



ROUTLEDGE
HANDBOOKS



The Routledge Handbook to the Political Economy and Governance of the Americas

Edited by Olaf Kaltmeier, Anne Tittor, Daniel Hawkins
and Eleonora Rohland

THE ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK TO THE POLITICAL ECONOMY AND GOVERNANCE OF THE AMERICAS

This handbook explores the political economy and governance of the Americas, placing particular emphasis on collective and intertwined experiences. Forty-six chapters cover a range of Inter-American key concepts and dynamics.

The flow of peoples, goods, resources, knowledge and finances have on the one hand promoted interdependence and integration that cut across borders and link the countries of North and South America (including the Caribbean) together. On the other hand, they have contributed to profound asymmetries between different places. The nature of this transversally related and multiply interconnected hemispheric region can only be captured through a transnational, multidisciplinary and comprehensive approach. This handbook examines the direct and indirect political interventions, geopolitical imaginaries, inequalities, interlinked economic developments and the forms of appropriation of the vast natural resources in the Americas. Expert contributors give a comprehensive overview of the theories, practices and geographies that have shaped the economic dynamics of the region and their impact on both the political and natural landscape.

This multidisciplinary approach will be of interest to a broad array of academic scholars and students in history, sociology, geography, economics and political science, as well as cultural, postcolonial, environmental and globalization studies.

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*Edited by Olaf Kaltmeier, Anne Tittor,
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Olaf Kaltmeier
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POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

Carlos Del Valle Rojas

Broadly speaking, political communication is any communication that is political in nature and in purpose. The study of political communication is, on the one hand, a type of applied research that focuses on understanding the effects of media, in order to optimize political results (electoral campaigns, public policy, etc.), the basic principle being that there is no politics without communication. On the other hand, one can argue that *politics* is an intrinsic condition of *communication* and, therefore, political communication should be understood through a lens of established power relations and control. In this case, the principle would be: There is no communication without politics.

The different circumstances surrounding the origins of political communication do not allow for a clear distinction between communication and propaganda. In fact, the concept of political communication emerged within the framework of World War I propaganda and developed in the context of electoral campaigns. For this reason, the work of the Committee on Public Information (CPI) in the U.S. is considered a milestone and an effective example of war propaganda on a large scale. Journalist George Creel directed this committee, and Edward Bernays, one of the inventors of Public Relations, was a member (1923, 1928, respectively).

It follows that political communication originates from two particular contexts: one related to war and characterized by the use of communication strategies to persuade the United States' population to support participation in World War I; the other related to electoral politics, with the aim of getting public support for electoral candidates. Notwithstanding the foregoing, some of the more common techniques, like the poster, can be seen being used even before World War I.

Harold Laswell is considered to have founded the concept of political communication with his book, *Propaganda Technique in the World War* (1927), and he is thought to be responsible for formally introducing this term (1969). The concept is also considered a precursor to political psychology. Other authors argue that the origin of political communication is the book *Political Behavior*, edited by Eulau, Eldersveld, and Janowitz and published in 1956.

Regardless of the different but related understandings, political communication is the most common way to refer to the integration of communication and politics, and specifically to a form of communication that is: 1) political in nature and 2) political in purpose. The first implies that politics is an intrinsic condition of communication, which means it is

impossible to consider communication in isolation from politics. The second suggests that communication can be *used* in politics, from which communication as a political strategy is understood.

Inter-American discussion and critical reflections

From a general perspective, there are two identifiable approaches within the field of communication, and both of these can also be seen in the study of political communication. Through the first approach, communication is viewed from a functional and instrumental perspective, derived from two traditions: 1) Mass Communication Research, primarily developed in the United States (→ Cultural Industries, III/27) (Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet 1944; Katz and Lazarsfeld 1955); and 2) development (→ II/6) and modernization (→ I/35) theories from a diffusionist perspective (Schramm 1949; Lerner 1958; Rogers 1962), a widespread tradition in Latin America (particularly in Colombia, Brazil, and Mexico), though also in the United States.

