Côté does not attempt to provide a structural analysis of the driving forces underlying the euthanasia controversy, such as the medicalisation of dying, the role of religious belief and church hierarchies, the relationship between the individual and the state or the dynamics of social movements. Nor does he probe into the complicated ethical and legal debates about life, death and dying. His focus is less on why things are happening and more on what is happening, mainly on the side of right-to-die campaigners. He has provided the best available account of the international death-with-dignity movement.

In the final chapter of *In Search of Gentle Death*, Côté steps away from his usual narrative style and outlines the case for death with dignity, presenting it as the only humane option. His concern is less with confronting euthanasia opponents than with reconciling the split among the proponents between those favouring the legal and technology routes. His plea may not make much difference to campaigners with entrenched positions, but for both them and others, the outstanding value of the book is in portraying what is actually happening, and giving a human face to many of the committed campaigners involved.

### References

Hillyard, D. and Dombrink, J. (2001) *Dying Right: The Death with Dignity Movement*, Routledge, New York.

Humphry, D. and Clement, M. (2000) *Freedom to Die: People, Politics, and the Right-to-Die Movement*, St. Martin's Griffin, New York.

Woodman, S. (2001) *Last Rights: The Struggle over the Right to Die*, Perseus, Cambridge, MA.

Brian Martin
*University of Wollongong, Australia*
bmartin@uow.edu.au

**Alternative and activist new media**, by Leah A. Lievrouw, Malden MA, Polity Press, 2011, 294 pp., $US19.95 (paper), ISBN 9780745641843

There is more to this book than meets the eye. More precisely, there is more to this book than its title suggests. During the past 15 years, we have seen a remarkable procession of monographs, articles, book chapters and textbooks that have dealt with that often-elusive notion of 'alternative media'. On the face of it, Leah Lievrouw seems to have simply added another volume to a growing pile. Her title, A*lternative and Activist New Media*, appears general and perhaps even a little redundant (what contemporary study would not be concerned with new media?). Her case studies, arranged under five broad headings - culture jamming, alternative computing, participatory journalism, mediated mobilization and commons knowledge - rehearse the arguments for alternative media and the media of new social movements that are to be found elsewhere. Olga Bailey *et al.*'s *Understanding Alternative Media* (2008), for instance, shares many of Lievrouw's interests in media that serve specific communities and that enable participation in media

production. Likewise, Lievrouw is also interested in exploring the connections between alternative media and dominant, centralised media (whether complementary, agonistic or antagonistic). Christine Harold's study of oppositional rhetoric (*OurSpace*, 2007) is a clear antecedent for many of Lievrouw's arguments about how culture jamming might be enacted and its incorporation resisted.

I do not wish to suggest that the present book is lazily derivative of these and other works in the field, rather to emphasise continuities and (it has to be said) the apparent limits of alternative media scholarship. In other words, there is a familiarity to many of the cases examined here: Adbusters, the Critical Art Ensemble, Indymedia – all have been the subjects of many previous studies. Similarly, the historical and theoretical wellsprings of the book are familiar: the roots of culture jamming are seen to lie in Dada and Situationism; Melucci's theory of new social movements underlies contemporary online activism. Lievrouw's contribution lies not in her choice of cases and their contexts, but in her argument for the book as a whole, an argument that her book's title belies.

The chief argument of the book is to consider alternative and activist media projects beyond their function as foci for mobilising information and as spaces for the recreation of knowledge. Instead, Lievrouw wants to argue for their significance as processes of "participation and intervention in the creation of and sharing of meaning" (p. 4). The generation of knowledge at the individual level thus becomes a locus for communicative action that can operate socially across media platforms and into the lived world. While at the outset of the book Lievrouw puts aside ontological disputes over the real and the virtual, she returns to explore mediation as a social, participatory process in her final chapter, where she essays a generous positioning of mediation as lived experience that brings together activist forms of communicative action with interventions with communication technology.

In this respect, her position resembles that of Clemencia Rodriguez, who makes similar claims for what she terms 'citizens' media'. For Rodriguez, media practice may be understood in a performative sense, where individuals and groups use media to experience the world at the same time as they construct it for themselves. The political power of mediation as performance lies in its capacity to re-appropriate public spaces and to re-integrate communities, or indeed (as I think Lievrouw might argue) to *produce* communities. Rodriguez finds the significance of what we might term 'mediatised performativity' amongst indigenous peoples, particularly those under threat of violence (as she shows in *Citizens' Media Against Armed Conflict*, 2011). Lievrouw's achievement is to find similar significance beyond physical threat and territorial marginalization. Where Rodriguez's citizens' media projects work within specific communities that are more or less isolated from the ideologies and rituals of the mass media, Lievrouw's cases present media performance as resistance both within and against dominant media technologies and institutions. It is here, though, at the end of the book, that I would liked to have learned more about how Lievrouw might apply Jesus Martin-Barbero's notion of rituality to alternative media. There is a tantalizingly brief reference to mapping rituality onto "new media infrastructure", understood as an interaction between artefacts, practices and social arrangements (p. 229), but Lievrouw finds that undertaking to be beyond the scope of the present book. This is a shame; to refract alternative media theory through the lens of media rituals would be to place the mediatised performance of alternative media alongside the important work already being done in the study of mass media rituals. Nick Couldry's *Media Rituals* (2003) has already problematized the

distinction between the 'media person' and the 'ordinary person'. If alternative media as a social practice aims to erode this distinction, then Lievrouw's book becomes an important step towards a study of alternative media rituals as social practice.

## References

Bailey, O. *et al.* (2008) *Understanding Alternative Media*, McGraw Hill, New York.
Couldry, N. (2003) *Media Rituals: A Critical Approach*, Routledge, London.
Harold, C. (2007) *Our Space. Resisting Corporate Control of our Culture*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, MN.
Rodriguez, C. (2011) *Citizens' Media against Armed Conflict*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, MN.

Chris Atton
*Edinburgh Napier University*
*c.atton@napier.ac.uk*

**Internet success: a study of open-source software commons**, by Charles M. Schweik and Robert C. English, Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 2012, 344 pp., £24.99, ISBN: 978-0262017251

In a historical sense, open source software (OSS) development is a relatively new activity that generates interest from software developers and students of innovation alike. The text by Charles M. Schweik and Robert C. English, titled *Internet Success: A Study of Open-Source Software Commons* and published by MIT Press, is therefore timely because it seeks to bring understanding developed through rigorous research to a topic dominated by, as one reviewer puts it, 'hacker folklore' (book sleeve). The reason why the authors have chosen to focus on success is perhaps obvious to those seeking to better manage OSS projects. However, the emphasis on success will act as a dog whistle to those who see failure as perhaps just as instructive to the understanding of OSS.

Indeed, Schweik and English discover that neat distinctions between success and failure are resistant to definition as OSS emerges as a multifaceted concept (pp.129–42). Hence, they qualify their descriptions of success by developing six categories that distinguish projects that initially achieve one official release of software from those that achieve releases of three or more versions. The term 'failure' is judged to be inappropriate and is replaced by the term 'abandonment', which is divided into two sub-categories to reflect abandonment before one release and before three releases, respectively. They also find the need to define situations in which the assessment of success or abandonment is premature or unreliable. These make up the final two categories.

The authors set out to provide a rigorous and empirical assessment of OSS development throughout the world. The borderless nature of the Internet facilitates such an approach and given the masses of information that are available, statistical analysis of site metrics and surveys are used along with interviews with authorita-