

University of Groningen

Transnational public spheres

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PhD thesis title: Transnational Public Spheres: A Spatial Perspective

Ten brief propositions from the PhD project

1. Concepts and theories have their own specific histories and geographies. Public Sphere theory is an originally nationalistic concept with a European history and geography; hence the need to revisit the theory under transnational conditions and arrive at a theory of TPSs.
2. The institution of public sphere is in crisis in both national and transnational terms. The encroachment of private and privatizing forces is the major crisis of the public sphere.
3. Transnational space is a parallel and by no means the end of the national space. In fact, transnational space is defined in relation to the national, hence the word 'transnational' and not global or cosmopolitan.
4. A general theory of TPSs has to start with the particular. The particular can be found in spaces in which it *takes place*; hence the importance of space as a category of thought.
5. One of the particularities of the present moment is that 'rationality' rooted in the Enlightenment notion of reason as the sole locus of truth has been rejected by various types of TPSs as only one mode of knowing among others, hence the rise and reemergence of, inter alia, 'world knowledges' and religion under globalization.
6. The assemblage approach as advocated by scholars such as Deleuze and Guattari and DeLanda is getting more currency in the humanities as it is a useful multidisciplinary tool to deal with various particulars from different arenas of life and academia.
7. The current theories of transnational democracy and public sphere take a very generalist perspective and are lopsidedly focused on the legitimacy criterion at the expense of political efficacy.
8. Space is a historically neglected category of thought. A reformulation of our established theories and concepts in light of a spatial thinking can yield new theoretical fruits; hence, the concept of 'the right to space' as advocated in this dissertation.
9. The current prevalence of surveillance, Netpolitik, and Big data poses two main challenges to public sphere theory. Not only does it worsen the crisis of the public sphere in practice, it also poses a challenging theoretical question: How do we define publicness in the gradual dwindling of privacy?
10. "The system is not broken; it is fixed." An Occupier