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## Public sphere of politics: between classical grounds and new political actuality

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The public sphere of politics as a theoretical concept of modern political science has been discussed in the article. The reasons of the increasing interest to the public sphere is a dominating subject. Studied The phenomenon of the public sphere being a tool of theoretical and methodological definition of the political world's boundaries has been studied. The value aspects of media activity in the contemporary politics has been investigated. An attempt has been made to establish the potential of political publicity for the qualitative understanding of participatory democracy. The potential of the public sphere in the development of civil society and social capital has been described. The distinction between the public sphere of politics and political communication in the specific conditions of modern transformational societies has been reasonably grounded. The importance of the presence of state power in all spheres of life of the transformational society has been stressed. Such transformation has not been stopped after the liberal market reforms, which had to ensure the existence of a formal representative democracy. The influence of the elite and expert groups being the reason of the absence of really functioning future civil society has been considered. The features of the formation of civil and social activities as a precondition for the democratic political class' functioning have been studied. The specifics of public political activity being the prerogative of the competent entities' political broadcasting have been analyzed. The gradual formation of cyber public sphere and its political branch segment has been revealed. Thorough attention has been given to the processes of the public sphere's politicization which are usual for primarily authoritarian and closed societies.

**Keywords:** the public sphere politics; political communication; civil society; power relations; open society; liberal freedoms

## Публічна сфера політики: між класичними засадами і новою політичною актуальністю

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У статті розглядається публічна сфера політики як теоретичне поняття сучасної політичної науки. Встановлюються причини посилення інтересу до публічної сфери як предметної галузі. Вивчається явище публічної сфери як засобу теоретико-методологічного окреслення кордонів політичного світу. Досліджено значення аспектів медіа-діяльності в сучасній політиці. Робиться спроба встановлення потенціалу політичної публічності для якісного осмислення партисипаторної демократії. Висуваються гіпотези щодо потенціалу публічної сфери для розвитку громадянського суспільства і соціального капіталу. Обґрунтовано розмежування між публічною сферою політики і політичної комунікації в специфічних умовах сучасних трансформаційних суспільств. Підкреслюється значення присутності державної влади у всіх сферах життєдіяльності трансформаційного суспільства, яке не припинилося після проведення ліберальних ринкових реформ, які забезпечили існування формальної репрезентативної демократії. Розглядається вплив елітарних і експертних груп як причина відсутності реального функціонування майбутнього громадянського суспільства. Вивчаються особливості формування публічної громадської діяльності як передумови функціонування демократичного політичного класу. Проаналізовано специфіку публічної політичної діяльності як прерогативи компетентних суб'єктів політичного мовлення. Розкрито умови поступового формування кібернетичної публічної сфери та відокремлення її політичного сегмента. Надано увагу процесам політизацію публічної сфери, які притаманні, перш за все, авторитарним і закритим суспільствам.

**Ключові слова:** публічна сфера політики; політична комунікація; громадянське суспільство; владні відносини; відкрите суспільство; ліберальні свободи

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## Публичная сфера политики: между классическими основами и новой политической актуальностью

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В статье рассматривается публичная сфера политики как теоретическое понятие современной политической науки. Устанавливаются причины усиления интереса к публичной сфере как предметной области. Изучается явление публичной сферы как средства теоретико-методологического определения границ политического мира. Исследовано значение аспектов медиа-деятельности в современной политике. Делается попытка установления потенциала политической публичности для качественного осмысления партиципаторной демократии. Выдвигаются гипотезы относительно потенциала публичной сферы для развития гражданского общества и социального капитала. Обоснованы разграничения между публичной сферой политики и политической коммуникацией в специфических условиях современных трансформационных обществ. Подчеркивается значение присутствия государственной власти во всех сферах жизнедеятельности трансформационного общества, которое не прекратилось после проведения либеральных рыночных реформ, которые обеспечили существование формальной репрезентативной демократии. Рассматривается влияние элитарных и экспертных групп, как причина отсутствия реального функционирования будущего гражданского общества. Изучаются особенности формирования публичной общественной деятельности как предпосылки функционирования демократического политического класса. Проанализирована специфика публичной политической деятельности как прерогативы компетентных субъектов политического вещания. Раскрыты условия постепенного формирования кибернетической публичной сферы и отделения ее политического сегмента. Уделено внимание процессам политизации публичной сферы, которые присущи, прежде всего, авторитарным и закрытым обществам.

