The Post-War Angola

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Public Sphere, Political Regime and Democracy

By

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Dedicated to the Memory of all the fallen Victims of the Angola's Civil Wars
And to those who have perished for Resisting the Powerful

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACA	Angolan Civic Association
ACC	Association Building Communities
ACGD	Christian Association for the Catholic Businesses
ADSA	Association for Health Development in Angola
AJPD	Association for Justice, Peace and Democracy
ALIAZO	Alliance of Natives of Zombo
AMMAR	Angolan Action for the Support and Advancement of Rural Area
ANGOP	Angolan News Agency
ASSOMUZO	Association of the People from Maquela do Zombo
BBC	British Broadcasting Service
BD	Democratic Block Party
BNA	Angolan National Bank
BP	British Petroleum
CCDH	Human Rights Coordination Council
CEAST	Angolan Catholic Bishops Conference
CEI	House for the Student from the Empire
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CICA	Council of the Christian Churches in Angola
CIEAC	Counsel of the Evangelical Churches in Central Angola
CIMANGOL	Angolan Cement Company
CNDA	National Democratic Convention of Angola
CNE	Angolan National Commission of Election
DNE	Angolan National Department of Revenues
DW	Development Workshop
EITI	Extractive Industries Transparency Initiatives
ELNA	National Liberation Angolan Army
ExxonMobil	Exxon Mobil Corporation
FAA	Angolan Army Forces
FALA	Army Force for the Liberation of Angola
FDA	Angolan Democratic Forum
FESA	Eduardo Dos Santos Foundation
FNLA	National Front for the Liberation of Angola
FORDU	Regional Forum for University Development
FpD	Front for Democracy
FRAIN	Revolutionary Front for National Independence of People

FRELIMO	Front for the Liberation of Mozambique
FULA	United Front for the Liberation of Angola
GRAE	Angolan Revolutionary Government in Exile
GRN	Cabinet of National Reconstruction
GURN	Government of National Unity
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
IMBISA	Assembly of the Interregional Meeting of Bishops of Southern Africa
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LNA	African National League
LNG	Angolan Natural Gas
MAC	Anti-colonialist Movement
MEA	Movement of the Angolan Students
MIA	Movement for the Independence of Angola
MINA	Movement for the National Independence of Angola
MLA	Movement for the Liberation of Angola
MLN	Movement of National Liberation
MLNA	Movement of the National Liberation of Angola
MOVICEL	Privately Owned Angola Mobile Phone Network
MPLA	Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola
MUD	Movement for Democratic Unity
NCC	National Counselling Centre
NDUE	New Democracy Electoral Union
OADEC	Organisation for Community Assistance and Development
OMUNGA	Civic and Pressure Group on Housing and Children's Rights
OPSA	Political and Social Observatory of Angola
PADEPA	Party for Democratic Support and Progress of Angola
PAI	Independent Angolan Party
PAJOCA	Party of the Alliance of Youth, Workers and Farmers of Angola
PALOPs	Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries
PCA	Angolan Communist Party
PDA	Angolan Democratic Party
PDLA	Liberal Democratic Party of Angola
PDP-ANA	Democratic Party for Progress-Angolan National Alliance
PIDE	International and State Defence Police
PLD	Liberal Democratic Party
PLUAA	United Struggle of the Africans in Angola
PNDA	Angolan National Democratic Party
PRA	Angolan Renewal Party

PROMAICA	Association of the Catholic Women of Angola
PRS	Social Renewal Party
PSD	Angolan Party of Social Democracy
PSDA	Social Democratic Party of Angola
RE	Radio Ecclesia
RNA	National Radio of Angola
SAF	Southern Africa Army Force
SINFO	Angolan Counterintelligence Services
SJA	Angolan Sindicate for Journalist
SONANGOL	Angolan National Oil Company
TotalFinaElf	TotalFina and Elf Aquitaine
TPA	The Public Television of Angola
UCAN	Catholic University of Angola
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNDP	United Nation Development Program
UNHCHR	United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
UNITA	National Union for the Total Independence of Angola
UNITEL	Privately Owned Angola Mobile Phone Network
UNTA	National Union for the Angolan Workers
UPA	Union of the People of Angola
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
VAPA	Angolan Vision for the People's Protection and Assistance

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INTRODUCTION

This book examines Angola's potential for further democratic development by assessing the conditions of public life as determined by the post-war Angolan politics in three interconnected parts. The first part outlines the theoretical framework on which the observations and analysis are based. It explains how we have approached the notion of the "public" and how it is considered in relation to the functioning of a democracy. The second part offers a brief summary and analysis of the historical background of the rise of the Angolan "public" and the peculiar conditions surrounding its formation. This leads to an exploration of the current state of public life in the country, which is provided in the third and final part.

