

Article

Media, Religion, and the Public Sphere

Coman Mihai

Faculty of Journalism and Communication Studies, University of Bucharest, 030018 Bucharest, Romania; mcoman53@yahoo.com

Abstract: In the present study, I undertake to show that the public sphere can be constructed within the frames of a discourse loaded with religious symbols, either as part of religious institutions and manifestations, or, in a more interesting case, through the media discourse. I want to show that media functions as a *ritualizing agent*, which builds symbolic spaces of action and thinking. Journalists accomplish this by presenting events as if they had pre-established and immutable order and meaning, set within a religious system. The ritualization of the journalistic performance and the mythologization of the representation of events are some of the strongest tools for promoting a representation of events in a language loaded with religious symbols and to outline a public sphere constructed in a religious frame. Thus, using a sacralizing language, media creates a religious public sphere, which function as a *liminal*, subjunctive framework: it is possible to assume that now a new type of public sphere, defined by a religious frame, is developed, in a social context and symbolical frame that are totally different to the usual circumstances of a religious experience.

Keywords: religion; public sphere; media events; liminality; ritual mastery; sacralization

1. Religion and Public Sphere—Theoretical Frame

In the present study, I undertake to show that the public sphere can be constructed within the frames of a discourse loaded with religious symbols, either as part of religious institutions and manifestations, or, in a more interesting case, through the media discourse; in certain circumstances, media achieves a religious construction of an event by ritualizing its coverage (the media events) or by mythologizing the news stories (the sacralization of actors and issues) and setting the public sphere, especially the digital public sphere, in a religious frame. Our research questions are as follows:

RQ 1: In which situations can a public sphere be created within religious institutions or ceremonies?

RQ2: Which circumstances lead the media to cover specific events using a religious discourse, and to set public sphere debates into a religious vocabulary?

RQ 3: What are the means of journalistic discourse that contribute to the sacralization of these events and the set of the public sphere in a religious frame?

I consider that the theoretical construction (and re-assessment) I am proposing here can be grounded using two perspectives:

- The situations where the public sphere is built within religious institutions or ceremonies of a religious nature; field research (anthropological, sociological, and historical) leads to the identification of the concrete forms in which the public sphere was embedded in ceremonial manifestations with a religious underlayer.
- The situations where, in the modern and post-modern world, the public sphere is built through the mass media or social media, through a discourse loaded with religious terms, references, and symbols; in such cases, we are no longer dealing with existing religions, but with ad hoc discursive constructs firmly anchored in the religious imaginary.



Citation: Mihai, Coman. 2023. Media, Religion, and the Public Sphere.

Religions 14: 1253. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14101253>

Academic Editors: Mónika Andok, Ákos Kovács and Enzo Pace

Received: 8 June 2023

Revised: 24 July 2023

Accepted: 28 September 2023

Published: 2 October 2023



Copyright: © 2023 by the author. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

The first axis is substantial, whereas the last one is processual: ethnographical and historical records reveal cases where the public sphere is a constituent of religious ritual manifestations, whereas the analysis of the enactments by the mass media reveals moments, determined by specific circumstances, where journalists sacralize the (coverage of) events, affecting, through this process, the structure and way of functioning of the public sphere. The first perspective is interesting for the cases proving the stated model, the second one, for the processes whereby journalists and audiences are constructing the coverage of events, i.e., their debate in a religious frame.

Under these circumstances, it is important to first clarify the relationship between religion and the public sphere, and then ascertain the transformations that occur when media and journalistic discourse also enter this process.

In a very thorough study, Andrew Smith (2014) identifies six major trends in approaching the relationship between religion and the public sphere. The first supports the *radical exclusion* of religion from the public sphere: the dominant idea is that the deliberation which would be based on religious motivations and which would replace rational argumentation by religious dogma is unacceptable within the secular rule of law. A second model is of the *"laissez faire"* type, where it is considered that citizens can use any form of communication, to the extent in which it helps them to achieve their political objectives. The third model is defined as one of *weak inclusion*: this affirms that citizens must provide other citizens, who do not have religious convictions, with acceptable moral and political justifications so that the assertions of a religion's followers should be rational, public, and accessible to others. In contrast with this point of view, there is the model of *strong inclusion*. This starts from the finding that, to many people holding religious convictions, decisions on the issues debated by society are based on such convictions; in other words, to them religion is not something foreign, referring to things unrelated to the social and political life, but an element whereby they are assessing and establishing lines of argument and subsequently of action in their social and political life.

The fifth model is the one proposed by Habermas (2006), a model based on the idea or criterion of *translation*. In Habermas' vision, translating religious language into the terms of laic discourse is the basis for cohabitation in the public sphere for those with religious convictions and people without such convictions. Habermas considers that, even when believers, regardless of faith, cannot support an argumentation without calling upon religious language and values, the laic citizens, partners of dialogue in the public sphere, should be prepared to accept such perspectives, translating them into secular language. Habermas (2006, p. 11) argues that the integration of religion in the public sphere can be performed via laic participants' availability to tolerate, in a debate, different positions based on the truths (indisputable for believers) of the dogma ("the epistemic ability to consider one's own faith reflexively from the outside and to relate it to secular views"); and via the effort to translate the dogma in rational formulas ("this requirement of translation must be conceived as a cooperative task in which the non-religious citizens must likewise participate").

The last model, according to Smith, is that of *mutual accountability*, whose purpose is to allow all citizens to adopt any type of cognitive position, whether religious or not, which they deem adequate for public deliberation; however, within this process of choosing a cognitive position, they should abandon seeking out the political arguments and justifications that are specific for the democratic framework. The fact that a religion's followers will insist on certain specific arguments and visions indicates that these are important to them and should be considered by the other citizens—but only on the grounds of the contribution they can bring within public sphere deliberations. Kohrsen (2012) associates this last perspective with Casanova's (1994) vision of what the latter calls "public religion"—this is about those religious leaders and organizations who attend public sphere debates on religious or non-religious topics. This creates public micro-spheres "in which religious communication is facilitated or even requested" (Kohrsen 2012, p. 283); they constitute

niches, where the use of religious language and the reference to supernatural powers are allowed and contribute to the ongoing debate.

