

The Public Sphere

Communications & Media

Where private people reason together about common concerns.

A public sphere is an arena, independent of state and market, in which public opinion is formed through argument.

- Habermas traced it to coffee houses and the press.
- Requires access, equality and reasoned exchange.
- Refeudalisation: publicity replaces deliberation.
- Critics note it excluded women and the poor.
- Counterpublics form where the main sphere excludes.

LOOK FOR IT

A comment system that rewards outrage produces publicity without deliberation.

Useful as a standard to measure against rather than a description of any real historical arena.