A crucial reference point for any discussion of "public life or of a "public sphere" is Jürgen Habermas's seminal work *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, which was first published in German in 1962. Accordingly, the first chapter in Part 1 engages with Habermas's work and its critics. The analysis of Habermas's discussion focuses on the role of "interests" in the formation of the public and in sustaining what Habermas called "the public use of reason". A further important question which is addressed is whether indeed Habermas is a good starting point for an analysis of the "public" in a non-Western, non-liberal state. Can Habermas's concepts be transferred to socio-economic, political and cultural conditions which are radically different from the modern German, British and French societies and states? Are the historical conditions of the rise of the bourgeois public sphere in these countries specific to their context and time? While Habermas's contribution is an unavoidable starting point for the reflections detailed in this book, the analysis departs from Habermas's framework for a number of interrelated reasons.

First, given the importance of "interests", Habermas's "public sphere" is insufficiently differentiated from "civil society". This is particularly important in this case – Angola – because in some sense the historical conditions in this southern African country can be considered the reverse of the conditions that prevailed in the modernizing of European countries. According to Habermas, the "public sphere" emerged as "the sphere of private people coming together as a public; they soon claimed the public sphere which was regulated from above and used it against the public authorities themselves, to engage them in a debate over the general rules

governing relations in the basically privatized, but publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labour."[1] If there is a "public" in Angola, then it has been "claimed" by the state. The bourgeois interests which motivated private people to carve out a "space" over and against state authority, in which state actions could be subjected to public scrutiny, barely existed as a separate force in Angolan politics, where the state regime itself is the vehicle for "interests" to be pursued.

Second, although in Angola as in Europe, the rise of the "public sphere" reflects a process of "emancipation", the differences could hardly be greater. In Europe, the fact that the bourgeoisie dominated trade, capital and information, meant that the state was forced to respond to its demands for increased autonomy and state accountability. The "emancipation" in Angola, however, took place over and against a regime which had been externally imposed – colonialism – so that after its defeat, those who had successfully ousted the colonizers suddenly found themselves in a position of power. The totality of the colonial power and the totality of the struggle against it, reflects the totality of the power of the post-colonial regime that replaced it. The public sphere, which appeared to emerge as a space of resistance against colonial oppression, was absorbed by the regime which had unfolded from this very resistance. As a result of these developments, the regime has created a "pseudo-public sphere" which has the appearance of a public but without the characteristic separation between the interests of the state, the citizens and the interests of the bourgeoisie.

While many of these ideas will be substantiated in the second and third parts, the first part already provides a new definition of the "public sphere" that departs from Habermas's framework. This new definition will be used throughout the book as a "measure" or "standard" to evaluate whether or not the "public" exists in Angola. The new definition is based on Michel Foucault's work on "truth-telling" or, to use the Greek term, "parrhesia". In his late work, Foucault analysed "parrhesia" as a key feature of the ancient Greek democracy. While it may be impossible to offer a literal translation of the term, expressions such as "frankness", "frank talking" or "fearless speech" (franc parler in French) gives us the first idea of what parrhesia refers to. The person who speaks in the mode of parrhesia says what he or she has in his or her mind without fear of the consequences. Often, speaking in this manner requires courage, especially when it takes place in front of superior powers and authorities who have the power to punish the speaker if the truth spoken is inconvenient to them. Parrhesia, therefore, is a "relationship between the speaker and what he says."[2]

The truth-teller or parrhesiastes "say[s] everything he has in mind: he does not hide anything, but opens his heart and mind completely to other

people through his discourse."[3] Parrhesia is thus very different from rhetoric. Speaking in the mode of rhetoric implies that language is used with concrete interests in mind; rhetoric concerns the instrumentalization of language. In rhetoric, bios and logos are distinct, i.e. rhetorical language has an ulterior motive. Rhetoric wants to achieve something, and that something may well be hidden in what is being said. Parrhesia is different because it serves no interests, no ulterior motives. The mode of parrhesia is chosen often out of a sense of duty, in a "Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise" moment. There is a sense in which the parrhesiastes surrenders to what he or she believes to be true. He or she links his bios, his life, to what is being said, the logos. Historically, important moments of parrhesia are often moments of resistance, when it becomes a heroic act to not conceal the truth in front of powers whose very power may have been derived from the concealment. Foucault was interested in the notion of parrhesia for a number of reasons:

> My intention was not to deal with the problem of truth, but with the problem of the truth-teller, or of truth-telling as an activity: […] who is able to tell the truth, about what, with what consequences, and with what relations to power.[4]

