



"NEW" THEORIES OF THE PUBLIC AND ACTUALITY: HIERARCHICAL SYSTEM OF INFLUENCE AND HEGEMONY OF IMMATERIAL LABOR

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The article considers "new" theories of the public, sometimes also called "postmodern" theories, which emphasize the openness of the mediated public sphere and plurality of symbolic publics, which can find the modus of their interests with the help of the steering capability of the system of influence. The author argues that it is possible to envisage a consensus between symbolic publics only because the theories are funded in the liberal tradition, which presupposes the interests and rationality of the members of the publics to be autonomous in relation to the material conditions in which they live. When historical-material thought is applied, two types of inequalities that permeate the system of influence are revealed, the structural and the relational one. These in reality lead to the formation of partial publics and a fragmented public sphere. However, public actors do not call into question the origins of the mentioned inequalities, because in times of the hegemony of immaterial labor, they (public actors) are both consumers and producers of ideological forms, which engender an "objective" world view based on the model of circulation (the market). The creation of the common worldview in turn creates the neutral base for a "new" kind of refeudalization of the public sphere. This is now carried out by classes and members of the public that did not take part in the "classical" intrusion of private interests into the public sphere in the time of modernity.

Keywords: public, media, influence, immaterial labor, ideology



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At the end of the 20th Century, many theories rejected critical politico-economic analysis of the opportunities for citizens to participate in the political public sphere. The work of the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas is a very good example of the way in which the prevalent conception of the public began changing, from an analysis of the demise or refeudalization¹ of the liberal public in the 1960s (1989a), to the beginning of the 1990s, when he revised his theory and united liberal and republican points of view in laying the foundations of a new conception of the public (1994). In his earlier work, Habermas interpreted critically the ingression of organized private interests into the public sphere. However, in his recently revised model of the public sphere, the public is supposed to be able to recognize and prevent manipulative tendencies from affecting it directly. Such an about-face in interpretation of the sovereignty of the public in modern democracies is the result of change in the geo-political organization of the World, development and application of new technologies, changes in class structure, recognition of interpretation capabilities of the members of the public, and, even, directions of research, which developed under the auspices of post-structuralism and post-modern theories of society. Besides Habermas, one should also mention John B. Thompson and Leon H. Mayhew, whose work focuses not so much on the political view of the public, but rather on the role of the media in the transformation of the space and time of the public opinion formation processes or rather on the role of symbolic dimensions of the public, especially, on the representation and influence of public actors. Thus, Thompson refers to "a new kind of publicness", which no longer consists of exchanges of arguments among members of the public through dialogue, but rather denotes the openness of the public sphere, visibility of contents, mediatization of symbolic forms, and the structural inequality between producers and receivers of messages (Thompson, 1995, 245). Messages are now produced for an undefined member of a mass audience, who interprets and evaluates, in isolation, conveyed arguments, which can, but might also not, induce him to action, to seek new information or to form new relationships and alliances. According to Leon Mayhew's theory, which is presented in his work named *The New Public* (1997), advocates of a certain public affair help rational individuals in forming their view, while in the same time these advocates compete among themselves for the favorable disposition of dispersed members of the public. In this way, the public is divided into influential leaders and a silent majority of those they lead, who recognize each other in what is for them the most favorable mediatized symbolic representation of their interests:

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Influence is the principal means by which bounded rationality works, so it is meaningful to criticize the mass media as an institution based on influence. Assistance in economizing the search for information is precisely what people expect of the media. Nor is it realistic to bemoan the superficiality of the media in relation to the notion of an informed citizenry, for creating a highly informed public is not the way the process of public information is played out. (Mayhew, 1997, 253-254)

