



Comparing Political Communication Across Time and Space

Conference of the ECREA Political Communication Section
Co-sponsored by ACOP (Asociación de Comunicación Política)
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The Political Communication Section of ECREA, along with ACOP (Asociación de Comunicación Política) is calling for a **Workshop to provide a forum to discuss and advance comparative political communication research**, including both longitudinal and cross-national comparisons.

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Basic data:

Call for papers URL: <http://ecreapoliticalcommunication.wordpress.com/>.

Submission of contributions: Abstracts of not more than 500 words should be sent to María José CANEL info@compolitica.com

Deadline: 16 May 2011

For more information, Website: <http://ecreapoliticalcommunication.wordpress.com/>.

Why meeting to discuss about comparative political communication research?

It has been said that “every observation is without significance if it is not compared with other observations” (Pfetsch and Esser, 2004). Unlike neighboring disciplines, such as political science or sociology, communications studies has been rather slow in developing concepts and strategies for comparative research, be it across cultures or across time. However, during the last decades, comparative political communication research has become more prominent, leading to new exciting insights into how politics is communicated in different contexts. Still, much work and many challenges lie ahead, and there is a general lack of both longitudinal and cross-national comparative research.

The 2011 ECREA Political Communication sectional workshop aims to address these challenges. It will provide a forum to discuss and advance comparative political communication research, including both longitudinal and cross-national comparisons.

Advantages of comparative research in political communication. Comparative research has several unique advantages no single-case study can ever provide, the most obvious being that it serves as an effective antidote to unwitting parochialism. Comparative research not only helps us become more aware and knowledgeable about other contexts – it also helps us to better understand our own context and its particularities. As political scientist Giovanni Sartori (1996) succinctly said: “He who knows only one country knows none.” Thus, comparative research has the “capacity to render the invisible visible” (Blumler and Gurevitch, 1995). More importantly, comparative research allows us to sharpen the theoretical concepts that we use to describe and explain the role of communication in modern politics. Phenomena such as commercialization, personalization, negative campaigning or media populism do not mean the same thing in different countries and at different points in time. Expanding the database of empirical observations across time, political and cultural contexts helps us to identify both the range of variations within these concepts, but also possible core meanings. Further, comparative research is a powerful tool to build and test hypotheses, i.e. assumptions about the causes, conditions and consequences of political communication. The more theories are investigated in different contexts, the firmer our conclusions can be with respect to how universal the phenomena are and how far we can generalize. Following from this, comparative research serves to counteract naïve universalism, that is the tendency to assume that research findings from one context are universally applicable.

Comparative research is not least essential for understanding the antecedents of different political communication phenomena and the impact of macro-level structures on meso- and micro-level processes and phenomena. What may explain the extent to which the media frame politics as a strategic game, the processes of professionalization of political campaigning, or the extent to which citizens follow political news or participate politically? These are just three examples of questions that can hardly be adequately addressed without a comparative approach and without variation in the independent and/or the dependent variables.

Areas of interest for the Madrid Workshop on Comparative political communication research. For the conference on “Comparing political communication across time and space” we invite empirical as well as theoretical papers that contribute to advancing comparative research. Papers should address one or both dimensions of comparison; or even different dimensions. The spatial dimension refers to comparisons across countries, regions, cultures, different layers of government, media, etc., whereas the temporal dimension refers to variations across time either within a single country or across more than one country (or region, culture, etc.).

We are particularly interested in papers that address the following aspects:

Longitudinal and/or cross-national comparisons

* of the behavior or attitudes of political actors, for example different aspects of political campaigning and of public sector organizations communication (such as governments, parliaments, etc.)

* of the behavior or attitudes of media actors, for example the media coverage of politics and election campaigns.

* of the behavior or attitudes of citizens as they relate to political communication institutions, actors or processes, for example their levels of political knowledge and participation.

* on the relationships between political institutions and actors; media institutions and actors; and the citizenry.

Further, we look for papers that longitudinally or cross-nationally

* address the impact of system-level factors on political communication processes, behaviors, attitudes or linkages.

* test the applicability of theories originated in one context in another context.