The interests of this study are similar to Foucault's in a desire to explore the conditions of truth-tellers in Angolan public life. As noted previously, interest-driven public acts are usually controlled by the regime currently in power in Angola. In these conditions, as we shall see, it is virtually impossible to sustain a "public space" in which the regime can be put under pressure to respond to demands and criticisms. Put in another way, it requires an extraordinary degree of courage to create such a public space. A "public sphere" in Angola exists, it will be argued, to the extent that it is instantiated by those who "speak up"; who do not take part in the games of concealment. It is proposed, therefore, that "parrhesia", as understood by Michel Foucault, becomes the defining feature of the "public sphere" in this work. The "public sphere" thus becomes the space where parrhesia normally takes place. It comes into existence whenever there are parrhesiastes who speak up. Because it is a matter of personal choice – of conviction and courage, or of despair – to "speak up" and to refuse to conceal, there is always the potential for a "public sphere" to come into existence. While this potential can never be entirely suppressed, the question of opportunities nevertheless must feature prominently in this analysis.[5]

I can speak the truth in private when nobody listens, and thus the truth will have no social or political effect. Parrhesia requires that there are

people – and powerful people – listening. Oppressive regimes can undertake all kinds of things in order to prevent parrhesiastes from speaking. People can be silenced by sending them into exile, through imprisonment, by killing them. Crowds can be prevented from gathering. Media outlets can be monopolized. Radio stations can be closed etc. And yet while powerful regimes can be extremely effective in increasing the costs associated with truth-telling, it may just take one courageous soul to instantiate a "public". The "public" thus becomes the space where potentially the system of self-interests and deceit can be transcended. Thus, exploration of the conditions of the "public" in Angola becomes an exploration of the conditions in which truth-tellers will, or will not, "speak up".

Foucault argued that parrhesia was a crucial ingredient in the development of the ancient democracy in Athens. The place where parrhesia typically took place was the Agora, where the assembly of the citizens met. Parrhesia was a "right" that all citizens enjoyed. There was a clear understanding that the entire community would benefit if all citizens were empowered and encouraged to speak frankly with and to each other. Accordingly, Foucault explained, the fate of the Greek democracy and the fate of parrhesia were inextricably linked. The decline of the democratic polis corresponded to the abuse of parrhesia as skilled orators promoted their self-interests or the interests of their clients under the disguise of truth-telling. Foucault suggested that the conditions of parrhesiastes are thus an important indicator which sheds light on the extent to which a political culture can be considered "democratic". While there may be many "democratic" institutions and formal processes, as long as these are used only to promote self-interests, and as long as the citizens are too afraid to speak their mind in public, democracy cannot flourish. In such circumstances, democracy becomes a façade behind which all kinds of cruelties, exploitation, corruption and excessive private wealth accumulation continue unabatedly. The costs of speaking up increase as the gap between reality and the façade increases.

Part I examines the historical developments that led to the formation of the Angolan polity as it presents itself today. The three chapters in Part II outline the key stages of this development during the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods. A politically animated public emerged in Angola as a resistance to centralized power; this feature remained constant through much of its history, beginning with the formation of "kingdoms" during the pre-colonial era. This dynamic, however, turned inwards as the resisters found themselves in positions of power.

The discussions in Part I prepare the analysis of Angola's contemporary public detailed in Part III. Chapter 7, the first chapter in Part III, provides a survey of the constitutional and legal framework within which truth-tellers have to operate in the country. Chapter 8 then looks at the visit of Pope Benedict XVI to Angola – an event which for many reasons may have provided "revelatory" opportunities for truth-tellers to resist the official policies of concealment. It will become clear that the meaning of "events" always remains contested. Events provide opportunities for oppressive regimes to "hijack" public moments for the promotion of self-interests and self-aggrandizement; but they also provide opportunities for those waiting for the right moment to reveal rather than to conceal. We will argue that it is in the very nature of an "event" that they can never be completely controlled or instrumentalized. For example, the regime in a public gesture of generosity allowed Radio Ecclesia to broadcast across the entire country for the duration of Benedict's visit – while normally its transmission was restricted to the Luanda area – an opportunity arose for truth-tellers to reach a wider audience, and thus to extend the realm of the "public". But were these opportunities used? The Pope's visit is an interesting case of an "event" because the message he brought to Angola explicitly and implicitly appealed to potential truth-tellers to detach themselves from the system of lies in which the self-interests of the stronger powers prevailed. The analysis continues in Chapter 9, which looks at the fate of the Catholic radio station Radio Ecclesia, which, as the name suggests, aims to actualize the potential of the "public" as a community of speakers who are more than just a random gathering of people. While Chapter 8 allows a look at the opportunities and risks provided by an "event", Chapter 9 looks specifically at the structural constraints that affect the work of the radio station. One of these structural constraints is, of course, the ambiguous history of the Catholic Church in Angola. The concluding sections will reflect upon my observations, review how the understanding of the "public sphere" has helped this analysis, review new concepts I have introduced – such as the notion of the "pseudo public sphere", and reflect on the current and future development of "democracy" in Angola.