Because the mentioned theories many times designate recent phenomena as "new", I also speak about "new" or "newer" theories. They build upon the plurality of public actors, which struggle for visibility and influence in an endless sea of media, content, demands, offers, representations, while members of the public, armed both with rationality and with their passions, inclinations, and desires choose the most appropriate proponent of their interests or, rather, the most convenient form of truth about a certain matter of public affairs. Each publication of an opinion spawns a symbolic public, which public speakers try to depict as attractive as possible. Meanwhile, the interpretative abilities of the audience (the potential public) play a central role in forming opinions of its members. Even Jürgen Habermas in his recent theory emphasizes the symbolic dimension of the political influence of public figures, which (political influence) "must *ultimately* rest on the resonance and indeed the approval of a lay public whose composition is egalitarian" (Habermas, 1996, 364). However hierarchical the context in which the media and public figures' act may be, their influence is based on arguments, which the lay public extracts from a flood of symbols, according to both Habermas and Mayhew. Arguments are the content of influence, which confers an egalitarian and communicative character on persuasion processes, Mayhew follows Talcott Parsons (1967) from whom Habermas derives his concept of influence as well. However, considering influence in conjunction with social status, influence is backed by arguments only in the final phase of persuasion that – and this is the central thesis of this article – never comes under objective conditions, gaining influence as a means of persuasion which permeates the social hierarchy. Mayhew argues the contrary, leaving particular interests of actors of different social standings unquestioned and transformative in direction of "consensual" society: "Values determine social status, status confers prestige, prestige implies respect and respect is a resource for influence. By this account, the entire system of stratification can be regarded as a moral order within which exemplars of social values contribute to social integration by influencing others to conform to social norms, and, more generally, to adjust their conduct to

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society's integrative needs" (Mayhew, 1997, 28). From this point of view the system of influence is unstable (thus allowing open and egalitarian redemption of token arguments, the whole process leading to consensus) only if class structure and differences in interpretative schemes are disregarded, and this is exactly what happens in the "new" theories. When the mentioned two characteristics are taken into account, two modes of inequality that permeate the system of influence are revealed, the structural and the relational inequality of the system of influence, leading to the fragmentation of publics, which are unable to find consensus with communicative means. Only compromises are feasible, reached with strategic actions.

The second difficulty with newer theories emerges from the entrenched sovereignty of the members of the public in the lifeworld. In the latter, the individual is supposed to be able to protect him/herself against the imposition of systemic imperatives of power and money, which, in principle, should not enter into public discussion. However, in the current information society, where immaterial labor² assumes the hegemonic role over other forms of labor, the lifeworld and the system, two domains in terms of which Habermas (1984, 1989b) formulates his two-level conception of society, are impossible to distinguish even analytically. Communication processes, which corporate capital requires for systemic integration of society, permeate all aspects of life, even the reproductive, which is especially significant for members of society, who sell immaterial labor in the tertiary services market of information processing and cultural production. The colonization of the lifeworld with its consequent effects (production of ideology) in this context causes a "new" kind of refeudalization of the public sphere. It is carried out by classes and members of the public that did not take part in "classical" intrusion of private interest in the time of modernity.

STRUCTURAL INEQUALITY OF THE SYSTEM OF INFLUENCE

The underlying idea of the "new" theories is that with the advent and use of new (digital) communication and information technologies the "status conferral function" – ascribed to mass media already by Lazarsfeld and Merton (1948, 497) – could be avoided, if only direct access to several discursive forums is enabled. In other words, differences in social status could be leveled off by numerous more or less equally prestigious platforms from which a plurality of actors speaks, argues Mayhew (1997, 255-260). Namely, the system of influence is based on egalitarian grounds only when the condensed rhetoric of the person speaking in the name of the public can effectively be questioned, and precisely the abundance of communication platforms was supposed to enable it, simultane-

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ously neutralizing the power of social status when and if necessary.