**Ключевые слова:** публичная сфера политики, политическая коммуникация, гражданское общество, властные отношения, открытое общество, либеральные свободы

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**Problem's formulation.** The public sphere of politics has theoretical and conceptual grounds in contemporary politics and political science. The interest to the public sphere as to the subject area and at the same time, as to the tool of theoretical and methodological coverage of the political world borders is constantly growing. In the current research works key aspects of media activity in politics are studied actively. Also attempts to establish the potential of publicity for qualitative comprehension of participatory democracy have been made. Hypotheses about the potential of the public sphere for the development of civil society and social capital have been suggested (see J. Dryzek [5]). However, these interdisciplinary studies link public sphere with the categorical apparatus of Jurgen Habermas' social theory, referring publicity to the attributes of social activity in the German classical sense «Öffentlichkeit». However, the task of political and social identifying of the substantive scope of the demarcation, and political and public tasks, (especially in the transformation countries) stand before the contemporary political theory.

The requirement for such disengagement occurs due to the peculiarities of transformational societies in which the totalization of the presence of state power in all spheres of public life did not finish even after the liberal market reforms which ensured the existence of a formal representative democracy. In conditions of the absence of the civil society and public civic activity's real functioning, it becomes synonymous to the political activity as a whole. In transitional countries it has become to be the prerogative of the few elite and expert groups, which create an emerging political class of the new independent states in Central and Eastern Europe as well as former post socialist countries.

**Analysis of studies and publications.** The most active and most efficient actors of communicative activity are focused on the political segment of the publicity in

the transitional countries. They implement function of political parties' public interests representation, provide the content of political discourse, and form the structural foundations of the public opinion about political problems. Regarding to this, it is necessary to suggest the hypothesis of allocation of new political public sphere's theoretical concepts in political communicative studies. It has to cover public communication and public communication activities of individuals, what belongs to the functional structure of political interaction, as well as to related institutional grounds of political situation or process. New peculiarities of political publicity, and the relationship between the concept of the public sphere and political system processes have been studied by Pascal König and Georg Wenzelburger [11], Tina Nabatchi [14], Ercan Selen and Carolyn Hendriks [15], Patrick Hummel [10]. They study, respectively, the place of political strategy theory in policy analysis, deliberative democracy capacity of public administration, democracy challenges and localism potential, deliberative democracy and electoral competition. Efforts to clarify the concepts of public sphere and political space occupy the significant place in the modern social sciences. These efforts are seen in the works of J. Habermas [9], A. MacKee [13], P. Dalhren [2]. However, the problem of the concept of political public sphere requires further consideration.

**The aim of the article.** Preliminary remarks impose a number of questions which are clarifying the nature of the term «public sphere of politics». What are the criteria for the demarcation of public manifestations of political and social entities? Is this separation artificial or does it have reliable theoretical and methodological fundamentals? How far is the separation of public sphere of politics areas and other segments of the global public sphere legitimate for scientific community, taking into account that classical Habermasian understanding of public sphere is opposed to social and power system based on

objective rationality? Answers to these questions include several levels and horizons of research. Among them basic structure of the public sphere of politics, its semantic content, its stability and sustainability in the form of new theoretical concept has prominent place. Thus, the aim of the article is to establish the principles of classical and new political relevance of concepts and phenomena of public sphere of politics.

**The main material.** The question of the public sphere's attribution to the different aspects of the subject or the traditional division is related to the general theory of social system. Publicity, as a community, and quality of human and social need at the present stage of society development has been determined rather as a significant part of the person transition from individual to social level. In this aspect the public sphere of politics becomes to be a sphere of specialized manifestation of individuals and groups that have political connotations or other political thematic cooperation, either as a consequence of an emotional occasion of speaker. Both states (for both individuals and groups) are the consequence of the emergence of the modern society in which the framework and concepts of professional group identity and institutional norms of behavior exist. In this context the researcher Christian Fuchs says «The question, which arises, is how the public sphere that is sometimes also related to the concept of civil society is related to other realms of modern societies» [7].

