



Datafication of Public Opinion and the Public Sphere

How Extraction Replaced Expression of Opinion

By Slavko Splichal

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The book, anchored in stimulating debates about the Enlightenment ideas of publicness, analyses historical changes in the core phenomena of publicness: possibilities, conditions and obstacles to developing a public sphere in which the public reflexively creates, articulates and expresses public opinion. It is focused on the historical transformation from “public use of reason” through the identification of “public opinion” in opinion polls to contemporary opinion mining, in which the Enlightenment idea of public expression of opinion has been displaced by the technology of extracting opinions. It heralds a new critical impetus in theory and research of publicness at a time when critical social thought is sharply criticising and even abandoning the notion of the public sphere, much like the notion of public opinion decades ago, due to its predominantly administrative use.

Readership

Undergraduate and doctoral students and researchers in sociology and political science interested in the history and theories of public opinion and the public sphere.

Key selling points

- A brief and comprehensive historical overview of the fate and perspective of two basic social science concepts, public opinion and the public sphere
- Introduction of a new conceptual model of publicness, consisting of six basic components – Visibility, Access, Reflexivity, Mediation, Influence, and Legitimacy (VARMIL)
- Assessment of the impact of major technological advances, such as data and opinion mining and algorithms, on the social nature of communication and research approaches
- Bridging of normative-critical theoretical conceptualizations and constructive empirical applications.

About the Author(s) / Editor(s)

Slavko Splichal is Professor of Communication and Public Opinion at the University of Ljubljana’s Faculty of Social Sciences, fellow of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts and member of Academia Europaea. He is founder and director of the European Institute for Communication and Culture and editor of its journal Javnost – The Public.

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