

# The Decline of Public Access and Neo-Liberal Media Regimes

Brian Caterino

The Decline of Public  
Access and Neo-Liberal  
Media Regimes

palgrave  
macmillan

Brian Caterino  
Rochester, NY, USA

ISBN 978-3-030-39402-8      ISBN 978-3-030-39403-5 (eBook)  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-39403-5>

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s), under exclusive licence to Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2020

This work is subject to copyright. All rights are solely and exclusively licensed by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use.

The publisher, the authors and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, expressed or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The publisher remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Cover illustration: gettyimages / oxygen  
Cover design: eStudioCalamar

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG.

The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

# CONTENTS

<b>1</b>	<b>Public Access in Decline</b>	<b>1</b>
	<i>The Limits of Technological Determinism</i>	3
	<i>Technology and Social Construction</i>	4
	<i>Bibliography</i>	13
<b>2</b>	<b>The Frankfurt School and Its Aftermath</b>	<b>15</b>
	<i>An Excursus on the Frankfurt School</i>	16
	<i>The Limits of the Frankfurt School's Analysis</i>	19
	<i>The Political: Horkheimer to Habermas</i>	22
	<i>The Public Sphere in Habermas and Beyond</i>	23
	<i>Critics of the Public Sphere</i>	26
	<i>Habermasian Revisions</i>	28
	<i>Civil Society</i>	31
	<i>Participatory Democracy</i>	36
	<i>Bibliography</i>	41
<b>3</b>	<b>Public Interest Standards from Radio to Public Television</b>	<b>45</b>
	<i>The Rise of Radio and Telecommunication and Public Interest</i>	45
	<i>The Regulatory Context</i>	49
	<i>Broadcast Regulation</i>	51
	<i>Radio Publics: Democratic Potentials?</i>	54
	<i>Democratizing Media</i>	59
	<i>From Pacifica to PBS: The Rise of Public Interest Media and Civil Society</i>	61

	<i>The Critique of the Network Model</i>	65
	<i>From the Wasteland to the Promised Land</i>	67
	<i>Network Television and the Portrayal of American Life</i>	68
	<i>Bibliography</i>	73
<b>4</b>	<b>The Emergence of Public Access Television</b>	77
	<i>Access to Democracy</i>	77
	<i>Public Access Begins</i>	78
	<i>Participatory Democracy or the Technological Sublime?</i>	79
	<i>Shimmering Blue Skies: The Promise of Technology</i>	82
	<i>Participatory Policymaking in the Formation of Public Access</i>	84
	<i>Funding Issues</i>	87
	<i>Access Cleavages: Cracks in the Foundation</i>	88
	<i>Legal Problems</i>	89
	<i>Precarious Foundations</i>	92
	<i>Access Success and Challenges</i>	93
	<i>Local Programming Success</i>	94
	<i>Governmental Access</i>	95
	<i>Socially Engaged Media</i>	96
	<i>Wayne's World: Changing Conceptions of Public Access</i>	100
	<i>Who Watches Public Access?</i>	105
	<i>Conclusions</i>	106
	<i>Bibliography</i>	111
<b>5</b>	<b>Neoliberalism: The Decline of Public Obligation</b>	115
	<i>Neoliberalism</i>	116
	<i>The Rise of a New Orthodoxy</i>	118
	<i>A New Consensus?</i>	122
	<i>Delayed Crises: Streeck's Analyses</i>	123
	<i>Political Thought in Neoliberalism</i>	124
	<i>Neoliberalism and the Entrepreneurial Self</i>	126
	<i>The Contradictions of Neoliberalism</i>	128
	<i>The Colonization of the Lifeworld</i>	130
	<i>The Decline of Public Interest Obligations</i>	130
	<i>Cloudy Horizon's for Blue Skies</i>	135
	<i>ALEC and Cable Franchising</i>	137
	<i>Channel Slamming</i>	138
	<i>Relaxing Ownership Rules</i>	140

<i>Market Failures</i>	144
<i>Speech Rights in Neoliberalism</i>	148
<i>Is Censorship Necessary</i>	150
<i>The Halleck Case and the Challenges to the Public Forum</i>	
<i>Conception of Access</i>	152
<i>The Aftermath of Halleck</i>	153
<i>Neoliberal Deregulation Extended: The Communications Act of 1996 and Beyond</i>	154
<i>The Privatization of Public Space</i>	157
<i>Public Sphere in Neoliberalism</i>	158
<i>The Public Sphere. Civil Society and the Nonprofit Sector</i>	160
<i>Putting It All Together: Depoliticization</i>	164
<i>Bibliography</i>	172
<b>6 Access Under Attack: Some Examples from the Field</b>	179
<i>Artificial Austerity</i>	179
<i>Austerity and Access</i>	182
<i>Access Closing or Service Reduction</i>	186
<i>Fragile Franchises</i>	190
<i>Narratives of Decline</i>	191
<i>Censorship of Public Access: Political and Cultural</i>	192
<i>Professional Associations</i>	196
<i>The Information Needs of Communities?</i>	200
<i>Bibliography</i>	206
<b>7 Looking Through the Wrong End of the Telescope:</b>	
<b>Internet Democracy vs. Public Access</b>	211
<i>Cybernetic Utopians: Romancing the Computers</i>	213
<i>The Consequences of Esoteric Community</i>	217
<i>Social Theorists and the Internet</i>	219
<i>Radical Democracy on the Internet</i>	222
<i>The Debate over Radical Media Are Social Media “Community Media”</i>	225
<i>The Internet and the Social Context</i>	228
<i>Can Social Media Serve as a Public Sphere?</i>	233
<i>Political Economy of the Internet from Public to Private</i>	234
<i>Facebook: Privacy and Publicity</i>	237
<i>Data Collection and Privacy</i>	238

<i>All the (Fake) News that Fits</i>	239
<i>How Emancipatory Are Social Movements? The Occupy Movement as a Case Study of Internet Activism?</i>	241
<i>Proprietary Publics?</i>	242
<i>Facebook and Twitter Pages as Public Forums?</i>	246
<i>YouTube and Social Media vs. (Public) Television: Public Forum</i>	248
<i>The Need for a General Public Sphere</i>	250
<i>General Publics Revisited</i>	253
<i>Bibliography</i>	258
<b>8 A Future for Public Access?</b>	261
<b>Author Index</b>	267
<b>Subject Index</b>	273