

## 2. THE PUBLIC SPACE

### 2.1. A conceptual framework: public sphere and public space

From a literary point of view, ‘sphere’ is defined as a space extending between points which are equidistant from another point referred to as the centre. However, in specialized literature, it is often perceived as the equivalent of the notion of *publicité* or *publicity*. Its English version appeared in 1989, with the meaning of public sphere. The origin of the word goes back to ancient Greek culture which distinguishes between the sphere of the polis or *koine*, accessible and common to free citizens, and the individual sphere or *oikos, idia. Bios politicos* was also used by ancient Greeks to refer to the public life occurring in the *agora*.

The public sphere is a crucial structure in the society-state binomial. The conditions in which and the extent to which state politics results in the freely expressed consent of those citizens who discuss and deal with their problems publicly prompted the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas to conduct extensive research in the field of history, sociology, philosophy, law and literature. Habermas interpreted the modern meaning of *public sphere*, which refers to a “principle of establishing political order” (in Marga 111). “General discussion free of domination” is not only provide the key to solving problems, but also the context for establishing the rationality of one’s knowledge and actions, and it presupposes one’s involvement in social life as well as the functioning of a sphere within which, “reunited as members of the public, citizens express themselves without any constraints, with the guaranteed right of gathering and uniting, of expressing and making public their own opinion about issues of general interest in a free manner” (in Marga 111). In this case, the sphere mentioned is the ‘public sphere’ or the ‘opinion sphere’ (*öffentlichkeit*).

In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Habermas analyzed the concept of public sphere based on the principle of interdisciplinarity, the necessity of crossing disciplinary boundaries being obvious as no single discipline and no multidisciplinary approach can tackle its complexity.

Not just ordinary language (especially as it bears the imprint of bureaucratic and mass media jargon) but also the sciences – particularly jurisprudence, political science, and sociology – do not seem capable of replacing traditional categories like “public” and “private”, “public sphere” and “public opinion” with more precise terms (Habermas, *The Structural Transformation...1*).