibilities.

Media, state and market

A further theme which is addressed at several points, sometimes directly and sometimes only through its bearing on other factors, is the positioning of media systems in relation both to the organizations of the state and to the mechanisms of the market. Media systems have an important public role both in information provision and also in offering a forum for debate and space for a public to recognize itself as such. Thus, media systems are necessary institutions to any form of civil society. This perspective emphasizes output which is broadly journalistic over that which is offered primarily as entertainment, but there is by

no means a sharp division here and there are grounds for seeing many kinds of dramatic material, serious and popular, as having a public function too.

The notion of the 'public' has been a troubled term in contemporary political analysis, indicating a degree of autonomy both from direct state intervention and from the realm of market structures and corporate influence. In Britain and other European countries, for instance, there has been a tendency for the tradition of 'public' broadcasting to become too closely linked with the interests of the state (thereby allowing more recent commercial initiatives to project themselves as democratic and liberatory). In many other countries, however, notably the United States, 'public' broadcasting exists only in a marginal form where it exists at all, even though national regulation has produced a pattern of provision which is by no means a simple reflection of private imperatives.

Systems of funding are a major factor, of course, but they are not the only one, since requirements of 'public' responsibility have regularly been made of 'privately owned' media and this looks likely to become the dominant mode by which any public requirements upon the media might now conceivably be made. Such sanctions have either been implemented through bureaucratic oversight over commercial activities (as in the case of the British Independent Television Commission) or through the 'softer' mechanisms of bodies of public appeal (as in Press Complaints Boards). An additional problem in the regulation of public media systems is that notions of 'the public' have often tended towards an emphatically unitary idea, and consequent unwillingness to register multiplicity and variety; this has also occasionally led to countenancing imposed homogeneity. Reappraisal on this point, retaining a principle of cohesion but discarding neat unities, is clearly a prerequisite of any cogent policy in the future, whatever national historical differences obtain.

But how might media systems gain the maximum space for independent information-gathering analysis and debate, with the consequent expectation of 'public' value, and also have viable and stable funding? This has been the problem, variously posed, for the critical review of media systems internationally, and it has increasingly become precisely an international issue because to address it in the terms solely of a national media economy has become either impossible or imprudent. It is not suprising that the 'solutions' variously arrived at, often carrying strong historical legacies, have so often been one form or other of accommodation to the international media market. As our three chapters on policy shifts show, the intensified round of deregulation in western Europe (where the United States model has been influential though not decisive) has been joined by the wholesale deconstruction and reconstruction of media systems, and media–politics relations, within the former communist countries. Here, the swing from state to market has been most dramatic (notwithstanding concealed continuities), carrying an impetus which has had, so far, little time for that 'intermediate' category of the public that has been the focus for so much liberal democratic debate.

Yet, despite the widespread consolidation of market models, linked to new

technologies of production and distribution and variously pledged (or not) to the observance of 'public' principles, state and supra-state organizations (for instance, the EU) still exert a measure of regulatory influence over the media as an industry and over certain forms of public representation. Governmental effectiveness in the former area is determined by the particular forms of economic control which specific states operate, namely the larger settlements made in any given polity between the 'state' and the 'market'. Their function as regulators of content depends in some measure on the strength of 'public feeling' upon which they can draw (and also orchestrate) concerning specific notions of cultural nationalism and morality as well as broader rights of citizenship. That the state could, and should, intervene to protect citizenship against erosion through the unchecked promotionalism, selectivity and inequalities of markets – thereby paradoxically regulating for freedom against neo-liberal constraint – should be an established principle of any self-aware democratic politics. But the protection of state interests against those of public knowledge is, of course, still a major cause of actual intervention in many countries. Moreover, the possibilities of certain kinds of state interest being well served by market interests, to the general detriment of the broader public interest, are considerable. It is how to initiate cogent policy in this complex configuration, rather than any single alignment with either side of the state/market relation, which now represents the greatest problem for ensuring the democratic character of press and broadcasting.

All of the above means that, outside of improbable schemes for wholly alternative funding, the products of mass media systems will have an increasingly commodified character as the exchange-value of media products extends to areas where it has so far been resisted and intensifies in areas (e.g. globally marketed entertainment) where it has always been present. It is thus very hard to resist the view that a global economic squeeze on public culture is occurring. Assessing just how and to what degree 'public' values are sustainable or not in the face of this underlying pattern of commodification and how states might act in the public interest to check and contest a thoroughgoing privatization of citizenship is therefore a more important task for international media research than either of the two rather 'diversionary' paths which offer themselves – the search for non-commodified alternatives or the repetitive denunciation of commodification *per se*.