All these analyses share a common trait—they do not overcome the idea that religion is and would be only a marginal actor in the construction of the public sphere. They accept Habermas axiom: even in the post-secularism period, religion still has to be *tolerated* at the periphery of the post-modern society's architecture. As a consequence, the theoretical constructions concentrate on strategies for accepting and integrating religious discourse in the secular public sphere, without changing its secular status. (See [Adams 2006](#); [Bahram 2013](#); [Bottici 2009](#); [Dillon 2012](#); [Enns 2010](#); [Herbert 2011](#); [Kohrsen 2012](#); [Lafont 2007](#); [MacKendrick 2018](#); [McCallum 2011](#); [Salvatore 2007](#)).

2. Religion Integrating the Public Sphere

This perspective opens a door for accepting the idea that the debate arenas that appears in different cultures can be considered forms of the public sphere; these arenas do not have (maybe) all the “canonical” traits of a Habermasian public sphere, but, were we to refer to the strategy of defining a social phenomenon, proposed by de Ludwig Wittgenstein (as applied, for instance, by Benson [Saler \(2000\)](#), when defining the concept of religion), they have a so-called “family resemblance”; therefore, they have the majority of the notes specific to the concept of the public sphere. They can be labelled in terms specific to Western realities, as *proletarian public spheres* ([Negt and Kluge 1993](#)) or *subaltern counter public sphere* ([Frazer 1992](#)), or, by wider-encompassing, less ethnocentric formulas, *public sphericules* ([Gitlin 2011](#)), *micro public spheres* ([McCallum 2011](#)), *emergent public spheres* ([McNair 2000](#)), or *societal public spheres* ([Miege 2011](#)).

The perspective I am proposing is in agreement with the analyses underlining the determined historical and cultural character of the Habermasian model of the public sphere. In other words, the public sphere can be enacted in forms that are modeled by different religious, political, social, and cultural traditions. That perspective pleads for a “de-westernization” ([Gunaratne 2010](#)) of the public sphere model, or, in other terms, to acknowledge this concept's “provincial” and Euro-centric character ([Salvatore and LeVine 2005](#), p. 16).

“The public sphere cannot be the form of a singular, albeit universalizing, tradition. The notion of the public sphere can regain theoretical coherence and conceptual plausibility—also for framing empirical analysis—only if carefully reconstructed by drawing on the conceptual resources of a plurality of partly overlapping and partly conflicting discursive traditions” ([Salvatore 2007](#), p. 258).

In addition, as highlighted by [Friedland \(2002, p. 393\)](#) “religion is perhaps the only language in which ordinary people can reach the public sphere” and “religious institutions often constitute the closest thing to a civil society, an arena for sociality, collective organization and the provision of services outside state control”; as a consequence, we can identify two complementary situations: (a) the appearance of certain public sphere generated by various religious events and (b) the existence of certain public spheres inside certain religious institutions or ceremonies.

In the first case, the religious events offer just the content, the theme of debate: here, we can evoke studies like the one devoted to the religious practices from Iran pilgrimages or funeral ceremonies, as instances “of the emergence of a civil society and of public forums” ([Adelkhah 2003](#), p. 118), or the one on the apparition of micro public spheres within the Ganapati religious festival ([Kaur 2001](#)), or the one on the development of a Catholic public sphere within the Malta and Australia “festa” ([Baldacchino 2014](#)), or the analysis of the processes whereby narrations brought together under the title of “Sacred Games of Śiva” have created a popular public sphere within the Hindu calendrical festival ([Fisher 2017](#)).

In the second case, we can evoke the studies that showcase the intertwining between the religious life and the public sphere. An eloquent example is offered by research dedicated to the apparition and functioning of public spheres inside Islamic religions; this

is facilitated by the “basic premises of Islamic vision”; thus, according to Eisenstadt (2002, p. 151):

These public spheres were arenas in which different sectors of the society could voice their demands in the name of the basic premises of Islamic vision. Indeed, the dynamics of these public spheres cannot be understood without taking into account the crucial importance in them of the place of the community, rooted also in the basic premise of Islam, that of the equality of all believers and of their access to the sacred—conceptions that have necessarily given members of the community a right to participate, if not in the political arena, certainly in the communal and religious ones, in the promulgation and voicing of norms of public order.

The religious language and the religious ceremonial setting were thus used as instruments of political dialogue. Hoexter (2002) shows that, in the Islamic world, *waqf* (endowments) made by people from all social layers contributed not only to ensuring public services but also to the discussion of values, norms, and political circumstances: “Study of the *waqf* reveals a very lively public sphere, involving rulers, governors, and senior officials, side by side with all strata of the Muslim community—rich and poor, male and female—all of them participating in the creation and improvement of the public space” (p. 134).

The same mechanism is revealed by another study, consecrated to the role of *khutuba* in the configuration of the popular public sphere in Egypt. By discussing these sermons, a counter-public was created that places its thinking between the normative demands fixed by the classical concepts of Islam and the deliberation over current political topics. The public character of these debates was amplified by the recording of *khutuba* on magnetic tapes. The tapes with sermons (*da’wa*) enjoy a huge circulation and generate “a kind of practice involving the public use of a mode of reasoning. As a type of activity aimed at shaping other practices through persuasion, exhortation, and deliberation, is fundamentally a political practice (...) Indeed *da’wa* emerges not at a point of commonality, but precisely at one of difference, where a discrepancy in practice makes argument necessary” (Hirschkind 2006, p. 40).

Pinto (2006, p. 169) reveals the modalities through which “Sufi public discourses on both religion and society contribute to the constitution of a sphere of public debate, offering channels for expression of disputes over forms of the common good in Syrian society. The Sufi-framed moral performances create circles of communication, trust, and shared expectations, which demarcate multiple arenas of solidarity and participation in the public sphere”. Moreover, various other forms of ritualization of political communication allowed people to debate (avoiding the repression risk) and to accept or refuse political authority. On other geographical coordinates, an incursion in pre-colonial India shows the fact that in the public arenas, in ritualized forms, the various publics were confronted with or confronting the Power messages using the religious discourse: “Congregational prayers among religious communities were another important source of ritual communication in the public arena (...) The sermons (*khutuba*) that were read before prayer served as an instrument of political legitimation for the state. But common people did occasionally prohibit their recitation to convey their refusal to extend legitimacy to the state” (Hassan 2005, p. 90; see also Dasgupta 2006; Eickelman and Salvatore 2002; Eisenstadt 2002; Esposito 2000; Gerber and Hoexter 2002; Hamzah 2005; Port 2005; Redissi 2002; Salvatore and LeVine 2005; Zaman 2008).

