

## Citizens and Consumers Abstract

This paper explores the significance of the terms 'citizens' and 'consumers' in defining the role of the new communications regulator, Ofcom. We begin by tracking how debates about these concepts took centre stage during the passage of the 2002 Draft Communications Bill through the House of Lords. Drawing on post-Foucauldian perspectives, we then examine how an uneasy consensus was achieved between different, often opposing, arguments about the role of regulation. This, we argue, reflects broader changes in patterns of governance, which urge publics to participate whilst defining the ways in which they can do so. In particular, we ask what it means that a new regulator gives primacy to 'competition' whilst still upholding its commitment to public service broadcasting. Critical theoretical and analytical approaches are used to explore how notions of the public became crystallised in the formation of the 2003 Communication Act, and argues that its discursive formulation reveals key dilemmas in defining its relationship to media and communication technologies, to democracy and to identity. Meanwhile, it outlines the obligations of the new regulator in terms of this public, in particular relating to the opening up of a public sphere, in which the public voice can be heard and responded to.