Disclosure of the public sphere occasion to political practice is possible on the basis of the manifestation of political structures interaction and institutions with relate areas of social life, such as the spheres of culture and economics. The definition of the public sphere of politics is one of the aspects of the power influence on the system of specific types of social life. It requires special clarification with the classical definition of the public sphere as a phenomenon opposed to the colonization of the life-world system. Regarding to this, the public sphere of politics can be defined as a set of political subjects' activities, which is free from coercion, similar to non-political, but free actions in the sphere of economic enterprise and the realization of their cultural needs. Connection between these varieties of the public sphere can be understood on the basis of economic and cultural needs as factors of participation of individuals and groups in political interactions. Christian Fuchs says that «The public sphere/civil society connect culture, the economy and politics and thereby create sections of overlap between the public sphere and these realms: the socio-political sphere, the socio-economic sphere and the socio-cultural sphere» [7].

The theoretical definition of the public sphere of politics is grounded not only on the classical meaning of publicity, such as openness and utters of free individuals actions, but also on the priority of their members' dependence to the various private interests. In this connection, the interpretation of democratic policy being exclusively common space of the solution of questions, which are very important for the society, has to be clarified on the basis of political pluralism's securing. Norms and conditions are becoming constitutionally enshrined liberal freedoms in which the public sphere of politics

can function. In transitional societies, where the general public sphere has not yet been formed, the public sphere of politics may be understood as something of universal origin of the general public sphere. According to Christian Fuchs, «Habermas thereby stresses that the public sphere is not just a sphere of public political communication, but also a sphere free from state censorship and from private ownership. It is free from particularistic controls» [7].

Idealistic (counter factual) view of the public sphere creates a demand to identify the ideal conditions of citizen's participation in socially important presentations and discussions. Political significance of statements and discussions is determined by the process of agenda setting, the general culture of a society, with political objectives of participants. Therefore, public sphere of politics in the broad sense covers all kinds of political discussions from the parliamentary debate to the discussions on political topics between the neighbors. The general rule of the identification of both political statements is the voluntariness of their intentions and meaning's rational criterion. Manipulative and rhetorical statements do not meet the idealistic criteria of public statements' inclusion to the public sphere. At the same time the realistic public sphere of politics' understanding forces to reduce the scope of moral criteria and the criteria of discourse ethics outlined by Jurgen Habermas and lower them to the level of general democratic and liberal norms. The peculiarity of common and shared public sphere of politics is the possibility of self-organization and self-realization of individuals and political activity becomes obvious tool of representation of social interests at the political level. As noted by Christian Fuchs «in the public sphere, humans organize around specific interests as social groups. As groups they take on socio-economic, socio-political and socio-cultural roles» [7].

The dynamic and the actual content of the politics' public sphere concept include a statistical summation of all forms of organized public activity. Separation of political forms of public expression from cultural to economical is not artificial in the case of separation of levels of social organization and their meaning. Regarding to this, the public sphere of politics is not the political public sphere (see J. Habermas [9]), as it is the space of social, cultural and economic issues transition to the sphere of political debate. Public sphere of politics is open to interaction and interpenetration of other public spheres. However, its political identity is based on the constant presence of political issues in the agenda, the apparent significance of the issues under discussion for the whole of society and decision-making as a result of the discussions. Above mentioned phenomena and processes are signs that allow aggregating its substantive isolation. «As modern society is based on structures of accumulation and a separation of roles within different realms, there are conflicts of interest over the control of property, collective decisions and meanings that can result in social struggles. Economic, political and cultural roles in modern society are organized in the form of classes, parties and political groups, and communities of interest that compete over the control of property / surplus, collective decision and social meanings», Christian Fuchs notes [7].

In modern conditions, the conversion of political approaches to public sphere of politics' understanding is connected to the details and fragmentation of the democracy theory, which represent the problems of a democratic political system in the context of equal representation of social groups. Elitist conceptions of democracy described the possibility of equal access of citizens to the decision making (see [8]). Regarding to this, the content of political debate loses its meaning if the result of these discussions is not dependent on the public political interactions. At the same time, the public sphere of politics requires serious testing in respect of the legal value of the concept. The approximation of elite democracy and political publicity, in general, is refuted by the basic requirements of the civic participation and civil society. At the same time, the concept of the politics' public sphere is able to connect these two disparate substantive branches of the political world, as participants of the elitist democracy and civil society actors have an opportunity to participate in the public discussion of political issues. As Christian Fuchs argues, «liberal ideology postulates individual freedoms (of speech, opinion, association, assemblies) as universal rights, but the particularistic and stratified character of unequal societies undermines these universal rights and creates inequality and therefore unequal access to the public sphere»[7].