Several ethnographic field studies are focused on situations in which, through more or less ceremonial forms, the public sphere’s constitutive elements manifest themselves in societies, usually labeled as “non-modern.” For example, in a study focusing on the way through which forms of public sphere exist in the life of the Xavante tribes from Amazonia, Laura Graham (1993) analyzes the public debates, ceremonially organized in the political reunions named *wara*; here, the representatives of different groups, usually in conflict, constitute themselves as a public, reunited and tied by the behavior and discursive conventions specific to this ceremony. In situations like this one, the speaker gives voice

in fact, to a “collaborative discourse”—he either transmits the opinion of a group that previously reunited, or he incorporates into his discourse what he knows this group’s opinion to be. The political debates of the Xavante meet the essential notes of the public sphere (individuals that use reason to reach a consensus), but the ceremonial frame of *wara* imposes another conception about the relationship between individual and discourse:

“In the *wara*, then, the locus of political action resides in emergent social interaction, not in any single agent as in the idealized model of Western democratic tradition. The discursive interaction between senior males in the *wara* blurs the boundaries between individual voice and individual subjectivity, fuses individual perspectives, and erases the boundaries between an orator’s speech and the speech of others” (Graham 1993, p. 737).

Starting from the idea that the anthropologists’ mission is “to examine the ways in which agencies and structures engaged in development designate public spheres for presenting and contesting the political, and the manner of creating publics that produce and consume development in varied inter-linked sites,” K. Sivaramakrishnan (2000, p. 432) analyzes the role of the disproof rituals in the creation of a public sphere in the West Bengali pre-rural populations. In the same spirit, in a classical study, S.F. Moore (1996) analyzing a political reunion from a Tanzanian village in 1973 reaches the conclusion that the meetings from Kilimanjaro function as a form of political “co-ceremony”—these meetings are ritually staged so that they allow the interpretation of what was a sign of political accord. Moreover, Barnes (1996) argues that the ceremonies initiated by the local chiefs from Nigeria are constituted in a court for public opinion formation; the rituals organized by local clan leaders are placed outside the official state structures, and offer a forum where individuals can express themselves, where opposed opinions can confront each other, and where, through all these, the debate of social values is taking place: “The civic rituals and activities surrounding chiefs affairs constitute a public sphere in that they take place in a socially interactive realm that stands between the private (domestic, familial) and the state” (Barnes 1996, p. 35; see also Holder 2004; Snyder 1997).

3. Media Creating a Religious-Framed Public Sphere

It is widely known that there are two main types of news in the media—routine ones, referring to common facts or situations, without great social impact, and non-routine ones, which impact important social segments and which, therefore, interrupt current journalistic activities and activate a specific media coverage. As noticed by Dayan and Katz in their seminal work, non-routine news stories are generated by two great families of events: “Great news events speak of accidents, of disruption; great ceremonial events celebrate order and its restoration” (Dayan and Katz 1992, p. 9). In both cases, the audiovisual media provides live broadcasts, which triggers a double mobilization—that of people working in redactions, in order to ensure the continuous stream of images and commentaries, and that of the public, in order not to lose information and to live it, understand it, discuss it with their families, friends, and coworkers. The opposition between the regular media discourse and the ‘non-regular’ one resumes the Durkheimian opposition between the sacred and the profane: *media events* are to the regular press what holidays are to everyday work. Or, reverting to Durkheimian terminology, in media events, society sees itself as a sacred community:

“The members of a society experience the media event together: not routine, with the interruption of the normal broadcasting flow, across networks, live organized outside the media, organized by centers of power, preplanned, presented with reverence and ceremony, electrifying large audiences” (Goldfarb 2018, p. 119).

Within the media events, the journalistic discourse brings numerous mutations: they derive from the fact that, different from the regular regime of news (which involves creating a distance between the journalist and the event, a distance globally expressed through the term “objectivity”), they generate processes of an affective merging of actors—event

heroes, journalists, and spectators—with the respective events: “The conferral of media event status on a given occasion consists in pulling it away from the news and translating it in a fictional register. The result is a text which neutralizes the opposition between fiction and news”. (Dayan and Katz 1992, p. 114). In the process of transposing public ceremonies in such a format, journalists impose a new narrative coherence, an assembly of interpretations, symbols, and specific connotations, which can differ from ritualistic logic or performers’ intentions, as well as a host of new “peripheral narrations”, which can sometimes be more numerous and more attractive than the initial event (Dayan and Katz 1992, p. 83). Consequently, journalists “are not mere broadcasters or commentators of facts, they bring them to life. Thus, they appear as creators of the moment or apostles” (Dayan and Katz 1992, p. 91).

In some media events, mass media is interpreted as *ceremony-generating force*: it has the capacity to introduce ritual elements and experiences into the configuration of events that the community did not perceive as rituals, even if they were traditional, socially accepted, and formalized. Now, the media’s role is to create and legitimize meanings, so far difficult to accept at the level of society. As a result, mass media has become an instrument of social change, taking over the functions, means of signification, and even the structures of some classes of rites—those which, according to Victor Turner (1969), generate *liminal* intervals of reflection and acceptance of change, which allow the escape from a difficult situation and the integration into a state of equilibrium.

One of the readers of this article suggested that I deepen the concept of enchantment used by Morgan (2018, 2020) to define the ability of postmodern societies to give prosaic events an aura of enchantment. After Weber used (happily or unhappily) the metaphor of “disenchantment” to define the transformations of modernity, dominated by rational thinking, bureaucratic organization, a scientific perspective on nature, secularization, etc., which empties the world of mystery, of magical aura, of the grandeur of unknown forces and, finally, of sacredness, several authors identified various forms of the re-enchantment of the world. Thus, in his extensive synthesis, Ritzer (2005) reviews these studies and then focuses on the numerous “cathedrals of consumption”, from Disney parks to supermarkets, all privileged places of “the enchanted aspects of new means of consumption” (Ritzer 2005, p. 59).