Classical mass media did not offer many possibilities for the testing of influence, as many critical scholars argued, and the publication of critical opinions, aimed towards powerful players of the political and economic system was something the public wined for itself in fringe battles with the oligopolistic "culture industry". Some researchers have alternatively pinned their hopes for an open and well-argued discussion on "new" media, which are supposed to enable freer publication of opinions due to a more democratic network structure and more affordable access. According to Thompson, the changes in technology have brought "a new kind of mediated publicness" that denotes an infinite (boundless) space, which is difficult to control, a space of creativity, in which content can appear suddenly and bring about unexpected consequences (Thompson, 1995, 246). In this way, the "new" theories argue, an internet newspaper with a small number of readers can cast doubt upon the reporting of a large TV network. By the same pattern, a weak interest group can confront an influential multi-national corporation or a responsible news reporter can disclose and oppose manipulation and censorship imposed by political or economic figures. Considering traditional media, every effort at effective publicizing of opinions occurs in two phases, in which the speaker, firstly, attempts to influence the media, and then the media, in turn, attempts to influence the audience by passing messages (Mayhew, 1997, 252). At first sight it would be reasonable to argue that with the development of the Internet, the producer and the distributor of opinions could be the same person or group, and that the two step process of influencing could be reduced to one phase, or better, to one communicator, directly accessing the platform for distribution of information and simultaneously demanding the argumentative redemption of rhetoric of competing groups.

However, the change in the possession of technology (media) neither guarantees greater plurality of opinions nor more democratic public debate. Even free publication of the opinions on the Internet does not add much to the effectiveness of the demands for justification of influence of competing public actors. Technology remains in the hands of privileged social classes, given that the ever-increasing commodification of information and technologies never chooses the marginalized and disenfranchised to be the first to take advantage of these trends (Jordan, 1999, 161). What is more, Internet content is being commercialized just as are communications and portals, which purveyors of information services are attempting to make as user-friendly and undemanding as possible, so that users might never leave them (McChesney,

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2000, 22). The audience is segmented according to the supply side strategies, aimed at attracting those with the highest sum of discretionary income, which are later sold to the highest bidding advertisers. In an appointed segment, no place is reserved for values that are incompatible with values that support the social status of public figures that attract segmented audiences. In the field of non-commercial, alternative and community media, the picture is similar, just that their audiences are not sold to advertisers. There is no guarantee that the competitive segment is not built on precisely opposite values to those, defended by adversary public actors. To use the language of economic theory, the supply side offers a set of values, from among which the demand side, according to its different preferences, chooses from. In this process the plurality of closed discursive communities with distinguished values is built up. In his revised theory, Habermas provides exactly such a structure of partial and autonomous public spheres, which compete for the visibility in and the recognition from the media and the political system (Habermas, 1996, 358). However, he does not illustrate how partial publics can transform their interests in order to achieve a mutual agreement. To say that there is a possibility of the common public sphere does not resolve the question of dissenting and competitive publics. If some norms and values are not commonly accepted, then the appointed social status of the platform or of the public actor cannot induce trust in the offered symbolic public.

In accordance with the mentioned linkage between values and influence, a certain acknowledged social status has the power to persuade those who affirm the values on which the social status is based. And if we follow the opinion formation processes from the viewpoint of the concept of "a new kind of publicness" (Thompson, 1995), their messages are able to persuade entirely different audiences, because audiences also have different values, according to their position in the hierarchical class structure. For example, an owner of the productive means attempts to attract citizens, who defend the current status quo of the capitalist system of economic production, as a worker in an industry will find a safe haven in the proletarian public sphere, where conditions for change are explicated. This is the result of the fact that the first one has entirely different values than the last one, which means that when they speak from different platforms, influence is unable to steer them towards consensus. The inability to achieve consensus in the first phase of influencing, when influence functions on the basis of trust in public actors – and arguments are not yet demanded nor provided for redemption of rhetorical tokens –, is the consequence of *the structural inequality* of status and prestige of media and public actors.

RELATIONAL INEQUALITY OF THE SYSTEM OF INFLUENCE

And why does not the process of persuasion even in the last instance – in our case in the second phase of persuasion – lead to an effective validation of arguments and later to consensus? This validation is called relational because it tries communicatively to transform at least two different interpretations, based on particular arguments, of the same objective reality.