Fieldwork Experience

The theoretical framework presented in Part I of the book structured the fieldwork in Angola. One of the key questions that guided me was whether there are opportunities for truth-tellers to speak, and to speak in public, and whether what they say is being considered and allowed to have consequences? While parrhesia is indeed a personal commitment, the

social, political and cultural context can either encourage or discourage individuals to speak. Looking at public life and democracy in Angola, it was my intention to focus on the opportunities that public life provides – or prevents – for truth-telling. Where are the parrhesiastes in Angolan society and public life? What happens to them? How does their fate relate to the development or stagnation of Angolan democracy? The fieldwork in Angola took place in 2009 during which time I witnessed the commotion caused by Pope Benedict's visit. My stay in the country allowed me to sample views from all strands of Angolan public life: politicians, journalists, activists and academics, religious leaders, faith-based activists, trade unionists and people in the media. In conducting unstructured interviews my main purpose was to gauge the political and public climate in order to further understand the situation, I was especially interested in the views of those figures who positioned themselves as "watchmen" and "watchwomen". In total I conducted 46 interviews; moreover, I closely followed the press and media coverage of key issues and generally endeavoured to "absorb" the Angolan political culture.

While the theoretical considerations helped guide the empirical work, the fieldwork also affected the scope and shape of the book. During my visit to the country, the Pope's visit was an extraordinary public event and it thus provided a crucial insight into the functioning and malfunctioning of public debate. The contacts and interviews I was able to pursue also helped specifically explore the role of the Christian churches in the country, and I came to accept this as a meaningful limitation of the research. This is not to suggest of course that there are no truth-tellers outside the main churches in Angola, but in the course of the research it seemed especially worthwhile to explore the influence of church people and institutions, for two reasons.

First, the Pope's message as well as Radio Ecclesia's mission places considerable emphasis on the dynamics of truth as a collective endeavour. Parrhesia is a New Testament theme. The messages that were circulated during the Pope's visit thus directly appealed to the conscience of those who "knew" but were afraid to speak. Moreover, the complicated and ambiguous role of the church during Angola's history only serves to accentuate the tensions that a parrhesiastes with a church background must feel. Thus, while the empirical work in Chapter 8 and 9 has a strong link to Catholic events, people and organizations, I still suggest that the struggle of the parrhesiastes, inspired by the Church, is to some extent representative of the overall struggle that is entailed in parrhesia, thus also allowing Church organizations to work together with other non-religious groups and movements. This book will not post a general theory which is

to be "tested" in a positivistic manner. Rather, I am interested in exploring and establishing the links between the "public sphere", parrhesia, and democracy in Angola. Having explored these themes in relation to Angola, my conclusions will give a brief opportunity to suggest more general hypotheses regarding these links, which could then be used in future research on other, non-Western countries.

Truth-Telling as an Object and a Method

One of the key problems of the research that I became increasingly aware of during the study was the close relation between its object and method. Angola is classified as "not-free" in the Freedom House Survey. Angolan scholars have described the country as a "republic without republicanism and a democratic state without democracy."[6] Malaquias described the Angolan state as an "anti-state."[7] The fact that the costs of speaking frankly are very high in Angola clearly affected my research. Encouraging people to speak in interviews became almost an incitement to parrhesia; the research itself became a political act. Accordingly, some of my interviewees would ask questions about me: Who was I to ask these questions? Who was funding my research? What would happen with the notes I was taking? Could I be trusted? I have tried to deal with these tensions as best as I could – practically by preserving the anonymity of my sources whenever it was requested.

Epistemologically, I have come to accept that the act of drawing attention to the consequences of speaking up is in itself a form of speaking up. Therefore, this work continues a personal journey of critique and self-reflection, which follows the tradition of other national writers, artists and critics who in the past have used words to expose the evil of the Portuguese colonial rule. As a young Jesuit I was once confronted by my superiors who told me in no uncertain terms that the publication of a text I had written would inevitably lead to my expulsion from the Order: "Don't publish this book. It dilutes the Jesuit's spirit of obedience to the Catholic Church orthodoxy. If you choose to publish it, then you must leave, and face the consequences of your choosing." I published the work – a volume of prose and a volume of poems – and was expelled, thus having to suddenly find the funds to support myself and my studies. These were agonizing moments, but in the end I chose to be free. The book won a competition for young writers from the Portuguese colonies. I invited my Jesuit friends to the award ceremony, and they came, accepting a signed copy of my book as a gift from a disobedient former colleague.[8]