The idea that journalists, like other producers in the cultural industries, such as those in advertising, film, sports, or entertainment, would create such enclaves of enchantment is attractive, but it raises an insurmountable theoretical problem. From a general perspective, we must recognize that anthropologists and historians of religions all agree that there are significant differences between religion and magic, so the creation of an enclave of magic is not the same as a religious construction. In particular, even Morgan, in one of the cited studies (Morgan 2020, p. 257), says clearly: “It is important, though perhaps quite obvious, to point out that enchantment often has nothing to do with religion of any kind. (...) Enchantment and sacrality are not therefore the same thing, although they readily operate together in the same network of actors”.

I am convinced that there are numerous cases, especially when it comes to media events of the consecrating type, where journalists build an aura of enchantment around actors and facts (media events such as royal weddings, major sports competitions, or various forms of political consecration). In the cases I analyze, the journalistic discourse has explicitly anchored itself in religious language, constructing the event as if it were a hierophany, a re-enactment of a moment of sacredness, what Eliade calls the mythic *illo tempore*.

However, starting from a “classic” issue in media studies—the contribution of media, through the correct informing and through the launching and maintaining of rational and responsible debates, to the functioning of the public sphere—we come to ask ourselves about the symbolic role of media events in the functioning of the public sphere(s). In this respect, Alexander and Jacobs assert that the theoretical model proposed by media events presupposes a reconsideration of civil society—it can no longer be conceived of as a system

based solely on rationalist and cognitive ground, but as one in which identity is constructed by symbolic communication:

“What Katz’ research suggests is how important the media is for actively constructing common identities and common solidarities (...) it suggests that the media is concerned not only with the diffusion of information to a mass public, but also—and this is particularly true for media events—with the dramatization of civil society and the creation of a common cultural framework for building common identities” Alexander and Jacobs (1998, p. 28).

It is evident that the media-events concept is “embarrassing” for the classic public sphere theories: it suggests the possibility that mechanisms for information, participation, discussion, and interpretation of politics are not based on the principles of argumentative rationality, but on those of symbolic thought. The major consequences of this anthropological perspective for the classic political sciences and communication theories have not been exploited enough. In this respect, Coman (2003) argues that ritual acts and discourses are ways to activate both matters of public interest and some viewpoints (expressed in a symbolic language) over those matters. This means that media events, be they restorative or transformative, are creators of public spheres—they contribute not only to the “representation” of a certain reality but also to its staging into public debate. On a minor level, the mass media is just an amplifier (in space and in time) of the audience and of the speed in the transmission of various forms of social communication. On a higher level, the mass media becomes the creator of ritual systems. The acceptance of this function of the mass media also forces cultural anthropology into rethinking the theoretical models regarding the ritual agents, the ritual invention, and the relationship between the ritual, media, and religion. The fervor by which the media takes over certain types of ceremonies and makes them public at a global scale, its capacity to create new ceremonies, to impose them as public events and as themes for public debate is not an accident, a “disease” or a media “slip-over”. This power explains the easiness by which the media contribute to the *ritualizing* of certain events, in other words, to their translation into a ceremonial language and to their projection in symbolic codes—to make the reading of them more dynamic, more conflictual, and more public.

In such moments, a media event is able to re-revive, amplify, and legitimize what Bellah called *civil religion*. In the lineage of Durkheim’s thought, both Dayan and Katz, as well as Bellah or other authors such as Cl Riviere (and his concept of *political liturgies*) emphasize the mobilization, euphoria, and collective emotions experienced by a community during the great celebrations that express and legitimize the identity of that community. Often this can be achieved even without physical proximity, through a system that connects separate communities—this can be classic mass media and more recently social media; *imagined communities* are created through collective living (in Benedict Anderson’s terminology). Civil religion or imagined community are concepts that do not refer to actual religious constructs but to analogous and alternative symbolic constructs. In all these cases, the mass media function as creators of ceremonies, which, by their nature, can channel debates from the public sphere into a religious frame.

This indicates that consecration rites (from “classic” coronations, processions, funerals, or commemorations to their actual concretization in media events), similar to contestation rites (whether dramatized confrontations, carnivals, demonstration, and meetings, or the mediatised “transformative events”) are creating public spheres—they contribute not only to the “representation” of reality but also to subjecting it to public debate. Especially in the case of great moments, whose media coverage takes the form of media events, there occurs an intersection of two grand resources: those of the ceremonial universe, and those of press activity. Both generate spaces for the symbolic embodiment of public themes and confrontations. This explains, from my point of view, the ease by which the mass media is contributing to the *ritualization* of events, in other words, to transposing them into a ceremonial language and projecting them, for a more dynamic, more conflictual, more public understanding, into symbolic codes.

By ritualizing the coverage of events, journalists ensure for themselves, on the one hand, a “ritual mastery” (Bell 1992) of social communication, in other words, the consecration of their right to impose the significances they deem adequate for the respective event. Using this process, they achieve, on the other hand, the legitimization of the profession as an instance “providing” the event, as well as its right to construct the social definition of those realities.

“I believe ritualization is a mechanism that allows journalists to establish their position and social role through their discourses, presenting themselves as representatives of Culture in situations that mark and legitimize social differences and endow the journalists (for a short time) with ‘ritual mastery’ of the processes of debating and interpreting events of great importance for the group” (Coman 2005, p. 50).

Journalists can be considered the architects of *ritualistic experiences*, which allow audiences to interpret the various forms of social mobilization as grand collective rites, able to express not just the interests of limited groups, but the aspirations of an entire social body; thus, by using the language of rite, journalists are creating what Turner (1969) called a *liminal, subjunctive* frame in which one can experience various forms of symbolic interpretation of reality and of articulation of social order. Consequently, media events appear as a concretization of social processes of confrontation and battle to master the production of meaning. This perspective places the group of journalists in the ranks of “ritualistic officiants”: in the modern world, in certain moments, through their action, they create new frames and forms and propose a religious vocabulary and significations to give meaning, in the public sphere, to those events.

