

1. The public sphere is understood as the social and cultural process of the self-understanding of society.
2. It can be conceptualized as consisting of three levels. At each level multiple publics converse, which can be distinguished by the structure and character of their communication.
3. Publics positioned at the different level of the public sphere are in no way equal, since the social power structure determines their respective influence in public debates.

Fundamental social, economic or technological changes lead to a condensed social debate in which social affairs are more openly discussed and many voices can be heard. At such a historical moment, social movements, alternative or counter-publics can play an important role in changing hegemonic meanings.

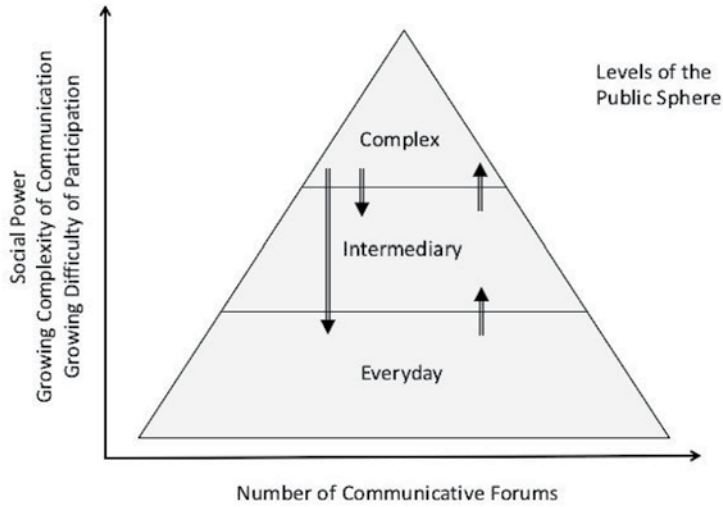
Publics at the different level of the public sphere consist of different actors and assume different functions in society (see table 1). The complex publics are comprised of highly organized institutions and organizations, such as mass media, corporations and governmental bodies, that determine hegemonic meanings by their codification into laws and binding norms. At the intermediary level relatively stable groups, such as clubs, associations or counter-publics, are pursuing their specific interests. They may or may not challenge dominant meanings. Finally, there are individuals that form social sub-groups and interact spontaneously and directly in everyday life. They are assuming many different positions and by this legitimize or question social norms and values.

Table 1: Publics and Their Functions

Level	Publics	Consisting of	Function
1	Complex publics	Elite actors and organizations	Codification of hegemonic meaning into laws and norms, governmental policy
2	Intermediary publics	Clubs, associations, pressure groups, counter-publics	Organizing individuals into groups and expressing their interests, challenging or reconfirming dominant meanings
3	Everyday publics	Individuals organized in social sub-groups and interacting spontaneously in everyday life	Assuming many-voiced positions, negotiating norms and values, legitimizing power, but also questioning it.

When we visualize this as a pyramid, it becomes more obvious, that publics at the different levels of the public sphere are in no way equal, but that their respective influence depends on the power structure in society (see figure 1). While there are much more public forums in everyday life than on the complex level of the public sphere, at the same time it is much more difficult to gain entrance to publics at the complex level, where influence and power resides.

Figure 1: Levels of The Public Sphere



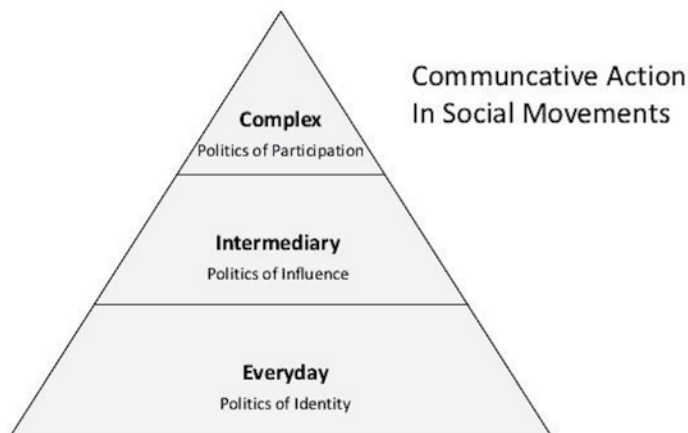
2. SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND THE THREE-LEVEL MODEL

The three-level model of the public sphere has been used in different studies mostly stemming from historical communication research, social movement research and Gender Studies (Klaus/Drüeke 2016). I will briefly show, how it was conceptualized by Ulla Wischermann (2003), a historian from Frankfurt, in her large-scale study on the historical women’s movements in Germany. Wischermann pondered the reasons, why the early feminist movement around the turn of the 20th century could have such a substantial impact. What were the conditions of their successes in influencing public debates and changing norms and laws governing gender relations?