Notes

[1] Habermas, J. (1989) *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, translated by Thomas Burger with the assistance of Frederick Lawrence, Cambridge, Polity Press, p. 27.
[2] Michel Foucault, M. 2001 *Fearless Speech*, edited by Joseph Pearson, Los Angeles, Semiotext(e) Foreign Agents, p. 12.
[3] Ibid., p. 12.
[4] Ibid., p. 169.
[5] This discussion is related to the notion of "structural political opportunities" as developed in Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald, 'Introduction: Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Framing Processes – Toward a Synthetic, Comparative Perspective on Social Movements', in McAdam, D., McCarthy, John D., and Zald, Mayer N. 2005 *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings*, New York, Cambridge University Press, pp. 2–11.
[6] Webba, M. 2011 'A Construção da Democracia e o Fenómeno da Corrupção em Angola'. This paper was delivered at a conference on *Transparency, Corruption, Good Governance and Citizenship in Angola*. The Conference was organized by the independent Angolan NGO, Association for Justice, Peace and Democracy, Associação Justiça, Paz e Democracia (AJPD), Luanda, 28–29 Junho, http://www.club-net/index, accessed 30 June, 2011.
[7] Malaquias, A. 2001 'The Political Economy of Angola's Ethnic Conflict', in McLean, S., Quadir, F., and Timothy M. Shaw, Timothy M. 2001 *Crisis of Government in Asia and Africa: Globalizing Ethnicities*, Aldershot, Ashgate, p. 99.
[8] My two books focus on the decline of the patriotic spirit, the increase in moral relativism, and the rise of institutional corruption to self-destructive proportions. Monangumba, X. 2002 *Makas da Banda*, Ed. Campo das Letras, Porto, Portugal, for my prose; Monangumba, X. 2001 *Quissanje*, Ed. APPADM, Braga, Portugal, for my poems.

PART I.

THE PUBLIC SPHERE, DEMOCRACY, AND TRUTH-TELLING

INTRODUCTION

Ever since the publication of Jürgen Habermas' seminal book *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (thereafter STPS) the concept of the 'public sphere' has been widely debated so that nowadays it assumes a wide range of meanings. Some scholars have tried to follow in Habermas's footsteps, while others have tried to amend and develop the concept in order to apply it to non-Western societies. In this work we will begin with a review of the debate initiated by Habermas's contribution. However, we will then move beyond Habermas by arguing that the public sphere needs to be understood not in terms of the pursuit of self-interests but as a 'space' where 'truth-telling' or 'parrhesia' can take place. We will use Michel Foucault's work in order to explore this notion of 'truth-telling', which is marked by the dis-interested stance of the truth-teller. It is precisely because the truth-teller does not act on the basis of self-interest – which could always be easily subsumed by the 'system' – that truth-telling emerges as a form of resistance against the authoritarian and oppressive features of society and the political system. We suggest that this approach to the concept of the public sphere is fruitful because it provides us with a critical standard whereby the conditions of public life in a given society can be evaluated. We will see that this approach will also allow us to critically explore the conditions of public life as they exist in Angola (see especially Part III of this book) and to assess its prospects to move closer to becoming a democratic society.

In this first part of the book, we will look at the theoretical debates surrounding the concept of the public sphere and its significance for the workings of a democracy. In the Angolan situation, we will see later on that the public sphere is dominated by the interests of the existing political regime, here understood as the party/state structure of governance with its ability to subsume, co-opt and manipulate the public institutions and to highjack the processes that according to the official discourses should lead to a fuller implementation of the principles of democracy. In order to establish our theoretical framework we will depart from the Habermasian ideas by looking at practices of truth-telling. Michel Foucault has studied the meaning and significance of 'parrhesia' in ancient Greece and its link to the functioning and decline of Athenian democracy. On the basis of Foucault's insights we propose to define the public sphere not as a free

field of ‘interests’ but as a sphere where depending on the social and political conditions ‘parrhesia’ can take place. Political regimes can quite easily accommodate interests but as we will see ‘parrhesia’ is not self-interested; it is, in a sense which we will explain later, ‘dis-interested’. In this first part, we will explore the links between the public sphere, parrhesia and democracy and propose a re-definition of the public sphere – which will incorporate the role of truth-tellers – and then use that definition as a standard for an assessment of the public life in Angola. In the following chapter 1 we will review the concept of the public sphere starting with Habermas and his critics. Chapter 2 will introduce the notion of parrhesia and lead us to a discussion of Habermas’ and Foucault’s understanding of truth. We will devote some space to Hauser’s vision of the public sphere in terms of rhetoric. Chapter 3 will introduce our new definition of the public sphere, thus establishing the theoretical framework which will inform the rest of the book.

