# ONLINE PARTICIPATION AND DEMOCRACY

- The public sphere online – what's happening with it?

- Is it being transformed by the internet or not?

- Echo chambers and challenges

- Globalisation and fragmentation

- Learning outcome 2: Critically apply theoretical considerations to their own use of social media (in relation to the public sphere)

- Learning outcome 1: Demonstrate an understanding of debates and key issues in relation to commercial applications of social media.

ONLINE PARTICIPATION

- Habermas – traditional mass media (few to many)
- Doesn't enable exchange of culture and ideas
- Digital transformation – growth of interactions
- Online interaction – debates/expressions
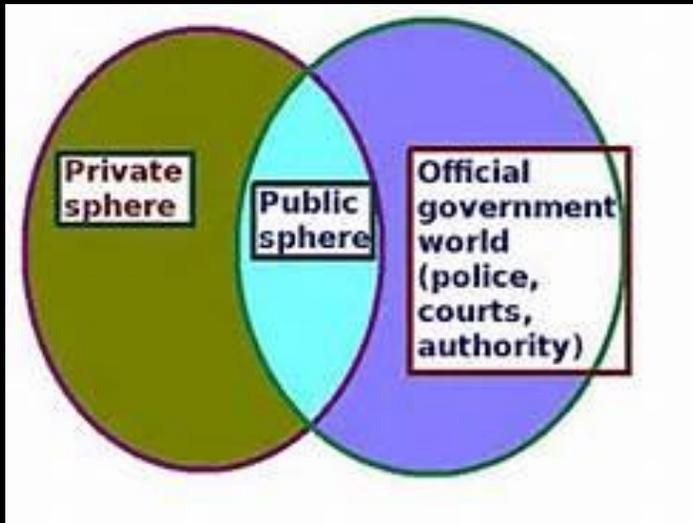
INTERNET

- Produce, distribute, share content
- Networked social media bring private selves together with wider society/politics
- Private individuals participate in public matters of political importance
- E.g. news depends on social media users

SOCIETY TALKING TO ITSELF

- Internet enables society to talk to itself

- Rather than being talked at by the powerful few

- But large-scale corporations dominate e.g. advertising

- With commercialised electronic networks

- Online surveillance also by governments, police, security.

- Technologies can reinforce as well as challenge power disparities

Top 10 Social Media Brands

Rank	Company	Category	IMPs (000)
1	Coke	Beverages	1,479,716
2	Apple	Consumer Tech	761,162
3	Google	Consumer Tech	606,805
4	Amazon	Retail	555,513
5	Samsung	Consumer Tech	469,327
6	Starbucks	Restaurants	382,215
7	Burger King	Restaurants	316,636
8	Sprite	Beverages	302,821
9	Microsoft	Consumer Tech	284,681
10	McDonald's	Restaurants	271,572

Source: PQ Media, uberVU   Data based on full month period.

FRAGMENTATION

- <u>Neo-liberal</u> deregulation is diluting the national public culture

- Needed for effective public engagement and debate

- People had to read or watch the same thing – with daily agendas and conversational topics

- Decided by small number of programme schedulers

- Narrowcasting can challenge a unified national public

- On demand individual content facilitating social/cultural fragmentation

Centrifugal Force vs Centripetal Force

Centrifugal force | Centripetal force
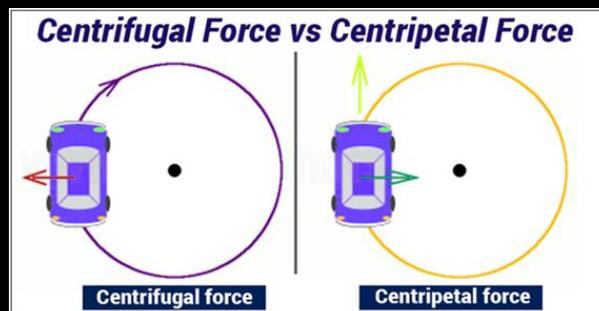
<u>Example of Centrifugal v centripetal forces in relation to health care and social media</u>

(2.22 mins)

FRAGMENTATION AND DIGITALISATION

- Content shared with narrower groupings instead of broader/diverse groupings

- Internet users can avoid matters of public/socio-political importance

- Can opt out of the public sphere

- Follow individualised tastes/interests

- Left and right wing networks which keep to themselves

Why You Need To Escape Your
ECHO CHAMBER
(And One Practical Way We'll Do It Together)

Echo Chambers
(4.44 mins)

GLOBALISATION

- Content can move from country to country

- Consumers – watch same films, music, celebrities

- But also smaller scale specialist content

- Globalisation and fragmentation

- E.g. News may be more domestic focused

- News (4.43 mins)

SUMMARY

- The internet can provide greater participation in public sphere

- But some people can opt out of the public sphere altogether

- There is commercialisation on the internet – and advertising and corporations tend to dominate

- There is fragmentation as well as globalisation

- But also echo chambers.

- Learning outcome 1: Demonstrate an understanding of debates and key issues in relation to commercial applications of social media.

- Assignment 2: You can focus on any of these issues for assignment 2, including the notion of echo chambers, politics, globalisation, public sphere generally, political campaigns etc.

REFERENCES

- Curran, J., Fenton, N. & Freedman, D. (2012) *Misunderstanding the Internet*. Oxon, Routledge.

- Dijck, J. V. (2013) *The Culture of Connectivity. A Critical History of Social Media*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

- Hodkinson, P. (2017) *Media, Culture and Society. An Introduction*. London, Sage.