Mayhew has argued that the ideology of the free market and a strategically oriented "rhetoric of presentation" prevent the arguments to be brought to the fore to test influence: "The rhetoric of presentation takes the rhetorical token to be sufficient in itself, and needing no redemption. Images speak for themselves and slogans do not require explication" (Mayhew, 1997, 274). To resolve this situation, Mayhew demanded that the backing of influence is tested on discursive forums, where the validation of arguments is carried out, but this is a highly idealistic stance, because ideologically supported values do not allow their own transformation simply by argumentative persuasion, or rather, every argumentative persuasion is also subjective, because it is grounded in the material conditions in which people live. And these conditions shape the interests that propel the actions of particular actors. For example, the manager of a company cannot by objective arguments persuade a member of a trade union to work more time for a lesser wage, as the owner of the company longs for. In other words, *we* cannot have an objective position towards the objective world, nor can we objectively present our arguments: "To say that there is a world independent of *our* experiences of it and practical activities within it is not at all the same thing as arguing that *we* can be independent of that world, that we can rise above the social interests coursing through our social locations and identifications. Thus we can legitimately say that there is no such thing as an *objective subject*" (Wayne, 2003, 226). Even "objective" arguments are shaped according to the interests that stand behind public actors and for this reason the persuasion to be effective has to be directed to social levels which share similar values as the persuader does – or the persuasion has to be manipulative or/and strategic to change the worldview of groups and classes on different levels of society's structure, adapting their thinking and values to seize the reality in the form the persuader offers it. "New" theories argue the opposite: competing interests can be transformed by the use of arguments. Arguments enable the testing of influence because theories accept the liberal conception of society, in which interests are the immediate result of autonomously functioning human beings. The materialistic conception of the world is different and accentuates that ideas, consciousness and inter-

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ests are conditioned by material circumstances, which differentiate according to the class structure. This inequality prevents individuals from different classes to transform their interest towards the same goal or common good, because the conception of common good is different according to the actors' positions. Differences in interpretative schemes are exposed in many research projects that interconnect the interpretation of mediated content with the interest depending on the location of people in the broader context of the economic system, thus with social relations of production and class structure (see Golding and Murdock, 2000, 85). The interpretation of the facts that stand alone is not problematic, people can interpret them in the same way, understand the speaker. What is problematic is the one-dimensional interpretation and consequent transformation of interest that the arguments are supporting. The inability to provide backing of influence with arguments that all would use to understand (and accept as legitimate) particular interest in the same way, makes *relational inequality* of two or more subjects the common object of attention.

The process, marked by structural and relational inequality of the system of influence, then leads to the formation of many publics with more or less stable beliefs that have their base in the values of certain competing groups with their distinguished ideologies. Be the status order ever so fluid, it is formed by hegemonic values, which are transmitted by the media and influential public figures thereby closing the influence loop – the loop in which the influential ones (media and prestigious public actors) define who has the power to persuade the chosen segment of the public. Therefore, the persuaded ones are those with similar values and similar social standing.

In principle, unequal conditions of media production and reproduction of life should not influence the public debate. However, these conditions determine the means of struggle of various groups for intellectual and moral leadership of a given society. Therefore, results of the analysis of material conditions of media production and public opinion formation processes, in which concepts of newer theories are inserted, come to resemble Gramsci's (2003) description of the struggle of groups for a hegemonic role in society. Under such circumstances, the strategic struggle for visibility is conducted according to the principle of "equal opportunity," which is by far and away not "freedom of achievement" for all. This means that those who are in an underprivileged position and whose life context is created by more powerful forces than their own, attempt to achieve the achievable within the framework of pre-established constraints, unless they use strategic means to accomplish their goal. James Bohman critically assessed the difference between *equal opportunity* and *actual freedom* in asserting that delibera-

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tive democracy cannot be based on the assumption that all citizens are of equal social standing nor that they can all skillfully take advantage of opportunities (Bohman, 1997, 326). The system of influence is hierarchically organized, and although all have the opportunity to persuade, the levers by which the hierarchy of social status is determined and accordingly influence as well, is out of reach of their communicative action. The above-mentioned closed loop of influence can only be re-opened by means of strategic struggle.