Nevertheless, not all events “achieve a happy, successful, and, some may even say, magical outcome” (Sun 2014, p. 5). Numerous other events fall within the triad that Katz and Liebes (2007) call “Terror, Disaster and War”. In such situations, journalists produce discourses, accepted by audiences as significant, to explain events that directly or indirectly impact every individual in society. Creating these discourses is often dominated by elements of *mythologization*: the narratives through which journalists are presenting the respective events are articulated through the integration of elements that are familiar to the public (stereotypes, common epic schemes, culturally accepted figures, and evocative symbols) in a construction that is confirmed and legitimated by existing cultural codes (which, at the same time, re-confirm them). This effect of “mirrored” legitimation is manifest in crisis situations, when social equilibrium is questioned, and when the mass media provides successive visions of facts, versions that are accepted and acceptable only to the extent that they do not blatantly contradict the existing cultural code.

The journalistic discourse builds world models that are not primarily grounded on argumentative logic, but on the narrative one: through the journalistic discourse, people can ask themselves the fundamental questions about the principles underlying their existence and, by combining them through bricolage with the narratives that power such principles and values, to re-think themselves. Similar to myth-makers, journalists are, in times of crisis, bricoleurs calling upon the existing narrative units symbols in the cultural vocabulary and who, by ceaselessly combining them in their narratives, are building different versions of the intelligible, acceptable, and convenient reality to their audiences; thus, they are offering an “intelligibility matrix” (Levi-Strauss 1971), which allows the understanding of a certain event and simultaneously allows the understanding of the cultural frames we use to think of the respective event.

In conclusion, both the ritualization of event coverage through the matrix of media events and the mythologization of dramatic events, in order to offer acceptable significances to disruptive events that are difficult to understand and to accept, generating public spheres for debate, profoundly marked by these symbolic constructs (and much less argumentative or hardly argumentative at all). In addition, in certain circumstances, the mass media builds and signifies events in a profoundly religious language and imagination.

4. Media, Public Sphere, and Religion

The relationship between mass media and religion has been intensely debated (see, among others, [Andok 2018](#); [Hjarvard 2011](#); [Hoover 2011](#); [Morgan 2013](#); [Lundby 2018](#)). Leaving aside studies on the simple media presentation of religious events, personalities, and values, I am interested here in the studies following the relationship between the mass media, public sphere, and religion, with an accent on mass media's capacity to amplify the religious perception of certain events by sacralizing them and to generate religious significations to interpret various events, non-religious in nature.

In my opinion, the discussion about the relationship between the media, religion, and the public sphere has followed two great directions. The first one focused on the control of religious communication and the role of media in this process. The second one has highlighted the media's power of sacralizing certain events and personalities, thus crowning them with a religious aura.

From the perspective of the sociology of religions, Niklas [Luhmann \(2013\)](#) claims that the act of communication is a social operation that establishes society and is based on a synthesis of information, enunciation, and understanding; the consequence of this axiom is that all social subsystems, therefore implicitly religion, should be understood as systems of communication; against other systems of communication that remain at the level of constituted meanings, religion grants meaning; more specifically, it provides meaning to the difference between what is observed and what cannot be observed. For our discussion, it is interesting to include Enzo [Pace's \(2011, 2013\)](#) analysis, claiming that a religion works as a system of communication that has reached a high level of self-consciousness and self-referentiality; hence, between religious systems and their social environment there is always a tension between the power to communicate and signify for the system, and the "empowerment", the capacity to establish a favorable chain of communication in the relationship with the social system; in the case of an institutionalized religion, empowerment is ensured by ecclesiastical authorities, theologians and other specialists in interpreting everything holy, dogmas and norms fixed by tradition; nowadays, churches have lost their monopoly on the means of communication and many other institutions (such as the movie industry, the mass media, music industries, various celebrities etc.) have "self-empowered" with the right and legitimacy of transmitting religious symbols, amplifying the tension between the religious system and the other subsystems of society (also see [Arens 2011](#); [Hirschkind 2011](#); [Knoblauch 2014](#); [Meyer 2006](#); [Rončáková 2020](#)).

From the second perspective, journalists accomplish the sacralization of events and/or of personalities facing decisive moments by (a) presenting events not as random happenings, but as if they had pre-established and immutable order and meaning, and (b) setting this order and this meaning within the reference system specific to religious ritual and myth. Within this framework, meanings appear as already existing (they precede the event), and those who report the sequence of facts and their meaning appear as agents of an extra-mundane 'truth'. Mythologization structures facts in epic constructions that, even if volatile, offer accessible intelligibility grids; at the same time, it re-structures the society's system of representations, offering symbolical configurations that are convenient and negotiable. Therefore, it builds the bases for discussions in the multiple contemporary public spheres. Mythologization is more than a simple modeled mechanical of some epico-symbolical schemes; it is a "bricolage" process ([Levi-Strauss \[1964\] 2014](#)), never finished, with all the units from the cultural vocabulary, a process through which successive sets of narratives are produced, narratives that are open to interpretations and negotiations from the public sphere.

Here are some significant examples ([Coman 2023](#)): the electoral campaign of the future President of Ukraine, Victor Iouchtchenko was described through numerous evangelical images: the visit to his mother's house leads to her description as the Good Mother who endures sufferings in an electoral campaign presented as a path of the Cross so that her son can accomplish his divine mission (Iouchtchenko was poisoned and close to death). Another visit, to the Hoverla mountain, is presented as a miracle of the transfiguration

on Mount Tabor, in which Iouchtchenko abandons the profane colors (the ones of the Ukrainian flag) and chooses as a personal symbol the color of gold. His election victory appears as a miracle and as a resurrection of the country (Dounaevsky and Albertini 2011). The visit of King Mihai to Romania, two years after the fall of communism, was presented by the printed press in the religious language of the hierophany and salvation. The King appears as a Jesus descending to bring the healing and resurrection of the country, and his visit is described as “a sign that Romania is no longer omitted from God’s plans” (Coman 2003). The discourse and iconography from Pakistani mass media translate the life and death of Benazir Bhutto from the political code into the religious code, transforming the political victim into a political martyr and then into a “secular saint” (Boivin and Delage 2010). The funeral of the President of Poland and 20 dignitaries killed in the plane crash in Smolensk was presented by the Polish mass media as a transformative media event, focused on the myth of heroic sacrifice for the homeland and that of the nation surrounded by enemies. The dead president is sacralized, thus becoming “a sacrificial figure on a mission to preserve the traditional values of faithfulness to the national memory.” (Niżyńska 2010, p. 469) Other analyses reveal the processes of media sacralization of political leaders or the victims of political struggles, presented as martyrs whose sacrifice is narrated in terms of foundational myths of a community—see the cases of Argentinian victims of political repression (Catoggio 2013) of Tunisian and Egyptian martyrs (Halverson et al. 2013), or of the media construction of the Russian poet Ana Ahmatova as a secular saint (Harrington 2017).