CHAPTER ONE

THEORISING THE PUBLIC SPHERE

The purpose of this section is to review the concept of the public sphere. Firstly we will discuss the concept in relation to Habermas' STPS, before assessing the main criticisms levelled against Habermas by authors such as Goode, Roberts, Fraser and others. Thirdly, we will look briefly into the relation between the public sphere and civil society, and consider how the public sphere may transcend the limitations of a civil society that is largely dominated by the pursuit of self-interest. The concept of the public sphere was systematised by the German social scientist and philosopher Jürgen Habermas in his book *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. The public sphere was constituted by groups of bourgeois people who gathered in the public arena in order to debate issues of common interest. Habermas's classic account offers a "historical-sociological account of the emergence, transformation, and disintegration of the bourgeois public sphere."[1] The 18th century saw a number of important new social and political trends.

First, there is what Habermas calls "the traffic in commodities and news."[2] This trend is important as it led to the establishment of some kind of institutional interdependence between the state and the commercial sector. This interdependence was marked by two features. On the one hand, the state had a monopoly in terms of the right to tax people and its ability to militarily protect national interests, including commercial and trading interests. The merchant, on the other hand, played the twin role of meeting the state's financial needs and of helping to formalise networks of communication, for example through "news letters" and later on through the publication of weekly "political journals."[3]

Secondly, besides the rise of private commercial institutions with strong political and cultural influence, the 18th century saw the rise of the *institutions of the public sphere:* the Parisian Salon, the British Coffee houses and the German *Tischgesellschaften* (table societies) and *Sprachgesellschaften* (literary societies).[4]

The public sphere was a discursive space that could be used for debating and deliberating, and the deliberations could subject governments and their actions to scrutiny and criticism. The public sphere was situated

between the *private sphere* (commodity exchange and social labour) and the "sphere of public authority" (referring to the state, the police and the ruling class) and through public opinion was able to put the state in touch with the needs of society.[5]

According to Habermas, the public sphere had three characteristic features. The first feature is often referred to as the principle of the "elimination of all privileges," which is the "kind of social intercourse that, far from presupposing the equality of status, disregarded status altogether. [...] The parity on whose basis alone the authority of the better argument could assert itself against that of social hierarchy and in the end can carry the day meant, in the thought of the day, the parity of "common humanity" (*bloss Menschliche*)." However, Habermas adds that "[n]ot that this idea of the public was actually realized in earnest in the coffee houses, the salons, and the societies; but as an idea it had become institutionalized and thereby stated as an objective claim. If not realized, it was at least consequential."[6] At least in its aspiration, therefore, the public sphere cultivated the idea that the "better argument" was to be established through public reasoning and was not to be determined by social conditions, political position or economic privileges. Accordingly, the second feature of the public sphere is general accessibility. Habermas explains that the

> […] discussion within such a public presupposed the problematization of areas that until then had not been questioned. The domain of "common concern" which was the object of public critical attention remained a preserve in which church and state authorities had the monopoly of interpretation not just from the pulpit but in philosophy, literature, and art, even at a time when, for specific social categories, the development of capitalism already demanded a behaviour whose rational orientation required ever more information.[7]

While in the Middle Ages the Church and the monks were the sole keepers of knowledge and informed opinion, the rise of modernity undermined such monopolies. The centre of culture moved to wherever capital was concentrated in the hands of private actors. Money attracted culture, and culture itself was transformed into a public commodity in the process. The third feature of the public sphere is its inclusiveness because as, Habermas explains, the same process that converted culture into a commodity established the public as in principle inclusive.

> However exclusive the public might be in any given instance, it could never close itself off entirely and become consolidated as a clique; for it always understood and found itself immersed within a more inclusive public of all private people, persons who – insofar as they were propertied

> and educated – as readers, listeners, and spectators could avail themselves via the market of the objects that were subject to discussion. [...] Wherever the public established itself institutionally as a stable group of discussants, it did not equate itself with the public but at most claimed to act as its mouthpiece, in its name, perhaps even as its educator – the new form of bourgeois representation.[8]

Goode on the Public Sphere

Certainly since the publication of STPS in English, Goode has been among the most influential and creative thinkers in carving out new theoretical avenues from which to re-conceptualise the notion of the public sphere as outlined by Habermas.[9] Summarising Habermas's account, Goode recapitulates the historical developments shaping the structure of the public sphere. The public sphere, which emerged in the 18th century, underwent numerous structural changes that go back to the feudal and mercantilist period in sixteenth century Europe. The former was defined as a "system of land ownership; a two-way obligation, firmly set in an unquestioned set of statutes, rather than being based on contractual rights."[10] The recurrent principle that could be inferred from this quotation is that of a binary system of opposition between the lord/king and the serf/slave. In a sense the rights of the serf/slave were suppressed by the lord/king's power. As a result citizens were reduced to the status of bearers of duties and keepers of the land.