The question of Ukrainian authorities' influence on the activities of individuals and groups during their interactions in politics since 1991 is commonly related to the Machiavellian interpretation of objectives and policy outcomes. Unlimited public discussion provides a rational interpretation of the purpose of political activity and it is so widespread and confirmed that determines the perception of policy even on the trivial level. However, the fundamental conceptual basis of the public sphere, suggested by Jurgen Habermas, is universal actual value of interpersonal communication, which is subordinated to the ethics of discourse and can't be reduced according to the achievements of selfish intention. The extension of these principles into politics is problematic due to inconsistencies in the methods of advocacy and political goals. At the same time, the communicative potential of ethics in a democracy, can balance Machiavellian logic with considerations of effective cooperation and the preservation of the political status quo. The authoritarian nature of power relations in contemporary transformative societies is undermined by a technological breakthrough that allows individuals and groups to receive freely political information, react to it and participate in political events. Regarding to this, the public sphere of politics can't be completely localized by the influence of power and control. «Communication is a social relation, in which humans interact mutually with the help of symbols and thereby create meaning of each other and the world. It is a constitutive feature of society and all social systems. Communication requires and is not possible without media: storage media (information technologies) such as paper, tapes, film reels, computer hard disks, DVDs, web space; transport media (communication technologies) such as the telephone, television, radio, e-mail; and collaborative media (technologies of co-operation) such as

wikis and online communities», Christian Fuchs states. [7].

Defining the boundaries of the politics' public sphere, general public sphere is currently associated with the definition of the structural elements that form the phenomena and determine their correlation with politics. Political identity in the public sphere in the context of its conditionality by politics is defined by demarcation between the political and social phenomena in general. Parties and governments, representative institutions, nongovernmental organizations influence politics as actors of competitive activity due to the reasons of public manifestations of their functions in fulfilling functions of power and the state. However, due to the permeability of the public sphere of politics, the temporary component of its structure may be private individuals, as bloggers, nonpolitical institutions, churches, trade unions, as well as spontaneous social network movements. With this, the concept of the public sphere of politics acquires a degree of flexibility and adaptability, including a variety of institutions and practices, depending on the political agenda of a democratic society. According to Rodney Benson «In short, we need answers to such questions as: What is the empirical structural organization of the public sphere? How do public spheres vary cross-nationally? » [1].

Aside from the institutional criterion of the accessory of politics' public sphere phenomena, important meaning has thematic affiliation of statements and their meaning. Discourse paradigm in the social sciences which gives the possibility to realize that the theme of political discussions, their meaning and content depends on the activity of specialized structures, which produce political messages. Discursive and media public sphere of politics components have a certain monopoly that is not confined to institutional actors. These elements are not reduced only by expressing the number of utterances, rhetoric styles, and an agenda of the day. Mediativity of the public sphere of politics involves common sense's coupling of all political statements and in a certain area or in a particular course of political events. At the same time, the contentment of political discourses is associated with the general rules of the public sphere, the main of which are open-mindedness, freedom of access to discussions, mutual respect for the panelists. An important characteristic in this context is the temporal characteristic of discourse and media manifestations, which are not only related to current public events, but also include their previous history. «And what are the complex links between structural characteristics of public spheres and the form and content of mediated discourses?» [1, p.180]

Specific evidences, which justify a separate status of public sphere of politics, are the functioning of the media and communication structure of democratic society. In contemporary developed democracies the political process is focused not only around the electoral procedures, but is also associated with resonant events that attract widespread public attention. Definition of the discussed issues depends not only on the activities of political actors, parties, social organizations, but also on the peculiarities of the functioning of media structure. The lat-



ter has been formed as a result of historical and cultural characteristics of each country. In certain extent, media system converts the response and actions of citizens and organizations in politics. As a result, public resonance takes various forms. Regarding to this, the current state of political discourse is a dynamic characteristic of the politics' public sphere. Institutional and discursive component of the public sphere of politics is combined in the thematic associations and in all subjects of political discussion in the framework of one subject or events. As Rodney Benson argues, «a comparison of the French and American news coverage of the respective protest events allows us to test hypotheses about the extent to which the state-dominated French media or the commercially-dominated American media function closer to the habermasian ideals of a rational-critical, participatory public sphere» [1].