Within this framework, meanings appear as already existing (they precede the event), and those who report the sequence of facts and their meaning appear as agents of an extra-mundane ‘truth’. This happens because a religious discourse highlights, legitimate, and creates *the difference*; by using religious language and symbols journalists stress and impose the singularity of the event and the unicity of their reporting (Coman 2005), creating a certain status of “apostles” of the event—to use Dayan and Katz’s (1992) metaphor. The ritualization of the media coverage of an event arises when journalists feel the need to attribute a heightened significance to what happened: placing an event, through hagiographic narratives, on the limit between the contingent and transcendental world leads to a transposal of the events in another system of signification, accessible (only) to them. Beyond this stage, in some situations, the mythologization wears the clothing of liturgical discourse. This “liturgical discourse” becomes a feature of the media, which places us in the framework of a “metaphoric religion”, namely a mutation of religiousness towards the profane areas “turned into the object of a new type of religious consecration” (Hervieu-Leger 1993, p. 102).

5. Conclusions and Limitations

The theoretical investigation undertaken here was carried out on two axes: first, we discussed the numerous studies that highlight the situations (cultures) in which a public sphere (similar to the Habermasian one) was/is religiously constructed inside religious institutions and/or ceremonies. Although mass media is not involved in these cases, the studies that I briefly evoked show that a public sphere constructed inside the religious space and/or with the help of religious discourse is ethnographically attested and it can find a theoretical validation (showing the limits of Habermas normative evaluations of the role of religion in the public sphere). This lets us inquire into the cases of a public sphere constructed outside religious institutions, by media, by means of a religious discourse.

When an event is presented as a sacred enactment, we are dealing with a system in which the meaning pre-exists the event—in fact, the significance is the one that creates the event, and the event is manifested as a concretization of something pre-decided, as a confirmation of a revealed meaning: media sacralize events and they appear in the public sphere as religious embedded significances. In other words, the religious matrix constructs the vision about those issues and in theory, places the debate in the framework of the religious discourse. In these situations, a religious discourse of mass media creates a public

sphere constructed after a religious matrix. The debate will not be one about religion or a religious event, nor one with church representatives or with faithful persons, but one about profane events presented and signified with the help of certain religious symbols.

One of the limitations of this article is the difficulty of reaching studies on the relationship between the public sphere and religion from other axial religions, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, or Confucianism; I am convinced that in these cases too, there are edifying analyses, but probably published in national languages and publications. I took advantage of the fact that there was a particular interest (and perhaps even one or two schools of research) in Islam and in the relations between the fundamental concepts of this religion and the public sphere; perhaps that is why this article gives more weight to Christianity and Islam. On the other hand, it is possible to have numerous other studies on the forms of the public sphere or debate forums analogous to it in premodern societies; I used the studies I found after long rummaging in various libraries; even if some are not very recent, they are representative as case studies that support the theoretical model I propose here.

In the other direction, the theoretical models referring to the capacity of journalistic discourse of ritualizing certain public events open up a new field, and a new line of research, specific to media anthropology: it suggests media function as a *ritualizing agent*, which builds symbolic spaces of action and thinking through mediated communication. Media could be considered as a *ceremony-generating force*: it has the capacity to introduce ritual elements and experiences into the configuration of events that the community did not perceive as rituals. As a result, media becomes an instrument of social change, taking over the functions, means of signification, and even the structures of some classes of rites—those that generate liminal intervals of reflection and acceptance of change, which allow the escape from a difficult situation and the integration into a state of equilibrium.

Journalists can be considered to function as a *'factor of ritual feeling'*, allowing the audience to interpret different forms of social mobilization as great collective rituals, capable of expressing not so much the concerns or interests of limited groups, as the fears and aspirations of the entire social body; thus, using a ritual language, journalists create a *subjunctive* framework, a framework for symbolically experiencing possible ways of articulating social life.

On the other side, the processes of a mythologization of the discourse and ritualization of the journalistic actions are associated with mechanisms of consecration of certain personae or events. Future research could establish the correlation between these phenomena and the processes of sacralization performed in and through various forms of popular culture—especially in social media. Important, from the point of view of this discussion, is the fact that sometimes these mechanisms can lead to public spheres that are constituted through language and religious imagery so that they can be considered as religious public spheres.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: This study did not require ethical approval.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

References

- Adams, Nicholas. 2006. *Habermas and Theology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Adelkhah, Fariba. 2003. Islam and the Common Mortal. In *Modernizing Islam: Religion in the Public Sphere in the Middle East and Europe*. Edited by John L. Esposito and Francois Burget. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, pp. 103–23.
- Alexander, Jeffrey, and Ronald Jacobs. 1998. Mass Communication, Ritual and Civil Society. In *Media, Ritual and Identity*. Edited by Tamar Liebes and James Curran. London: Routledge, pp. 23–41.
- Andok, Mónica. 2018. Media, Religion and Public Sphere: International Trends and Hungarian Researches. *KOME: An International Journal of Pure Communication Inquiry* 6: 16–31. [[CrossRef](#)]