The difference between "new" theories of the public and critical politico-economically oriented theories lies in the fact that according to the former, the conditions of participation in the public discussion can be communicative (oriented toward agreement) under certain "objective" circumstances, which would in the last instance allow argumentative persuasion, whereas according to the latter, conditions of participation in public life are always marked by the social relations of production. And these last conditions are marked by an unsolvable conflict between capital and labor. In reality, this is shown by the unequal standing of the platforms from which members of the public speak: a member of the working class has an entirely different economic and social position from which he can distribute messages and emphasize values – thereby augmenting status and influence – than a member of the political or economic elite. In other words, political economy is interested in the very conditions and socio-economic resources, which enable a certain public prolocutor to cast doubt upon the influence of the competitor from different social standing. The interpretation of media content itself is not problematic, nor is testing/sampling of influence as a symbolic form. It happens quite straightforward in partial public spheres. Problematic are the broader conditions (1) under which public figures compete for media attention (the sphere of message production and distribution), (2) the conditions under which transformation of particular interests takes place (the horizon of life experience). These conditions are not equal and cannot be equal for all under any circumstances, even when we step on the public forum, where the power of the argument is a maxim. These conditions depend, in turn, on the economic (physical and financial), social, and cultural capital of public figures and audiences, as Bourdieu (2003) would have it. When we relate these forms of capital with the social standing of members of the public, we see that production, dissemination and interpretation of mediated content are determined by the position of the members of the public in the mode of production, as is shown in the next chapter. It is also presented, how ideology of the free market and entrepreneurship produces social context in which some forms of agreement between public actors is possible.

FUSION OF THE PUBLIC SPHERE AND THE MARKET

Through strategic framing, segments of the public adapt dissemination of information to their advantage as is shown by the theory of framing (Pan and Kosicki, 2001) or already in the 1980s' analysis of subsidizing information in the media (Gandy, 1982), with which the desired communicative integration of society actually unfolds as a strategic struggle. At first sight the above-mentioned compartmentalization or fragmentation of the public sphere is incompatible with the assumption that it is possible to find some common basis, foundation, vital context, common culture or rather common values, on which to continue a public debate and which will yield an agreement among the members of the public, who do not share common life experiences. Still, as newer theories demonstrate, people can reach a kind of agreement or at least they are able to achieve the conformity of their acts with the appeals of others. I argue that in the "new" models of the public, agreement is achievable only because the theories presuppose an objective picture of reality – the autonomous base – that all members of the public share. However, conception of the autonomous base is possible only if the positions and conflicts in the class hierarchy are forcibly put in brackets, which causes the rationality of the people to become unproblematic.

In Habermas' theory, language can form such a basis, which already carries with it the potential for rational argumentation, together with "culturally-rooted pre-understanding" (Habermas, 1984, 100), which guarantees a basic set of meanings and basic norms for collocutors. Similarly, Mayhew formulates his model firstly in terms of competing interests, based on which discourse calling for solidarity among members of society would enable the formation of post-conventional norms suitable for new post-modern identities (Mayhew, 1997, 286). Both authors emphasize building and existence of fundamental common social norms and a common objective world view, which ought to be shared by all participants in the debate.

Habermas indicated the problem of achieving consensus among individuals of differing class backgrounds already in his analysis of the decline of the liberal bourgeois public sphere. In this earlier model of the public sphere, sovereignty of the members of the public was based in the private sphere of production. With the advent of the post-industrial society and an altered view of reality, newer theories – epitomized, once again, by those of Habermas – no longer posit the crux of sovereignty of members of the public in the private sphere, rather in the life-world in which activity is oriented toward agreement and in which systemic imperatives of money and power are denied entry. The entire concept of the public sphere loses its

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materialistic character, which was used to explain the invasion of organized private interests in the public sphere – the refeudalization of the public sphere. With that change, the public also gains a measure of autonomy based upon rationality and responsible undertaking of certain public figures and weak institutions of civil society (Habermas, 1994, 30). The main emphasis is on the ability to constrain the manipulative tendencies of the system, or rather, on an objective view of the world, which in previous theories was shrouded by the veil of ideology. In the post-modern world, ideology³ should be a thing of the past in which conflicts between labor and capital did exist, although with new means of production, diversification of ways of living, and greater accessibility of information, they are dismissed or, at least, immediately detected for what they are. Therefore, it is no longer necessary to conceal them with behind-ideological scheme (various media, educational systems, religion,...). In other words, theories assume that the economic system needs no ideological excuse for disciplining the underprivileged social strata, or rather, such activities are immediately revealed as ideological indoctrination. If Habermas' earlier description of the public sphere was predicated on the assumption that spheres of production and ensuing social relations manipulate the public and its behavior, now, the public can constrain these tendencies. One can present the difference in conception as follows. According to earlier conceptions, economic and political power dictated the behavior of the public. "New" theories conceive of the public as able to demand services of a given political system autonomously. In the former case, an individual is conscientious and irrational. In the latter case, an individual's behavior is rational and independent of structures of economic and political power.