The mercantilist period marked a step towards a metamorphosis of the social structure stimulated by land ownership and regional distribution of revenue through family ties. Merchants introduced a new form of trading to lands beyond the sea. The demand for raw material to sustain a growing industry in the West took the focus from domestic exploitation to a trans-national dominium of other people and territory. Indeed these developments were linked to the growth of empire with economic and military capabilities seemingly without limits. Moreover, alongside this change came "an expanding network of communications, primarily trade newsletters."[11]

The rise of critical reasoning in the eighteenth century was expressed by the publishing of letters and periodicals aimed at "attacking the activities of the state head-on, and then ploughing an impressively independent line on literature, philosophical or pedagogic matters."[12] Clearly at stake were two central issues: one that concerned the task of informing the bourgeois class as well as forming the conduct of the citizens (expressing the function of "the literary public sphere"). The other

issue refers to the political public sphere, viewed by Goode as being "linked to active struggles over the state power."[13]

These two issues should be considered as foundational principles of the mercantilist period, which together with a steady progress in the industry and trade formed a new order based upon individual freedom and the state's restraint of power. In contrast to the feudalist organisation, mercantilism brought about a fully-fledged bourgeois class who took on the mantle of the "universal class" by asserting "the meritocratic ideals of the free market": "they did not seek a new division of power so much as a neutralisation of power to allow for the flowering of civil society."[14] The immediate result was the formation of *rational and critical public opinion* (*Öffentliche Meinung*) viewed yet again "as a yardstick of legitimacy in political debate."[15] In the analysis of these developments, Seidman goes further in arguing that "state power is, to be sure, considered public power, but it owes the attribute of publicness to its task of caring for the public, that is, providing for the common good of all legal consociates."[16] Furthermore, "only when the exercise of public authority has actually been subordinated to the requirement of democratic publicness does the political public sphere acquire an institutionalized influence on the government, by way of the legislative body." Henceforth, the key feature of "public opinion" for Seidman consisted of "criticism and control of organized state authority that the public exercises informally as well as formally during periodic elections."[17]

The events that marked the formation of an active public sphere were linked with the breaking up of private intimacy either within the family or within the sphere of commercial enterprise that influenced public life. According to Habermas, "society was essentially a private sphere" that "became questionable only when the powers of society themselves assumed functions of public authority."[18] As a result the "long run state intervention in the sphere of society found its counterpart in the transfer of public functions to private corporate bodies."[19] The collapse of this intimate domain changed also the social structure that was initially established in the *salons*, clubs, and reading societies.[20]

In STPS Habermas presented the rise of the public sphere in the context of "the conditions of a bourgeois society that is industrially advanced and constituted as a social-welfare state."[21] Furthermore, STPS concentrated on the domain of the expanding industrial society in order to establish the dynamism of "the capitalist commercial system." This brought about an intensive system of "exchange of imported raw materials for finished and semi-finished domestic goods." The goal was to turn the "old mode of production into a capitalist one."[22] Thus, the structural

transformation of the political realities of eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe happened alongside the transformation of economic relations dictated by an upsurge in demand for goods, suggesting that the social transformations were very much interest-driven. The "elimination of all privileges", "general accessibility" and "inclusiveness" were therefore not to be understood in absolute terms; these notions were used by a new social class determined to occupy and justify a prominent place in society, especially vis-à-vis state authorities.

The Putney Debates, ignored by Habermas, in many ways anticipated the emerging conflict implied in these developments. The Putney Debates were ignited by the Levellers and Diggers, who championed the cause of freedom of opinions within the hostile environment of a pre-capitalist society in Britain during the mid-1600s. The Putney Debates are relevant here as they precede the events of the French and Industrial revolutions and because of the way they helped to forge new political identities across the continent. In Roberts's view, *Putney* "signalled a radical redefinition of democratic theory" emphasizing the individual's natural rights and liberties vis-à-vis the state, and above all Putney articulated the "demand that property should be levelled or set on an equal basis."[23] Clearly, the right to property and to a fair share of the wealth of the land advocated by the Levellers would have been regarded by the bourgeois/mercantilist class as contra productive. The bourgeoisie "conflated political (that is, bourgeois) and human (that is, universal) emancipation, which would become the target of Marx's critical energies."[24] The kind of social stratification that the rise of capitalism brought with it created new problems of social cohesion, thus paradoxically requiring state intervention in order to bind together contrasting positions: one belonging to the dispossessed social class and the other to the group of capitalists and property owners.