Within this first approach, various models exist, ranging from political psychology to propaganda, as well as Rogers's 1962 model of diffusion of innovations (and its subsequent updates and revisions), and social marketing models, in which communication constitutes a technique within a strategy.

From this perspective, the contributions made by propaganda studies, which would have an early presence in the United States, would prove essential. Such was the case of the CPI, or the "Creel Committee" (1917), led by George Creel (1920), and included Edward Bernays (1923, 1928). The committee's work is considered one of the most effective examples of war propaganda on a global scale. This period corresponds with the creation of close to two thousand posters between 1914 and 1920, in the context of World War I. The methods used in the production of these posters in the United States at the beginning of the 20th century is the same we see now in Latin American electoral campaigns. The principles behind these methods include simplification, hyperbole, association, appeal to emotion, and transmission (for example, recurrent nationalist mythology). Take the case of Michelle Bachelet's 2014 campaign in Chile, with slogans like "Yo Quiero Chile" (I love Chile) and "Chile de Todos" (A Chile for Everyone), or Mauricio Macri's 2015 campaign in Argentina with slogans like "Estoy con vos" (I'm with you) and "Unir a todos los argentinos" (May all Argentines unite). In all of these, the role of communication is key, particularly the role of social media (→ III/41). For example, Macri took first place in Argentina and third in the world, when he got 600,000 mentions on Twitter and gained three million Facebook followers. In fact, he earned the nickname, "President of Facebook," as he reached millions of Argentines through Facebook – 350,238 registered volunteers; 92 percent of Argentina's active Facebook population reached; and 3.4 million video views. In the United States, Donald Trump, for his part, with his 2016 slogan, "Make America Great Again," managed to continue the effective use of social media that Barack Obama had pioneered in 2008. In effect, despite his opposition to traditional media, especially the press (→ Journalism, III/32), Trump used Facebook and Twitter extensively, was the first candidate optimized by the Google News algorithm and tweeted more than any other candidate; there was one day when he was the person most talked about on the planet. The history of propaganda shows that Roosevelt was the president of radio (→ III/40), Kennedy of television (→ III/43), Obama of the internet (→ Digital Culture, III/28), and Trump of social media.

In contrast, through the second approach, communication is viewed through a combined social, critical, economic, and political lens, beginning with critical theories such as the neo-

Marxist tradition and its subsequent revisions like the Frankfurt School (Adorno 1954), and continuing with the political economy of information, communication, and culture, the development of which occurred across the Americas: Smythe (1981), who was born in Canada and studied in the United States; Schiller (1969) in the United States; Mosco (1996) in Canada; and Sierra (1999), who was Spanish but had a long career in Latin America and was later recognized as President of the International Centre of Advanced Communication Studies for Latin America, CIESPAL; among others. These traditions would intermingle significantly over the course of more than two decades, indicating fruitful Inter-American relations, and would later produce new branches of thought like communication for development and communication for social change, among others. With all of these, the political constitutes a critical component of communication.

From this perspective, not only is the role of traditional media (radio and television), internet, and social media important, but so is the role of “alternative,” “citizen,” “community,” or “participatory” media (→ Media Participation, III/36), which began to play a dominant role in Latin America in the 1980s (Antonio Pasquali, in Venezuela; Rosa María Alfaro, in Peru; Armand Mattelart, in Chile; Luis Ramiro Beltrán, in Bolivia; Néstor García Canclini, in Mexico; Mario Kaplún, in Uruguay y Jesús Martín Barbero, in Colombia). Important milestones include the MacBride report (1980), which identified the problem of the high concentration of mass media and the lack of horizontal communications (→ Cultural Industries, III/27), as well as the failure of the New World Information and Communication Order (NOMIC). These both highlighted the need for new media, like community radio, local television, and extensive use of info-centers and Telecenters. In the 1990s, projects playing a central role included the Communication Initiative, with Inter-American cooperation; the World Association for Christian Communication, based in Canada; and the Communication for Social Change Consortium, an initiative sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation in the late 1990s in the United States with a robust presence in Latin America that had launched the work of Wilbur Schramm and Paul Lazarsfeld in the United States in the 1940s.