The philosophy of realism does not accept such a "new" straightforward conception of the world. Theories, which are based on historical materialism, through analysis of actuality, indicate a fusion of the public sphere with the market and problematize the rational behavior of the public. Fredrick Jameson (1991) is an example of this. Content from the public sphere always appears in some broader market, be it the market of lifestyles, goods, or even consumer-style activism. Through this, the market, or rather a model of circulation, remains the only one sufficient to offer people a vision of totality, an entire reality. As Ženko explains, the central objective of Fredrick Jameson's work is to show "the inability of the post-modern subject to confront the totality of systems, which surround him." (Ženko, 2003, 90). This inability also serves to explain why status- and class- differentiated actors do not bring into question the origin of their difference.

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According to Althusser (2000), relations of production reproduce ideology by representing the imaginary relationship of people to the real relation of production. Ideology emerges from these relations of exploitation as relations of class conflict. The difference between the functioning of ideological schemes (educational, cultural, political, informational, ...) in industrial and post-industrial capitalism lies in the fact that people in our time are directly included in the production of ideological forms. These are, for example, media content, representations of reality and the public, lifestyles, in short, all products with any symbolic meaning. Today, the individual is no longer merely a consumer of ideological forms, but rather a producer thereof. He is forced into this position by the domination of immaterial labor and forms of production, which are characterized by the action of knowledge upon knowledge itself. Workers become prosumers (producers-consumers) and owners of the means of production (information and communication technologies, knowledge, collaboration networks), which they need for immaterial production, while also being independent entrepreneurs, cultural workers, news reporters, who work according to current entrepreneurial principles. The once enforced class struggle between owners of the means of production (machines, factories, etc.) and workers, who used to compete only in the labor market, is continued by workers in their own class among themselves as independent production units of economic value. This class struggle within a given class itself produces ideology. Phil Graham described vividly the unification of consumption and production in a knowledge society and inclusion of people in an exchange of symbols, knowledge and representations:

Once informed, people can then reproduce, reconfigure, and redistribute their knowledge in an infinitely complex cycle of social interactions and exchanges. 'Consumers' of knowledge are simultaneously its producers; language is the primary means of exchange. This holds for all kinds of valuable knowledge, from currency trades, to advertising and political propaganda, to secrets sold by inside traders on the stock market, to inventors of new techniques for manipulating DNA. (Graham, 2006, 73)

In a knowledge society, thinking becomes work, which ascribes meaning to symbols and through exchange enables their continual (re)production. Therefore, Graham, in his analysis entitled "Hypercapitalism" explains that it is impossible to distinguish the lifeworld from the system analytically. Immaterial labor has overtaken the role as leading form of labor from other forms of labor such as industrial labor, which

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means that it determines the organization of production in all other spheres of immediate production of economic value and in the lifeworld as well. Consumers of ideological forms have also become their producers or rather consumers prepare ideological forms for further exchange. Italian autonomists defined immaterial labor as a force, which produces knowledge, information, and meanings. Such labor is collective and, according to Lazzarato (2007), exists in the form of currents and networks. Production takes place in all spheres of life and society, so some authors refer to a "social factory," which, in addition to organization of production, produces ideological forms as well. The latter represent and rationalize pre-existing social relations as the only possible ones that are meaningful and natural.

