

---

of her discussion of death metal will disappoint fans of the genre.

– *Fraser McKissack, Film, Television and Media Studies, University of Auckland*

**Phillips, Louise, Carvalho, Anabela and Doyle, Julie (eds), *Citizen Voices: Performing Public Participation in Science and Environment Communication*, European Communication Research and Education Association Series, Intellect, Bristol, 2012, ISBN 9 7818 4150 6210, 192 pp., A\$45.00.**

In *Citizen Voices*, Phillips, Carvalho and Doyle present a collection of articles exploring the meaning of ‘citizens’ and their role as initiators of communication on science and as actors in formal public engagement exercises involved in science governance. This focus on the dialogic process is both timely and stimulating, given the increasing inclusion of public participation in governance processes, particularly in relation to development of government policy on environmental science.

The emphasis on both empirical and theoretical analysis of communication and participation is clear from the inclusion of ‘performing public participation’ in the book’s title. Ursula Plesner’s article on the role of ‘imagined audiences’ (Chapter 2), for example, explores three vignettes to show how ‘images of the audience are performative’, affecting media presentation of scientific developments. In one (pp. 32–40), participation in a science program on radio leaves a researcher ‘totally exasperated’ because of the disjoint between her goal – public education – and that of the radio host – to popularise science and promote it as entertainment. The vignette shows journalists not as ‘neutral transmitters of social scientific knowledge’, but as governed by conceptions of the public’s interests and abilities. It reminds researchers that dialogical engagement requires tailoring the communication format to the needs of different publics. Plesner challenges media presentation of science as a one-way communication process, with scientist as sender, journalist as translator and public as passive receiver, arguing instead that the process is multi-directional.

Similarly, Pauliina Lehtonen and Jarkko Bamberg (Chapter 10) explore the effect of ordinary people on presentation of an urban planning issue related to information and

communication technology. They cite (p. 214) Maarten Hajer’s (2003) argument that citizens are ‘political activists on “stand-by”’, and that policy-making can trigger public involvement, again exposing the power relationships inherent in the dialogic process.

The editors (pp. 4–5) maintain that dialogue is included in decision-making to engage scientists and citizens in mutual learning, to improve the quality of decisions and policy development. This process includes what Delgado et al. (cited p. 5) term ‘upstream public engagement’, in contrast to the previously dominant deficit model of communication, with its one-way transference of the results of scientific research ‘downstream’ to a public lacking scientific knowledge. However, the editors (pp. 6–7) argue that concepts such as ‘dialogue’ and ‘participation’ are seen by some as buzzwords with a ‘taken-for-granted positive value’ and used to legitimise processes that appear to promote public engagement while masking the real power dynamics.

Annika Egan Sjolander and Anna Maria Jonsson (Chapter 3) maintain that increased public involvement is a ‘deliberative illusion, which actually decreases public influence’, citing their analysis of the Swedish media’s 2009 ethanol debate, in which journalists claimed to know public opinion (p. 64) but the public was marginalised and placed in a reactive position.

Plesner (p. 35) states that ‘academic language’ is often characterised by ‘a lot of nominalisations, abstract concepts, passives and the like’. This book contains examples of such language; however, paradoxically, here it helps to elucidate the editors’ aim (p. 15) to provide both *empirical* insight into the effect of citizen voices on participatory decision-making and a range of related theories and methodologies.

– *Janet M. Harkin, Film, Media and Communications, Monash University*

**Potter, Simon J., *Broadcasting Empire: The BBC and the British World, 1922–1970*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2012, ISBN 9 7801 9956 8963, x+261 pp., A\$114.95.**

Not so many years ago, every Australian schoolchild’s map of the world was dominated by areas shaded in the colour red: the British Empire. From protectorates to Crown colonies, from mandates to territories, from dominions to the Raj itself, Britannia ruled the waves.