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PARTICIPATION AND MEDIA PRODUCTION

CRITICAL REFLECTIONS ON CONTENT CREATION

EDITED BY NICO CARPENTIER & BENJAMIN DE CLEEN

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In an era when (especially new) media are celebrated for their participatory potential, questions about the nature and intensity of these participatory processes seem to be superfluous. But raising these questions pushes us into a critical mode towards the changes that have led to the present-day media landscape. This volume's authors aim to activate this critical mode and reflect on the participatory nature of contemporary media organizations and products. In order to stand even a remote chance to realize this objective, and to critically unravel the societal role of participation, we need to acknowledge that participation is a complex and contested notion, covering a wide variety of meanings and practices that are converging into a hybrid of technologies, genres, and formats. At the same time, prudence is required, as many of the empowering and transformative opportunities cover-up a multitude of restrictions that deal with muting voices, appropriations, techniques of surveillance, inequalities, and exclusions. This volume thus provides its readership with a set of analyses that reconcile the appreciation for the analogue and digital empowerment and emancipation with the critical analysis of their boundaries. **Nico Carpentier & Benjamin De Cleen, Book Editors**

This volume showcases some of the best work analysing the conditions, the complexities and the significance of contemporary forms of technologically-mediated communication and participation for ordinary members of public and for society more widely. It asserts that critique is needed more than ever, as norms of authority, trust, authenticity and legitimacy evolve. Only with a critical lens can we hope to recognise both the diversification of political expression, the exuberant irreverence of youth and the quieter flowering of digital storytelling among hitherto marginalised voices as well as the anti-democratic responses of repressive governments and the legal, regulatory or economic barriers that restrict the potential of the contemporary communication environment. Since, in addressing such questions, the very standpoints from which we as researchers draw our strength are also challenged in the context of globalisation, all this adds up to an agenda that, I believe, will stimulate the field of media and communication for the decade ahead. This volume sets the scene most ably, and I look forward to the debate as it unfolds. **Sonia Livingstone, ICA President, 2007-8, from the book's preface**



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