Etymological considerations

Evidently, communication is as old as politics. Considered separately, the term “politics” is understood as the art of governing (from the Latin “*politicus*” and the Greek “*politikós*,” which essentially means “of the citizens” or “of the State”) (→ Citizenship, II/27; Nation State, II/38), or more recently as an activity related to the community.

The current and widespread use of the concept includes diverse epistemic and theoretical traditions, whose expressions are not always properly differentiated; for this reason, many believe that the term refers to the same idea, even when it is being applied to completely different situations. Accordingly, it is important to identify the different disciplinary areas that are in dialogue with political communication, such as: linguistics (political language) (→ Language, I/13), communication (rhetorical construction, use of media, influence on public opinion, advertising, and electoral campaign design), politics (government, communications, policy proposals), and sociology (social and political movements). Additionally, consideration should be given to the political economy of communications, a comprehensive approach that analyzes production conditions; power relations and the concentration of property, as they relate to the presence of media (→ Media Flows, III/35); and the political psychology of communication, which investigates psychological strategies of communication for a political purpose.

Political Communication should therefore be understood as an interdisciplinary science, as it involves an interaction among different disciplines of knowledge, which themselves address many diverse social, political, economic, and cultural factors. These factors include: actors (journalists, politicians, consultants, political parties, the media, governments), their roles, the production of discourse, and relations in democratic contexts (→ Democracy, II/32). In summary, three types of actors can be seen: political organizations, the media, and citizens (as audience), all interrelated because of the intentional nature of political communication (McNair 2011).

Considering the above, political communication is all communication of a political nature and for a political purpose. It appears in various psychological and discursive strategies and techniques, for political purposes, and can be used by different actors in different contexts, as previously mentioned.

Final discussion

Political communication is based on two different approaches and traditions, with different purposes and natures. Both make for an interesting geopolitical relationship between North and South America (→ Geopolitics, II/34).

In the first case, the approach of Mass Communication Research (often called “classical” to differentiate it from later research), emphasizes the uses of communication to achieve political objectives. Beginning with Rogers’s work, it developed over time in Latin America, as seen in the transformations that took place in the agricultural sector (notably, the incorporation of technology). There remains a constant tension between the theories and their application in Latin American contexts. In the second case, neo-Marxist studies, and critical theory in general, came to have a strong presence in North America, especially in the United States and Canada, but in Latin America, too, of course, where these studies (despite tensions and disagreements) formed part of dependency theory.

The two traditions resulted in a productive tension between an empirical epistemology, represented by Paul Lazarsfeld, and a critical epistemology, represented by Theodor Adorno. Indeed, one can see this tension concretely manifested in the Princeton Radio Research Project. This project, carried out between 1937 and 1939, was led by Paul Lazarsfeld, who invited Theodor Adorno to participate. Their encounter proved key to the trajectories of communications research, namely, the empirical approach (Lazarsfeld) and the critical approach (Adorno). In this sense, political communication had geopolitical tensions, as well, especially in Latin America, where one or the other model was adopted; the region then had two potential means by which to communicate politics and policy to establish a bridge between government and citizenry (→ Nation State, II/38; Civil Society, II/28). The distinction remains to this day in communications schools and departments, though there is a tendency to integrate aspects of both the empirical and critical approaches.

This integration is evidenced in the works of various international associations focused on political communication, whether at the Latin American level, such as the Asociación Latinoamericana de Investigadores en Campañas Electorales (Latin American Association of Electoral Campaign Researchers) – ALICE; the Ibero-American level, such as the Asociación de Comunicación Política (The Association of Political Communication) – ACOP; or at the North American level, such as the American Association of Political Consultants – AAPC. With all of these, approaches can be found that integrate both the empirical (characteristic of electoral campaigns), and the critical (characteristic of the sociocultural impact of electoral processes).

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