

THE BLINDSPOT OF PUBLIC SPHERE THEORY: THE ROLE OF EXPRESSIVE CULTURE



INSTITUTE FOR
DEMOCRACY
AND HUMAN
RIGHTS

A Presentation by
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University of Bergen



THE UNIVERSITY OF
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VENUE
WOOLLEY COMMON
ROOM, JOHN WOOLLEY
BUILDING, UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY

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COST
Free

ENQUIRIES
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Theoretical work on the public sphere has almost completely concentrated on the political part of it. Even book-length contributions where “culture” is in the title have not dealt with the role of expressive culture and discourses about and around that, but been about culture in the anthropological or ethnological sense. This is lamentable not only because the literary or cultural public sphere was the very beginning of the modern public sphere, but also because today’s actually existing public spheres are marked by quite obvious close relations between expressive culture and a variety of key democratic functions.

This presentation will discuss the implications of and possible remedies for this weakness in public sphere theory and point to historical and current examples of how expressive culture has politically relevant impacts and implications that need to be addressed. Expressive culture is evidently involved in a variety of ways in public discourses dealing with this situation, contributing to understandings of it and promoting political attitudes and actions. On the other hand, the cultural public sphere also offers possibilities for a retreat from politics and socio-cultural engagement, where differences in terms of engagement vs retreat are structured along lines of already established social divisions.

Jostein Gripsrud is Professor of Media Studies at the University of Bergen, Norway. He has published extensively on a variety of topics in media and cultural studies.

On the subject of television, he has published *The Dynasty Years: Hollywood Television and Critical Media Studies* (Routledge, 1995) and a number of articles, some of which have appeared in anthologies he edited or co-edited: *Television and Common Knowledge* (Routledge, 1999), *Media, Markets & Public Spheres: European Media at the Crossroads* (Intellect, 2010) and *Relocating Television: Television in the Digital Context* (Routledge, 2010).

He has also co-published articles on cultural sociology (e.g. “*Changing Relations: Class, education and cultural capital*”, in *Poetics*, vol 39 (2011), pp 507-529) and published articles as well as co-edited and contributed to anthologies on public sphere theory: *The Idea of the Public Sphere* (Lexington Books, 2010) and *The Public Sphere vol I-IV* (Sage, 2011)