The phenomenon of political publicity as the public sphere of politics is associated with the context of political activities and its actualization within the socially important messages. In this sense, all participants of democratic politics, from governmental leaders to individuals, who are leading the political agitation. It is connected with the phenomenon of the publicity. Reasoning public is the political side of life, going beyond the private world. That's why, the public sphere of politics can be considered as a set of simultaneous public manifestations, combined in a single semantic field of contemporary political engagement. The meaning of the public sphere of politics for contemporary political theory consists of bringing together the objects and phenomena of the political world, which are not included in the traditional systemic political vision. Public sphere of politics excludes also the functionality in its structural and systemic understanding. Public sphere of political theory has to embrace the widest possible list of political objects and it has to justify its explanatory power and consistency in the study of political phenomena. According to modern scientists, «journalists facilitate public participation in political debate first, by naming, and thus publicly legitimating persons and organizations as public actors» [1, p.19].

Public manifestations of political actors may be infinitely various. The concept of the public sphere of politics involves not only the delineation of its formal structure and distinguishing features. Activities of the political discourse participants coincide with signs of activity of the public sphere. Political speakers are both in a position of those, who are involved in the political process, and also they represent the extension of this involvement by the significance of the interests of other counterparts. Thus, the explanatory potential of the concept of the public sphere politics saves the current state of affairs, and the emergence of new political actors. «An important part of facilitating participation is not only citing and quoting a range of social actors, but in legitimating the very idea of organized political action. When we consider this aspect, the high percentage of citations of unaffiliated individuals in the American press appears anti-political rather than simply apolitical» [1, p.24].

Inclusion of those or other political phenomena into

the influential space of the public sphere of politics' explanatory potential is based not only on traditional notions of meaning and relevance, but also on the basis of internal intentionality of subjects of public political activity. The problem of individual citizens' involvement into the political process in transformative societies by the reason of little particular individuals' influence and low statistical level of political situation changes (because of lack of qualified and active citizens) receives theoretical justification of the validity coverage of information field of politics with journalistic mediatization (see P. Dahlgren [2]). Intrinsically, the political agenda can be formed by journalists and media structures on the ground of sustainable political institutions functioning. Conception of public sphere of politics' mediatization undergoes changes consequently the fact that the activities of the media are characterized by a limiting approach to restrictions of political events and public political manifestations based on the criteria of sensationalism and significance for public interest. Political public, meanwhile, continues to function mainly in the form of new political statements. Comprehension and resonating on political issues and political discussions also constitute a specific structural level of the public sphere of politics. «While media-audience relations may vary across societies, with some audiences being more critical and interpretive than others, this study shows that features of journalistic fields and their relations to the state and the market clearly do vary and with important consequences for the production of the raw material of political discourse made available to citizens», R. Benson argues [1, p.49].

The meaning of the public sphere of politics' concept acquires the unifying significance for heterogeneous traditions of comprehension of the political intercourse, which covers the political discourse, political communication, and political media activities. The normative core of the public sphere of politics is the criterion of correlation of positive and negative events that can be correlated with the normative sample. The theoretical meaning of the public sphere of politics will be proved if it is possible to describe its value as tools of rationalizing all manifestations of political communicability. Empirical studies demonstrate (see [4], [5]) that in contemporary political science theory exists a need for specific regulatory criteria for the level of democratic political participation, as well as the need for increase of desired value of political subjectivity of individuals and groups in an open and competitive political environment. Being a complement of the political system and connecting existing different conceptual dimensions of the phenomenon, theoretical concept of the public sphere of politics provides a new understanding of political action and political consciousness in view of technological achievements of mankind and its future evolution.

**Conclusions.** Thus, the current state of public sphere's understanding in political science gives preliminary basis for the assertion that the public sphere of politics is a handy tool of distinguishing between subject areas which cover specialized narrow expert discourse in politics, expressions of political intentions of social

groups, the formation of thematic contour in public political discussions, clearly separated from other social surveys and discussions. At the same time, the concept of the public sphere of politics is more flexible theoretical term, which doesn't inferior in contradiction with the traditional concept of the public sphere (which we observe in communication theory).

Public sphere of politics represents integral part of the general public sphere, which is inherent to the particular democratic society or even the global public sphere. In conditions of the gradual formation of the cybernetic public sphere, the formation of its separate

political segment looks a bit artificial. In addition, the politicization of the public sphere characterizes, mostly, authoritarian and other closed societies. But in the same time the notion of general public sphere can be theoretically sustainable unless political science expert community understands that modern political theory only as metaphorically associated with the model of the ancient Athens polis political publicity, or the ancient Roman Republic. Meanwhile, the concept of the public sphere is an umbrella for the part of public political interactions, which are aimed at rationalizing and optimizing the forms of communicative interaction.

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