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20-25 minutes

Thing to remember:

Political communication is an inter- and multidisciplinary field of research that examines the political system, media system and citizens

Parties and Political Systems in Europe: Communication of the Actors

1. What is political communication, who are the actors?

Political communication is not merely a combination of political sciences and communication & media studies.

- The field has interdisciplinary roots, but it quickly turned into a multidisciplinary scientific research area.

- It has its relations to political sciences, media studies, sociology, psychology, economic studies (marketing), linguistics, history and even cultural anthropology (etc.).

- Because of the multidisciplinary nature, political communication does not have a *master theory*. One can find theories that act as comprehensive explanations for all sorts of things: political nature, the nature of media systems, ideas about the electorate behaviour, and ideas about political interactions among the previously mentioned.

- As a field of research, political communication exists since the end of the 1960s. However, it has a much longer tradition (it was not considered political communication, but research on mass media or earlier as propaganda analysis).

- 'Modern' political communication is considered the

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field that examines the political system, media system and the public in democratic societies; and contains processes and messages.

Theories do all kinds of things – construct the truth, act as paradigms for an explanation, emphasise different facts – indeed see the world differently based on the kinds of things we focus on.

Should we be looking at parties/candidates, nation-states, the legal structure, the media system, gender, or class relations as the primary analytical starting point for political communication?

Who are the actors of political communication?

There are many possible classifications. For instance, one of the classifications does not name the actors; it merely sets dimensions, and whoever could fit into a dimension will become an actor of political communication. According to this approach, political communication has three main dimensions:

- Pragmatic dimension – an interaction between the sender and the receiver (conviction, persuasion, information, conquest, ruling, governance and negotiation).
- Symbolic dimension – rituals (e.g. the rituals of agreement and conflict).
- Structural dimension – it is realised through institutional (parliament and administration), organisational (parties), interpersonal channels and the media (audiovisual media).

The pragmatic dimension is reflected in many examples since if a politician wants to come into power, s/he has to interact with her/his possible patrons and voters. It depends on the politician's decision and habit, whether s/he uses the tools of conviction, negotiation or governance, or how these tools are mixed. Generally, it can be said that voters are expecting conviction, while governance and ruling are instead demanded in historical moments when constitutionality and public order is in danger.

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The symbolic dimension can be caught in traditional and/or cultural acts. Besides preserving the traditions of predecessors, new customs are created, repeated from time to time as a ritual. The *repetition* is somewhat like a ritual – the ritual of agreement –, since most of the repetitions in democratic societies are not codified (a door-to-door campaign, a political rally, talking/debating about a political issue in a pub, etc.).

The structural dimension can be found in many aspects of the political area. Since ancient times institutional channels are serving the structural dimension. Politicians, as rhetoricians, whose primary aim is to come into power, will use the possible structures. So they can be regarded as the organisational channels. Media channels are places where every rhetorician could express their opinion about the affairs of the political issues. However, interpersonal channels have the most significant importance. Many researchers will agree that interpersonal are the most suitable channels for persuasion.

Another classification approach is from *Gianpietro Mazzoleni*, who wrote about the **public-dialogue model** of political communication. It consists the political system (parliament, government, political parties, politicians, etc. = AKA partisan and *institutional* actors), media system (print and electronic media, journalists, marketing and PR companies and people etc.) and citizens/voters (civilians, NGOs, voters, *even* actors, celebrities, influencers etc. = the PUBLIC or the citizenship). The ongoing communication between them gives the political communication what we know.

The researchers of political communication widely accept this approach.

What are the dynamics between the actors?

We consider the actors as equal. In a democratic society, all of them can equally take part in the process of (public) communication AKA political communication. However, citizens' possibility was limited in the past. The so-called *new media* has changed a previously well-known landscape. The new communication technologies affect the relationship between the actors of political communication. While in the past, there was a hierarchy between the

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different actors, where the political system, media system, citizens/voters order could be set up, today's political system opening towards the citizens and the new networking techniques of civilians has brought the two actors to almost the same level as that of the media.

About the actors: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9MJflwhhVRk

Questions

1. What contains political communication?
2. What is the reason for political communication does not have a master theory?
3. When did 'modern' political communication start, and what was before that time?
4. What means the pragmatic dimension of political communication?
5. What means the symbolic dimension of political communication?
6. Who is named in the public-dialogue model of political communication?
7. What kind of political actors do you know?
8. What the 'system' reflects in the media system (who should be considered as members of the media system)?
9. What is the dynamic between the actors of political communication?
10. How did the role of citizens/voters change?

See:

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Kate Kenski, Kathleen Hall Jamieson (eds.): The Oxford Handbook of Political Communication. Oxford University Press, 2017. ISBN: 978-0199793471.

Pippa Norris, Ronald Inglehart: Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit, and Authoritarian Populism. Cambridge

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Caramani, Daniele: The Nationalization of Politics: The Formation of National Electorates and Party Systems in Western Europe. Cambridge University Press, 2004. ISBN: 978-0511185182