Among other movements, Wischermann focused on the suffrage movement that demanded voting rights for women. She performed a content analysis of hundreds of movement publications and conducted a network analysis of the actors involved. She concluded that the movements could be effective, since they successfully addressed and operated on all three levels of the public sphere. Wischermann’s work is a good example for the observation that social movement theory and public sphere theory can productively enhance each other. To analyse social movements and their successes and failures complex processes need to be considered (see the appendix for more information).

The resonances and effects of the suffrage movement were closely linked to a successful integration of very different factors in the private-public relationship. Personal bonds and organizational ties at the simple level of the public sphere, the formation of a counter-culture and the founding of movement publications and associations at the intermediary level, and finally the staging of public events, petitions and lobbying at the complex level – they all provided the necessary resources that helped to bring the goals of the movement to the attention of the public. In the end, the elite could no longer discredit or ignore the suffrage movement and their demands for equality in the political process. Wischermann (2016: 72) concludes, that the key to the successful mobilization of the suffrage movement lay in the dynamic interplay of publics at all levels of the public sphere. Relating her results to Habermas’ theory of communicative action, she distinguishes between a “politics of participation” enacted at the complex level of the public sphere, a “politics of influence” that governed communicative action at the intermediary level and a “politics of identity” at the level of everyday interaction (see figure 2).

Figure 2: Forms of Communicative Action in Social Movements



Do the analytic tools provided by the three-level model of the public sphere and by Wischermann's application to the historical women's movements help to analyse and better understand the Gezi Park protests? The answer is a yes and a no.

No, since there are clearly important differences between the Gezi Park Protests and the suffrage movement Wischermann has analysed. The latter was focused on a set of social norms and laws pertaining to women's exclusion from democratic procedures. The Gezi Park protests were built on an assemblage of people associating with different causes, voicing diverse interests and stemming from very different movements. There were the ecological minded, the LGBTI activists, striving for recognition and challenging heteronormativity, the anti-capitalist groups and globalization critics fighting against neoliberalism and the gentrification of the city; furthermore, groups that want to preserve the secularist tradition of the Turkish state or press for religious liberty, football fans and many others (Tokamis 2015). The felling of the trees in the Gezi Park, its reallocation from a public recreation area to a private shopping centre and the harsh and violent reaction of the police and the government provided the occasion for the protest, but were not its only cause. The relatively unsightly park became the site of the struggle, a place where different movements intersected, where a movement of movements enfolded (Özdemir 2015; Dević / Krstić 2015).

Having focused on the differences between the historical women's movements and the Gezi Park protests, there is also a definite yes. Yes, I think the conceptualization of the public sphere by the three-level model and the connection Wischermann draws to the particular forms of communicative action can help us to fruitfully explore and capture important aspects of the Gezi Park protests. When we consider the protest movement being situated at the middle-level of the public sphere some important characteristics of the Gezi Park movement come to the forefront. Pınar Gümüş and Volkan Yılmaz (2015) have pointed out, that the protests were not the result of completely spontaneous actions as it was often portrayed by the mass media. Instead, they were initiated by social activists belonging to different movements that had a longer-term organizational structure. Thus, they were able to successfully link "members of other political groups, which normally would not come together easily" (Gümüş/Yılmaz 2015: 187). "In other words, discursive and practical strategies they employed long before the Gezi protests contributed to the consolidation of a social movement community." (ibid.) These different counter-publics gathered in the Park and were able to mobilize an unprecedented number of people from everyday publics, who joined the first protesters. A "politics of identity" and a "politics of influence" enfolded and merged and led to an explosion of spontaneous and creative protest forms. These and the violent reaction by the state brought Gezi to the attention of the international media and prompted its extensive coverage. Here is not the time to ponder in any detail the interlinkage and conjunction of the multitude, the diversity of protesters and their concerns, the dazzling array of social groups with their particular interests and how all this led to the magnitude of the protest and the extent of the international attention it achieved.