After all, the bourgeoisie, too, would need to rely on the state to secure social cohesion for the capitalist programme to unfold. It would be misleading, therefore, to suggest that the "public sphere" was established "against" the state as the bourgeois class could not do without state authority. As a result of these developments, Goode observes, "the public opinion (in the 18th century) no longer retained a basis of unity and truth; it degenerated to the level of a subjective opining of the many."[25] Historically, the "dialectic of a progressive societalization of the state simultaneously with an increasing state-ification of society, gradually destroyed the basis of the bourgeois public sphere: the separation of state and society."[26]

> In proportion as private life became public, the public sphere itself assumed forms of private closeness – in the neighbourhood the pre-bourgeois extended family arose in a new guise. Here again private and public sphere could not be clearly distinguished. The public's rational-critical debate also became a victim of this refeudalization. Discussion as a form of sociability gave way to the fetishism of community involvement as such: Not in solitary and selfish contemplation… does one fulfil oneself in the circles of the bourgeois public – private reading has always been the precondition for rational-critical debate – but in doing things with other people… even watching television together… helps make one more of a real person.[27]

Despite the contribution that the public sphere made in promoting a critical debate in society, one may question whether its fate was aligned to the state or to the bourgeoisie. Even Habermas, commenting on the "specific sociological conditions of the public sphere", noted that "only the property-owning private people were admitted to a public engaged in critical political debate."[28] Alongside this condition, education (Bildung) was another requisite "which regulated admission to the public sphere in the political realm."[29] Goode points to the dangers involved in the "co-option of institutions of the public sphere" by well-off businessmen or, in other words, the "colonization of the life-world by the system."[30] Indeed, "consumerism" (or even the steering power of capital in modern and highly industrialised societies) cannot be separated from the "political public sphere," because, argues Goode, the "logic of consumerism has in a large part pervaded the political public sphere."[31] It is hard to envision a public sphere that is in itself free from the penetration of money, power and influence. That being the case, it will not allow precisely the ideals of a hierarchy-free public sphere to dominate without constraints, and will this in turn not invite state-intervention? Overall Goode implies that Habermas failed to properly distinguish public sphere and civil society.

A further problem is highlighted by Goode's assertion that Habermas's public sphere is a form of "mediated quasi-interaction",[32] which stands in contrast to dialogical face-to-face communication. The growing expansion of "communication technologies", Goode observers, allows "citizens some element of connectivity with the physically absent actors and social processes through which their experiences and action choices are structured."[33] Habermas described the evolution of the "press" or "independent journalism" as an expression of the need for a confrontational approach against governments; it was indeed the formation of the "fourth estate".[34] However, it is not clear what exactly the impact of these technologies is for the unfolding of a public sphere. Goode argues that Habermas cannot "obscure the fact that the development of mass printing

actually heralded the waning significance of public dialogue."[35] Goode thus criticizes Habermas's model of a rationally discursive public not just on the grounds that, empirically, self-interest permeated the public sphere but also on the grounds that technology and the material reality of public discourse also signalled the disappearance of dialogue. Accordingly, Goode points out that the "persistent allusion to participatory democracy by Habermas does not accommodate the realities of pervasive mediation."[36]

Fraser and Kellner on the Public Sphere

The publication of Habermas' *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* into English initiated a more systematic review of the public sphere's role in modern, liberal democracies. Many critics of Habermas's public sphere model agree that the self-understanding of those who inhabited the public sphere was somewhat distant from the actual reality of the new phenomenon and accordingly call for a more subtle understanding of its reality. There is also the question of whether the notion of the public sphere can be used outside the context within which it emerged, i.e. outside the context of modern, Western democracies.

Fraser's criticism sums up key concerns raised by many critics. She also makes suggestions as to how the concept should be redefined in a manner that fits the reality of multidimensional public spaces in the 21st century. Fraser draws attention to the "political and theoretical importance" of the public sphere and notes that the concept helps to highlight "the longstanding failure in the dominant wing of the socialist and Marxist tradition to appreciate the full force of the distinction between the apparatuses of the state, on the one hand, and public arenas of citizen discourse and association, on the other."[37] Fraser draws on the work of what she calls "revisionist historiography" and refers to authors such as Joan Landes, Mary Ryan and Geoff Eley, who unveiled a "much darker view of the bourgeois public sphere than the one that emerges from Habermas' study."[38] Fraser's analysis emphasizes a number of interrelated points.

First, the suggestion that the public sphere was open, inclusive and indifferent towards inequalities is dismissed. Fraser refers to Eley's account, according to which "the emergence of a bourgeois public was never defined solely by the struggle against absolutism and traditional authority, but […] addressed the problem of popular containment as well. The public sphere was always constituted by conflict."[39] Fraser claims that the bourgeois public sphere was in fact constituted by exclusions at the