Research and policy

The well-established, though contentious, distinction between critical and administrative research mentioned earlier emerges in a newer form in a number of the chapters that follow. Colin Sparks, Jean-Claude Burgelman, Vincent Mosco and Vanda Rideout and Elizabeth Fox, in their various ways, explore the relationship between media research and media policy. One way of understanding that relationship is to suggest that the funding crisis in scientific research in almost all the developed countries has created a situation in which media research is

increasingly being constrained, if not determined, by the perceived needs of government and industry. This results, it can be argued, in a profound skewing of the research agenda to issues defined as more or less exclusively relevant to the management of the polity and the economy. In turn, media research, like so many other areas of social science, is increasingly condemned to short-termism and pragmatism both in the selection of research areas and the approaches that are taken. And this can lead not only to a narrowing and skewing of the research focus, but also to a weakening of an alternative, humanist and critical tradition, which is left to scrabble at the margins of media research and scholarship. The increasing emphasis on the involvement of what in the UK's particular jargon are research's 'end-users', an emphasis which has now been enshrined in the basic agenda of the research infrastructure and has been incorporated into the two major programmes of media research funded by the British Economic and Social Research Council over recent years, can be seen to embody this trend towards 'relevance' most clearly.

However, the increasing relevance of media (especially, of course, the converging technologies of television and telecommunications) in the formation of national policy, and the increasing success of media researchers in persuading policy-makers and funders at all levels that there is indeed a social agenda to be pursued here, produce something of a double-edged sword. It can lead, reactively, to the reinforcement of extraneously defined political and economic priorities at the core of media research.

Two factors complicate matters further. The first is the argument that media research has an obligation to engage in public policy, but to do so with the aim of actually shifting the policy agenda. In addressing issues of political communication and of representation (in both senses of the word) as well as those of the regulation and consumption of new information and communication technologies, media research should be seen to be involved in a constant debate with those who, by virtue of ownership or election, have the power to steer media culture. The second complicating factor, and this comes through particularly in the contributions of Fox and Sparks, is the variation in the relationship between research and policy, geographically and historically. In both Latin America and in post-Soviet Central and Eastern Europe changing state–media relations and the relations between states and wider sets of regional or global forces have both defined and legitimated a necessarily shifting relationship between research and policy.

Substantial links between research and policy therefore seem to be inescapable, though experience suggests that they are by no means non-negotiable. If the research community acknowledges and accepts a responsibility for the ways in which media figure in contemporary society, then that still begs the question as how best, in specific circumstances, to honour that role.

There is a danger when discussing the relationship between research and policy that the differences as well as the links between different policy arenas will go unacknowledged. It is in the nature of things that media will intrude into economic, political and cultural policy-making at every social level, from the supra-national

(as in Europe) to the national as well as at the local. And of course media policy research impacts on wider questions of citizenship and democratic participation as well as on the regulation or deregulation of markets in telecommunications, broadcasting or electronic networks. It can also shape policies regarding aesthetic strategies in broadcasting or software design as well as those concerning gender or ethnic participation in media industries. There is, further, a danger that we may underestimate the significance of the different approaches that media policy research might take with respect to each of these different domains. Convergence in the world may or may not be matched by convergence in theory and approach, but what is obviously signalled is the need for media policy research to be newly sensitive to the rapid and often strategic changes in the world which it addresses, as well as to be continuously reflexive about its own presuppositions and agendas.

Two final points might be worth making. Media research often emerges at the interface of the humanities and the social sciences. It is clear from the policy research chapters in this volume that the dominant voices, perhaps inevitably and necessarily, come from within the latter. In almost all the cases discussed, cultural policy as such, and the media's role in its development, tends to get overlooked in favour of more narrowly conceived political, social and economic objectives, as it does more generally in the literature. This issue might be addressed in future work, especially since questions of particular form and content remain central and media analysis itself increasingly has to take into account the inseparability of medium and message. Second, and more controversially, it is possible to argue that, given the challenges of the intellectual agenda, research specifically oriented to policy is the last thing that media researchers should be undertaking; that they should be committed, rather, to more fundamental and unconstrained enquiries into the political, social and cultural processes of mediation.

FUTURES

Media research since the mid-1980s has seen shifts, both voluntary and reactive, in a field which in many respects has struggled to keep up with the rapid pace of change in public media culture. During this period it is not just that media have become ever more ingrained into the fabric of contemporary society, but as we have already suggested, it is now impossible to consider either public or private life without taking the media's central role into account. We have become increasingly dependent on media systems that are extending well beyond the relative simplicities of broadcasting. Media space is becoming fragmented and diverse, but it is also becoming more intense, more pervasive. It is, of course, both global and local, public and private. However both the global and the local and the public and private are imprecise and inaccurate as descriptors of the complex realities that are now emerging. The postmodernist fancies of hyper-realities, virtual communities and electronic hearths and democracies, of cyber-worlds universally accessible through the flick of a switch, or the click of a mouse, are often too easily claimed but they can also be too easily denied Perhaps the