

Media, public communication and citizenship

Budesa
University of California

Strategic Sex: Activating LGBT Discourse during Croatia's National Sex Education Campaign

With the emergence of post-socialist democracies in Eastern Europe, previously submerged aspects of identity are becoming part of the public language of nation. Croatia represents an acute example of this political current as the eruption of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) social actors have surfaced in the public sphere airing new discourses about sexual citizenship. As the Croatian state incorporates European Union (EU) standards to meet membership demands, it must absorb LGBT citizens into its shifting geo-political development. In light of this context, my paper examines how LGBT activists strategically approach new political opportunities to promote cultural change via active participation in the media. Drawing on a social movements framework with focus on the links between discourse and political opportunity, I analyze activist media involvement during Croatia's 2003 – 2009 national sex education campaign. This work examines the choices LGBT activists employed in making themselves publicly visible as they negotiated the interplay among secular, religious, national and transnational discourses (e.g. EU, Croatian Catholic Church, government officials, parents groups, etc.). I argue that activists' media exposure during this debate developed public interest concerning sexual minority rights that exceeded that of same-sex marriage and gay pride campaigns. The methodology employed includes in-depth interviews with LGBT activists and content analysis of Croatian media. The contribution of this paper is to demonstrate how activists accomplish social movement-related activity at the intersection of media and sex education politics.

Ciocea

College of Communication and Public Relations, NSPSPA

Demanding Respect. The case of Romanian media campaigns

This paper will discuss the wished-for worlds proposed by Romanian media to the public by looking at campaigns initiated by important media institutions in the written press, on a TV news channel, and on the internet. The inventory of communities created as a result will give an insight into the power of the social body, hereby represented by the press, to promote a round-up cosmopolitan alternative to the present community of citizens (Ong, 2008). My analysis draws on recent developments in cultural theory regarding the role of the media in constructing a global civil society. The paper attempts to put notions as cosmopolitan ideology, governance and agency, cosmopolitan citizenship, and media morality to work in the contemporary Romanian cultural landscape.

Ducci

Università di Urbino "Carlo Bo"

Public communication and social web: how public administrations promote citizen sharing and participation.

The evolution of Internet, the advent of web 2.0 and the recent spreading of social web, offer public administrations and citizens the opportunity to innovate the way they interact and consider each other in their relations, encouraging more closeness and sharing.

The change of the "sense of position in communication" (Boccia Artieri 2009), the valorization of relation and participation concept in social web (Jenkins 2006, Benkler 2007, Castells 2008, Mazzoli 2009), seem to create the conditions for a real change of perspective long sought for (think to the debate on civic networks of the Nineties): citizens, from simple "viewers", target of institutional messages and "top-down" politics, can become content generators together with administrations, contributing to the creation and spreading of institutional information (citizen journalism) and be involved in the setting and implementation of social campaigns (participative advertising). The measures institutions implement in order to stimulate citizens participation to decision making leading to deliberative democracy, (Faccioli 2007, Bobbio 2002) seem to draw new momentum.

A thorough cultural change should take place in public administrations in order to implement such a transformation and avoid operations which are just appearance or, as it has often been the case in Italy and in Europe, an unequal development of digital citizenship in the various territories.

In support of theoretical considerations, a few practices shall be considered: the new EU portal and the case of Venice 2.0.

Garcia – Toral – Murelaga
The University of the Basque Country

Communication flow and citizen engagement in public communication.

Social networks and the Internet may improve public communication and make it more plural, as long as citizens develop the capabilities necessary to present themselves in front of others and share their world view. The act of communicating gives rise to a certain level of anxiety for a high percentage of the population due to the social evaluation component it comprises. This factor may explain why so few people engage themselves actively and contribute to enrich the public space that is augmented by networks. So, even if technology has the potential to expand and democratise communication, a vertical structure may remain with the leadership of a few and a majority of passive followers. Universities are discussing their degree structures and qualifications in the process of creating a European Higher Education Area. We take this opportunity and present an instructional design model targeted at future professionals and users with an emphasis in creativity and motivation to participate in the new digital space. This project is based on the concept of flow. Flow theory describes optimal experience in every human endeavour. Such experience develops when challenges and skills are balanced at a personally high level. When in flow, people feel more active, engaged, creative, motivated and satisfied. Our method relies on progressive enactive mastery experiences advocated by self-efficacy theory. Our main aim is to empower users so that they can occupy their place in the new network society, thus improving autonomy of individuals and plurality in public communication.

Lovari - Parisi
Università La Sapienza di Roma

Public administrations and citizens 2.0

Exploring public communication strategies and civic interaction within Italian municipality pages on Facebook

The aim of the paper is to conduct an exploratory description of the prevalent use of Facebook pages by Italian municipalities by examining the characteristics of the online interactions emerging in the Facebook communication of 4 Italian capital cities of provinces: Rimini, Reggio nell'Emilia, Modena and Venezia. We compared the 4 municipality Pages on Facebook looking at the number of users, age composition and gender. Then we realised a content analysis to describe the prevalent typology of posts published in the municipality Walls on Facebook. In conclusion we observe that nowadays Italian municipalities adopt different communication strategies on Facebook: each municipality proposes a peculiar mix of contents that creates a specific communication flow addressed to citizens and other kind of publics.

Mascheroni – Mattoni
Università di Torino, Istituto Universitario Europeo

Regional elections 2010 in social networking sites. In between personalization, partisanship and incorporation of the emerging convergence culture

This paper discusses the findings of a research on the online campaigning strategies in 4 social networking platforms (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Flickr) adopted by the 53 candidates as governors at the last regional elections in March 2010. Candidates' profiles have been analyzed through a standardized codebook so as to record their use of social media and, at the same time, representation of both leadership and partisanship in the online environment. Their communicative strategies have been further analysed through a content analysis of the messages posted on Facebook profiles during March (we focused on Facebook since it is the most used platform for campaigning) and interviews to the campaign managers of the main competitors in 7 Italian regions. After an introduction on the use of social networking sites during political campaigns, the paper discusses the main methodological challenges faced by the research team. The authors then present the quantitative and qualitative data collected, and suggest the classification of candidates according to the communication repertoire employed in the online campaigning activity. Candidates' presence online, indeed, varies not only for the range of platforms used and communicative practices performed, but also for the degree of appropriation of the emerging convergence culture regarding both the communication style and the personalization of the campaign.

Massoli

Public Administration Department, Presidency of the Council of Ministers, Rome, Italy

Beyond public communication: civic evaluation and citizens engagement

The citizen involvement, considering the classical service and policy cycle (defining, designing, implementing, evaluating) has been generally marginal, mostly confined to some specific phases, through various forms of consultation and top-down information. A new paradigm has been introduced in 2008 through the civic evaluation initiative promoted by the Italian Public Administration Department, in collaboration with Cittadinanzattiva, with the aim of boosting wider collaboration and synergy between public administrations and citizens in assessing public services and policies. Civic evaluation could be defined as a form of “not fully structured assessment” in which citizens express motivated judgements on relevant public services. Some ongoing pilot applications of this concept, involving Italian municipalities and their active citizens, focus on “urban quality” and aim at assessing important quality dimensions of Italian cities and neighbourhoods (road maintenance, street lighting, urban waste, state of public buildings). In this scenario, the role of public communication becomes more and more strategic as it guarantees the peer exchange of information and practices between citizens and public administrations.