Instead, I will focus on one of the aspects of the Gezi Park movement that was mentioned by many observers: the amazing scope of the artistic and cultural production it prompted. In her study Wischermann has observed that common outings and projects played an important role in expressing a “politics of identity” of the women’s movements. The “politics of influence” found its expression in new symbols and rituals, in songs, poems and slogans. In short, the unfolding of the women’s movements was accompanied by creative artistic and cultural productions. But what exactly is the role of artistic and cultural productions in social movements? Can they introduce new topics into the public debates and establish counter-hegemonic meanings?

3. SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AS PRODUCTION SITES FOR ART AND CULTURE

For some time now I am involved in a centre where we work on the boundaries of arts and science. I am co-chairing a program area that is concerned with the critical potential of contemporary arts and cultural production. Also, I am the chair of a doctoral college that tries to shed light on “The arts and their public effects”. The relationship and connection between art and cultural production on the one side and the public sphere on the other, between aesthetics and social movement politics has a firm place in the contemporary art’s discourse and has more recently come on the agenda of public sphere theorists. Chantal Mouffe (together with Ernesto Laclau 2001) has introduced the concept of a radical democracy and in direct opposition to Habermas’ ideal of a deliberative democracy has put forth the notion of an agonistic public sphere (Mouffe 2014). “According to the agonistic approach, critical art is art that foments dissensus, that makes visible what the dominant consensus tends to obscure and obliterate. It is constituted by a manifold of artistic practices aiming at giving a voice to all those who are silenced within the framework of the existing hegemony.” (Mouffe 2007: 4-5). According to Mouffe one function of political art is to constitute an agonistic intervention into public spaces. She writes: “Artistic practices can play an important role in subverting the dominant hegemony” (Mouffe 2008: 15).

Powerful and influential social movements all have engaged in artistic and cultural interventions for a whole number of reasons. Artistic and cultural interventions have a great potential for changing dominant discourses. They enable us to shed a new light on old issues. They confront us with the unfamiliar. They allow for new aesthetic experiences. By bricolage they mix the seemingly irreconcilable and unthinkable. They address our emotions and longings as much as our reason. They rupture the neoliberal discourse centring on efficiency, rivalry, speed, profitability. They oppose and uncover the power elite and their structural (or real) violence by undermining their authority through culture jamming, humour or alienation. They draw people together by their common creative endeavours. In the words of social movement theory: Artistic and cultural interventions allow at the same time for a “politics of identity”, a “politics of influence” and to stake claims for a “politics of participation”.

The Gezi Park protests are a prime example of this. Artistic performances and cultural productions played an important role in the protests (Karakayalı/Özge 2014; o.A. o.J.). All the time protesters were occupying the park, it had an atmosphere of Bachtin’s carnevalesque (Walton 2015). There was theatre, poems and music. Some performances became very popular such as “The standing man” that was very effective in dismantling the authoritarian reaction to the protests. Street art and graffiti were important media and could be seen all over the Park and the surrounding area, often challenging and directly responding to Erdoğan’s threats (Yanık 2015; Tas, T./Tas, O. 2014). When mass media ignored the protests and CNN-Turk aired a documentary about Penguins instead of reporting about the protests and the violent reaction of the state, the stencilled penguin became a powerful symbol for the anti-elite, anti-authoritarian protests. Defying and unmasking the brutality of the police, it often carried a gas mask (Özturkmen 2014). The humour, making fun of the state media and government was an important visual and emotional weapon of the Gezi Park movement, weaving a common bond despite the very different interests of the activists and reducing the very real fear of being seriously harmed by the police.

If we compare these artistic and cultural productions with those from the historical women’s movement, again similarities are obvious, but also differences emerge. Performativity today plays a much bigger role in engaged, interventionist and participatory art (for an introduction see Fischer-Lichte 2012). One of the