

PUBLIC AND PUBLIC OPINION

DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONCEPT OF PUBLIC OPINION

- The notion of public opinion originated in the second half of the 18th century within the framework of liberal political theory and the Enlightenment.
- Although the notion of public opinion itself does not have a long history, the separate notions of public opinion and opinion existed much earlier than they were linked as a whole.

EARLY UNDERSTANDING OF OPINION AND THE PUBLIC

- ◉ From ancient times to the end of the 18th century. The term opinion used two different meanings.
- ◉ One was a label for irrational processes and the other a label for a rational-cognitive relationship to the environment.
- ◉ The term public was also understood in different ways, one is contained in the term “res publica” and refers to general accessibility and openness while the other term denotes things of general interest.

EARLY UNDERSTANDING OF THE CONCEPT OF PUBLIC OPINION

- The first to use this term was the philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau in 1794.
- and that in a political context.
- He distinguished "the will of all" from "the general will"
- An even greater connotation of the term public opinion is given by Eng. Philosopher Jeremy-Bentham. He believes that the public is capable and that it embodies the wisdom and justice of the whole world and that it is capable of taking on the role of judge over political power.

- Immanuel Kant defines the public as a moral-political unity. He explains his theory in such a way that the public cannot make a judgment on its own but needs the help of a philosopher.
- Marx sees public opinion as a potential danger and a closure of bureaucratic power.

CONTEMPORARY THEORIES OF PUBLIC OPINION

- PUBLIC THEORIES
- Even the public as a phenomenon has not yet received its concrete definition because it poses from different concepts and criteria. So we can come across the public as a group of people, the public as a geographical region, the public as a mass.
- Some are related to social activity while others to specific subjects of public opinion research.

- To understand contemporary theories of understanding this concept it is necessary to look at the main elements of the dominant models of the public.
- Sociological or discursive model
- The public is an informal, loosely organized collectivity that emerges and changes during the discussion of a contentious or relevant issue.
- Blumer, one of the authors of this model states the following elements of the public:

- We use the term public when we talk about a group of people:
 - A) who are faced with a contentious problem
 - B) who do not think equally how the problem should be solved
 - C) who begin to discuss the matter
- According to Blumer, public labels are the existence of a problem, debate, and collective opinion.

- The discursive model of Blumer and Park is basically a development model because it implies that public opinion is formed in several successive phases, thus listing the five main stages of the emergence of public opinion:
 - 1. spotting problems
 - 2. formulating proposals for possible solutions
 - 3. discussing proposals and accepting the action plan
 - 4. implementation of the action
 - 5. evaluation of the effects of the action.

- ◉ Individualistic or aggregate-model
- ◉ The sharp rise in interest in opinion polls during the 1930s led American analysts to replace the sociological approach with a more appropriate theoretical approach.
- ◉ This model was established according to the "one man one vote" model. Even today, the most widely accepted model as a basis for conceptualization and operational elaboration of empirical public opinion research.

- The model works by looking at each individual separately and the sum of the individuals making up public opinion.
- Since we also have different notions with this model, we can distinguish several levels of publicity:
 - 1. General public - opinion of the total population
 - 2. Voting public-electoral body
 - 3. Attentive public - one who knows politics
 - 4. Active public - politically active individuals
 - 5. Publics determined by social problems
 - The one who already has a certain attitude and opinion