- Arens, Edmund. 2011. Religion as Communication. In *The Social Psychology of Communication*. Edited by Derek Hook, Bradley Franks and Martin W. Bauer. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 249–65.
- Bahram, Masoumeh. 2013. Habermas, Religion, and Public Life. *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 28: 353–67. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Baldacchino, Jean-Paul. 2014. Contextualizing the Secular Public Sphere: Religious Ritual, Festa and Migrant Identity in Malta and Australia. *Ethnicities* 14: 113–35. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Barnes, Sandra. 1996. Political Ritual and the Public Sphere in Contemporary West Africa. In *The Politics of Cultural Performance*. Edited by David Parker, Lionel Caplan and Humphrey Fischer. Providence: Berghahn Books, pp. 19–40.
- Bell, Catherine. 1992. *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Boivin, Michel, and Remy Delage. 2010. Benazir en Odeur de Sainteté. *Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions* 151: 189–201. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Bottici, Chiara. 2009. The Politics of Imagination and the Public Role of Religion. *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 35: 985–1005.
- Casanova, Jose. 1994. *Public Religions in the Modern World*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Catoggio, Maria Soledad. 2013. The Consecration of Political Suffering: Martyrs, Heroes and Victims in Argentine Political Culture. *Journal of Latin American Studies* 45: 695–719. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Coman, Mihai. 2003. *Pour une Anthropologie des Médias*. Grenoble: Presses Universitaires de Grenoble.
- Coman, Mihai. 2005. Cultural Anthropology and Mass Media: A Processual Approach. In *Media Anthropology*. Edited by Eric Rothenbuhler and Mihai Coman. Thousand Oaks: Sage, pp. 46–55.
- Coman, Mihai. 2023. Media and the Sacralization of Leaders and Events: The Construction of Daily Spirituality and of the Religious Public Sphere. *Open Theology* 9: 202. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Dasgupta, Sudeep. 2006. Gods in the Sacred Marketplace: Hindu Nationalism and the Return of the Aura in the Public Sphere. In *Religion, Media and the Public Sphere*. Edited by Brigit Meyer and Annelie Moors. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, pp. 251–72.
- Dayan, Daniel, and Elihu Katz. 1992. *Media Events: The Life Broadcasting of History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dillon, Michelle. 2012. Jürgen Habermas and the Post-Secular Appropriation of Religion: A Sociological Critique. In *The Post-Secular in Question: Religion in Contemporary Society*. Edited by Philip S. Gorski, David Kyuman Kim, John Torpey and Jonathan VanAntwerpen. New York: New York University Press, pp. 249–78.
- Dounaevsky, Helene, and Francoise Albertini. 2011. L'Événement comme Avènement: La Logique et les Enjeux Symboliques dans la Présidentielle Ukrainienne de 2004. *Romanian Revue of Journalism and Communication* 12: 7–22.
- Eickelman, Dale, and Armando Salvatore. 2002. The Public Sphere and Muslim Identities. *European Journal of Sociology/Archives Européennes de Sociologie* 43: 92–115. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Eisenstadt, Shmuel N. 2002. Concluding Remarks: Public Sphere, Civil Society, and Political Dynamics in Islamic Societies. In *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies*. Edited by Miriam Hoexter, Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt and Nehemia Levtzion. Albany: State University of New York Press, pp. 139–61.
- Enns, Phil. 2010. Habermas, Democracy and Religious Reasons. *The Heythrop Journal* 51: 582–93. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Espósito, John L. 2000. *Islam and Civil Society*. Badia Fiesolana: European University Institute.
- Fisher, Elaine M. 2017. *Hindu Pluralism*. Oakland: University of California Press.
- Frazer, Nancy. 1992. Rethinking the Public Sphere. In *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. Edited by Craig Calhoun. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Friedland, Roger. 2002. Money, Sex, and God: The Erotic Logic of Religious Nationalism. *Sociological Theory* 20: 381–425. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Gerber, Haim, and Miriam Hoexter. 2002. The Public Sphere and Civil Society in the Ottoman Empire. In *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies*. Edited by Miriam Hoexter, Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt and Nehemia Levtzion. Albany: State University of New York Press, pp. 65–82.
- Gitlin, Todd. 2011. Public Sphere or Public Sphericules? In *The Public Sphere*. Edited by Jostein Gripsrud, Hallvard Moe, Anders Molander and Graham Murdock. Thousand Oaks: Sage, vol. IV, pp. 67–75.
- Goldfarb, Jeffrey C. 2018. Media Events, Solidarity, and the Rise and Fall of the Public Sphere. *Media, Culture & Society* 40: 118–21.
- Graham, Laura. 1993. A Public Sphere in Amazonia? The Depersonalized Collaborative Construction of Discourse in Xavante. *American Ethnologist* 20: 717–41. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Gunaratne, Shelton A. 2010. De-Westernizing Communication/Social Science Research: Opportunities and Limitations. *Media, Culture & Society* 32: 473–500.
- Habermas, Jürgen. 2006. Religion in the Public Sphere. *European Journal of Philosophy* 14: 1–25. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Halverson, Jeffry R., Scott W. Ruston, and Angela Trethewey. 2013. Mediated Martyrs of the Arab Spring: New Media, Civil Religion, and Narrative in Tunisia and Egypt. *Journal of Communication* 63: 312–32. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Hamzah, Dyala. 2005. Is There an Arab public sphere? The Palestinian Intifada, a Saudi Fatwa and the Egyptian Press. In *Religion, Social Practice and Contested Hegemonies: Reconstructing the Public Sphere in Muslim Majority Societies*. Edited by Armando Salvatore and Mark LeVine. New York: Palgrave, pp. 181–205.
- Harrington, Alex. 2017. 'Golden-Mouthed Anna of All the Russias': Canon, Canonisation, and Cult. In *Twentieth-Century Russian Poetry: Reinventing the Canon*. Edited by Katharine Hodgson, Joanne Shelton and Alexandra Smith. Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, pp. 63–93.
- Hassan, Farhat. 2005. Forms of Civility and Publicness in Pre-British India. In *Civil Society, Public Sphere and Citizenship: Dialogues and Perceptions*. Edited by Rajeev Bhargava and Helmut Reifeld. New Delhi: Sage, pp. 84–105.