From this analysis of condition for participation in the public sphere, it is possible to extract two processes: fragmentation of the life experiences of members of the public and their virtual rehabilitation in the "hyper-refeudalized" bourgeois public sphere. Namely, members of the public, who have differing interests, can each buy their own realities in the framework of a totality of a market, and the market model is the common basis, the source of values and truth about the world, which serves as an anchor for argumentation. Confrontation of these realities takes place in the system which gives rise to a strategic struggle for serving individual interests rather than conducting an autonomous public debate. Agreement is more readily reached among competing interests by agreeing on compromises (by way of rewards and sanctions mediated by money and power) than by transforming interests, since compromises most frequently suppress difficulties, which emerge as soon as another opportunity for them arises.

ENFORCED PICTURE OF THE COMMON WORLD

Newer theories are rather critical towards the dominance of strategic rationality in the public sphere, as an example of this, one could consider Mayhew (1997), which describes the phenomenon of "the New Public", formed by instrumentalized persuasion, advertising, lobbying, and other forms of manipulation. The way out of this situation that theories offer is to demand plurality of the media and responsible behavior of civil society. However, the possibility of publishing opinions critical of the activities of elites should not be equated with the ability to persuade, with the effective freedom of communication. A "supply-side" analysis of various media and influential public speakers reveals its hierarchical structure and, furthermore, that public figures with more socio-economic resources and means of persuasion often completely disregard the underprivileged and minorities, who are thus left only

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with strategic struggle as a means of becoming visible and recognizable. The public sphere is not refeudalized only by the most powerful class, rather the demise of the public is taking place in intense mini "refeudalizations" of countless public spheres in which a conflict for the servicing of special interests is raging, which emerge from highly-vertically-oriented, densely-differentiated structural inequalities of contemporary societies. In this context ideology provides an "objective" picture of reality and, accordingly, the unity of the source of life experiences of members of the public. The exploited and the exploiter become equal in public due to an equal picture of the reality. Furthermore, since the interests of all public actors are of equal origin in the circulation model (the market), they are equally legitimate, thereby obscuring the conflict between labor and capital. Consequently, class conflict in the system becomes invisible, while the common public interest strides to preserve a broad entrepreneurial sector and justification of enforced solidarity among members of society.

The public sphere, as described above, has become a domain of manipulation, hyperinflation of meanings and finality, the domination of the powerful over the weak, instrumentalization of public debate, which is far from the whole story. If such a totality of the real world were factually to lull everything and everybody to sleep and would do away with conflicts, then the described "new" refeudalization is a model of a perfectly-efficient public sphere, in which there is even no need for communicative means of social integration – market exchange and fantasy production ideally yields the common good. However, powerful public actors of the political and economic system often encounter resistance, opposition. Therefore, it would be mistaken to view conditions for public debate as complete, firm, and unchangeable. They are determined through activity in a struggle of class versus class and competition among members of the same class to establish a ruling ideology. Therefore, an individual activity is fundamental to understanding power relations. Apparently-perfect conditions for reproduction of human society present themselves as the most sensible and natural only through continual effort on the part of that class, of individuals and groups, who seek dominance, which in some respect fits Gramsci's description of the struggle of classes and groups for domination through intellectual and moral leadership of society.

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¹ By refeudalization of the public, Habermas denotes those characteristics of the public, which induce the fusion of the public and private spheres. When organized private interests invade the public, certain special interests are portrayed as public, which encompasses the domain of material trade as well as conflicting class interests.

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Presenting interests in this way thereby includes taking a political stance (Habermas, 1989a, 213). Forming and working with the public, which takes place through public relations, regains feudal character by displaying privileged private interests: "Suppliers shine in a representative fashion in front of their devoted consumers" (Habermas, 1989a, 215).

² Immaterial labor denotes application of various skills and knowledge required to process information as well as activities, which are not immediately recognizable as work, specifically, in establishing aesthetic norms, production of life styles, values, and, last but not least, production of public opinion. (Lazzarato, 2007)

³ In the philosophical tradition of realism, ideology denotes processes, which lead to a skewing of views of the world. Because of the insidious activity of ideology "behind our backs" people are ignorant of the origins of interests in the relations of production. Therefore, people consider interests to be independent of one's position in a social hierarchy, from which interests emerge. Furthermore, people conceive of their position in the world as following from the realization of their own autonomous interests, while the interests of the fellow people form the objective environment in which they blaze a trail of realizing their life's potential.

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"Nove" teorije javnosti i aktualnosti: hijerarhijski sustav utjecaja i hegemonija nematerijalnog rada

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U članku se razmatraju "nove" teorije javnosti, ponekad nazvane i "postmodernim" teorijama, koje ističu otvorenost posredovane javne sfere i množinu simboličkih javnosti i koje pronalaze interesne moduse uz pomoć upravljačkih sposobnosti sustava utjecaja. Autor tvrdi da je moguće zamisliti konsenzus između simboličkih javnosti samo zato što su ove teorije zasnovane na liberalnoj tradiciji, što pretpostavlja da će interesi i racionalnost pripadnika javnosti biti autonomni u odnosu na materijalne uvjete u kojima žive. Kada se primjenjuje historijsko-materijalistička misao, otkrivaju se dvije vrste nejednakosti koje se šire sustavom utjecaja, a to su strukturna i relacijska nejednakost. One u stvarnosti vode stvaranju djelomičnih javnosti i fragmentirane javne sfere. Ipak, javni subjekti ne dovode u pitanje podrijetlo spomenutih nejednakosti, jer u vremenima hegemonije nematerijalnoga rada oni (javni subjekti) ujedno su i potrošači i proizvođači ideoloških oblika koji stvaraju "objektivan" pogled na svijet što se temelji na

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modelu kruženja (tržišta). Stvaranje zajedničkoga pogleda na svijet tada stvara neutralnu podlogu za "novu" vrstu refeudalizacije javne sfere. Nju sada provode klase i pripadnici javnosti koji nisu sudjelovali u "klasičnom" upletanju privatnih interesa u javnu sferu u moderno vrijeme.

Ključne riječi: javnost, mediji, utjecaj, nematerijalni rad, ideologija

„Neue“ Theorien über Öffentlichkeit und Aktualität: Das hierarchische System von Einflüssen und der Dominanz immaterieller Arbeit

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In diesem Artikel werden „neue“ Öffentlichkeitstheorien untersucht, die mitunter auch als „postmoderne“ Theorien bezeichnet werden. Diese betonen die Offenheit der vermittelten Öffentlichkeitssphäre und die vielfältigen Formen symbolischer Öffentlichkeit, die mit Hilfe des Verwaltungs-Knowhows großer Einflussysteme ihre Interessen geltend machen. Der Verfasser vertritt die These, dass ein Konsensus zwischen symbolischen Öffentlichkeitsformen denkbar sei, allein deshalb weil diese Theorien in der liberalen Tradition begründet seien. Dies setze nämlich voraus, dass Interessen und Rationalität von Öffentlichkeitsvertretern autonom sind in Bezug auf ihre materiellen Lebensumstände. Gemäß dem historisch-materialistischen Denken erschließen sich zwei Formen der Ungleichheit, die sich in Einflussssystemen ausbreiten: strukturelle Ungleichheit sowie Ungleichheit in den Beziehungen. Diese Formen der Ungleichheit resultieren in der Entstehung partieller Öffentlichkeiten und fragmentierter Öffentlichkeitssphären. Dennoch wird der Ursprung genannter Ungleichheitsformen von den in der Öffentlichkeit agierenden Subjekten nicht in Frage gestellt, denn in Zeiten der Dominanz immaterieller Arbeit sind die öffentlichen Subjekte zugleich Verbraucher und Hersteller ideologischer Denkformen, die eine „objektive“ Sicht der auf dem Modell der Zirkulation (des Marktes) begründeten Welt hervorbringen. Die Schaffung einer gemeinsamen Weltsicht bringt so eine neutrale Grundlage für eine „neue“ Art der Refeudalisierung der Öffentlichkeitssphäre hervor. Diese wird nun beherrscht von Klassen und Öffentlichkeitsvertretern, die an der „klassischen“ Einflussnahme privater Interessen auf die öffentliche Sphäre der modernen Zeit nicht teilhatten.