- Herbert, David. 2011. Theorizing Religion and Media in Contemporary Societies: An Account of Religious ‘Publicization’. *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 14: 626–48. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Hervieu-Leger, Daniele. 1993. *La Religion pour Mémoire*. Paris: Du Cerf.
- Hirschkind, Charles. 2006. Cassette Ethics: Public Piety and Popular Media in Egypt. In *Religion, Media and the Public Sphere*. Edited by Brigit Meyer and Annelie Moors. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, pp. 29–51.
- Hirschkind, Charles. 2011. Media, Mediation, Religion. *Social Anthropology* 19: 90–102. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Hjarvard, Stig. 2011. The Mediatisation of Religion: Theorising Religion, Media and Social Change. *Culture and Religion: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 12: 119–35. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Hoexter, Miriam. 2002. The Waqf and the Public Sphere. In *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies*. Edited by Miriam Hoexter, Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt and Nehemia Levtzion. Albany: State University of New York Press, pp. 119–38.
- Holder, Gilles. 2004. La Cité comme Statut Politique. Places Publiques, Pratiques d’Assemblée et Citoyenneté au Mali. *Journal des Africanistes* 74: 56–95. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Hoover, Stewart. 2011. Media and the Imagination of Religion in Contemporary Global Culture. *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 14: 610–25.
- Katz, Elihu, and Tamar Liebes. 2007. ‘No More Peace!’: How Disaster, Terror and War Have Upstaged Media Events. *International Journal of Communication* 1: 157–66.
- Kaur, Raminder. 2001. Rethinking the Public Sphere: The Ganapati Festival and Media Competitions in Mumba. *South Asia Research* 21: 23–50. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Knoblauch, Hubert. 2014. La Religion Communicationnelle. *Archives des Sciences Sociales des Religions* 167: 83–104. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Kohrsen, Jens. 2012. How Religious is the Public Sphere? A Critical Stance on the Debate about Public Religion and Post-secularity. *Acta Sociologica* 55: 273–88. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Lafont, Cristina. 2007. Religion in the Public Sphere: Remarks on Habermas’s Conception of Public Deliberation in Postsecular Societies. *Constellations* 14: 239–59. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Levi-Strauss, Claude. 1971. *L’Homme Nu*. Paris: Plon.
- Levi-Strauss, Claude. 2014. *La Pensée Sauvage*. Paris: Plon. First published 1964.
- Luhmann, Niklas. 2013. La Religion comme Communication. *Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions* 167: 47–60. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Lundby, Knut. 2018. Interaction Dynamics in the Mediatization of Religion. In *Contesting Religion*. Edited by Knut Lundby. Mouton: De Gruyter, pp. 299–313.
- MacKendrick, Kenneth. 2018. Does Past Religion Have a Past? Habermas, Religion, and the Sacred Complex. *Critical Research on Religion* 6: 309–30. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- McCallum, Richard. 2011. Micro Public Spheres and the Sociology of Religion: An Evangelical Illustration. *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 26: 173–87. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- McNair, Brian. 2000. *Journalism and Democracy: An Evaluation of the Political Public Sphere*. London: Routledge.
- Meyer, Brigit. 2006. Religious Revelation, Secrecy and the Limits of Visual Representation. *Anthropological Theory* 6: 431–53. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Miege, Bernard. 2011. *L’Espace Public Contemporain*. Grenoble: Presse Universitaire de Grenoble.
- Moore, Sally Falk. 1996. Post-Socialist Micro-Politics: Kilimanjaro, 1993. *Africa: Journal of the International Institute* 66: 587–606. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Morgan, David. 2013. Religion and Media: A Critical Review of Recent Developments. *Critical Research on Religion* 1: 347–56. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Morgan, David. 2018. *Images at Work: The Material Culture of Enchantment*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Morgan, David. 2020. The Sensory Web of Vision: Enchantment and Agency in Religious Material Culture. In *The Oxford Handbook of History and Material Culture*. Edited by Ivan Gaskell and Sarah Anne Carter. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 255–64.
- Negt, Oskar, and Alexander Kluge. 1993. *Public Sphere and Experience: Toward an Analysis of the Bourgeois and Proletarian Public Sphere*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Niżyńska, Joanna. 2010. The Politics of Mourning and the Crisis of Poland’s Symbolic Language after April 10. *East European Politics and Societies* 24: 467–79.
- Pace, Enzo. 2011. Spirituality and Systems of Belief. In *Religion, Spirituality and Everyday Practice*. Edited by Giovanni Giordan and West Swatos Jr. Dordrecht: Springer, pp. 23–32.
- Pace, Enzo. 2013. *Religion as Communication: God’s Talk*. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing.
- Pinto, Paulo. 2006. Sufism, Moral Performance and the Public Sphere in Syria. *Revue des Mondes Musulmans et de la Méditerranée* 115–16: 155–71. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Port, Mattjis. 2005. Candomblé in Pink, Green and Black. Re-scripting the Afro-Brazilian Religious Heritage in the Public Sphere of Salvador, Bahia. *Social Anthropology* 13: 3–26. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Redissi, Hamadi. 2002. Dynamique des Moeurs et de la Politique dans la Culture Islamique. In *Public et Privé en Islam: Espaces, Autorités et Libertés*. Edited by Mohamed Kerrou. Paris: Maisonneuve, pp. 93–129.
- Ritzer, George. 2005. *Enchanting a Disenchanted World: Revolutionizing the Means of Consumption*. Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge Press.
- Rončáková, Terézia. 2020. Media as Religion. Stardom as Religion. Really? Christian Theological Confrontation. *Religions* 11: 568. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Saler, Benson. 2000. *Conceptualizing Religion: Immanent Anthropologists, Transcendent Natives, and Unbounded Categories*. New York: Berghahn Books.

- Salvatore, Armando. 2007. *The Public Sphere Liberal Modernity, Catholicism, Islam*. New York: Palgrave.
- Salvatore, Armando, and Mark LeVine. 2005. Reconstructing the Public Sphere in Muslim Majority Societies. In *Religion, Social Practice and Contested Hegemonies: Reconstructing the Public Sphere in Muslim Majority Societies*. Edited by Armando Salvatore and Mark LeVine. New York: Palgrave, pp. 1–55.
- Sivaramakrishnan, Krishna. 2000. Crafting the Public Sphere in the Forests of West Bengal: Democracy, Development, and Political Action. *American Ethnologist* 27: 431–61. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Smith, Andrew F. 2014. Religion in the Public Sphere: Incentivizing Reciprocal Deliberative Engagement. *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 40: 535–54.
- Snyder, Catherine. 1997. Elder's Authority and Women's Protests: The Massay Ritual and Social Change among the Iraqw of Tanzania. *The Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute* 3: 561–76. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Sun, Wanning. 2014. Media Events: Past, Present and Future. *Sociology Compass* 8: 457–67. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Turner, Victor. 1969. *The Ritual Process*. New York: Aldine Publ.
- Zaman, Muhammad Qasim. 2008. Religious Discourse and the Public Sphere in Contemporary Pakistan. *Revue des Mondes Musulmans et de la Méditerranée* 123: 55–73. [[CrossRef](#)]

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.