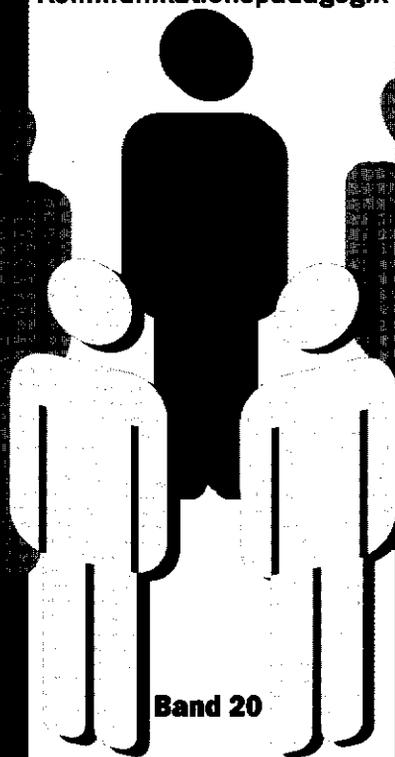


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# Communication and Political Change

## SPRECHEN & VERSTEHEN

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Kommunikationstheorie und  
Kommunikationspädagogik



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## Preface

As the founder and the chief-editor of the series "Sprechen und Verstehen" ("Speaking and Comprehending"), I am very pleased about the publication of volume 20 in 2004.

This volume brings new papers presented at an International Colloquium on Communication into the public arena. These colloquia – founded in 1968 by Fred L. Casmir (USA) and Hellmut K. Geißner (Germany) – are from that time the sole forum for the exchange of ideas between American and European communication scholars.

This ongoing transcultural dialogue had encouraged me to change the series' subtitle from "Schriften zu Sprechwissenschaft und Sprecherziehung" to "Contributions to Communication Theory and Communication Pedagogy." This change corresponds with worldwide developments in our discipline.

This means communication has been the main topic of all the authors since the first volume, whether it may be rhetorical or philosophical, cultural or intercultural, empirical or hermeneutical, face-to-face or mediated.

I do hope the series will be a further a source of internal as well as international scholarly cooperation.

Finally, I want to thank the publisher, who integrated "Sprechen und Verstehen" in the program of Röhrig Universitätsverlag.

Hellmut K. Geißner

Lausanne, Switzerland



## Preface

This book contains papers presented to the International Colloquium on Communication, which took place in Berlin, Germany in July of 2002.

The Berlin colloquium represented a continuation of scholarly exchanges between communication researchers from Europe and the United States. Founded more than thirty years ago through the collaborative efforts of the Speech Communication Association and the Gesellschaft für Sprechwissenschaft und Sprecherziehung, the International Colloquium on Communication is a consortium of European and American professors of communication. The colloquium meets biennially, alternating between Europe and the United States for conference locations. Recent meetings have been held in Boston, Massachusetts (2000), Budapest, Hungary (1998), San Francisco, California (1996) and Jyväskylä, Finland (1994).

Each conference is dedicated to a research issue relating to communication. Papers represent many research perspectives and the colloquium brings together scholars from different areas of the discipline to share ideas on the common theme of the conference.

The Berlin conference theme, "Communication and Political Change," provided an opportunity to examine the relationship between forms of communication and the dynamics of political change. Participants explored the conditions and contexts in which communication contributes to or hinders political change. The chapters included within this volume analyze the relationship between communication and political change within particular historical, cultural and social contexts. These contextual analyses demonstrate the complex role communication plays in helping to produce or prevent political change.

The chapters explore multiple forms of communication, including interpersonal, organizational and mediated communication. Similarly, they draw attention to diverse historical and cultural settings, including contemporary Europe and the United States, eighteenth century France and Britain, Germany of the 1930s, 1940s and 1980s, and contemporary Afghanistan. In their discussion of the relationship between communication and political change, the authors raise diverse issues and concepts: political rhetoric, civil society, cultural rituals, social movements and political activists, the Internet, social capital, cultural identity, political marketing, and taboos. The chapters, then, provide a representative example of the diverse issues that animate current communication scholarship in the United States and Europe.

The contributions by Henner Barthel, Kevin M. Carragee and Herman Cohen examine the relationship between communication and political change in specific historical contexts. Barthel analyzes the communication patterns that dominated the Central Round Table of the German Democratic Republic, a forum for political communication during the political transformation of East Germany in 1989 and 1990. He documents the achievements of the round table in helping secure peaceful democratic change, while also noting its limitations as a forum for democratic debate. Kevin M. Carragee evaluates the relationship between social movements, the news media and political change. He concludes that the news media in the United States have played a role at particular historical moments in producing progressive political and social change, a dynamic sometimes neglected by researchers within cultural studies who stress the news media's role in maintaining the legitimacy of powerful institutions. Herman Cohen shifts the historical focus to the eighteenth century by evaluating how Enlightenment writers and philosophers defined the relationship between rhetoric, culture and democracy. His discussion is particularly

sensitive to how writers in Britain and France held different perspectives on the interaction between communication, independence and freedom.

While the chapters by Hartwig Eckert, Elizabeth Fine and Hellmut Geißner vary considerably in their focus, they share a common concern with communication and the character of political culture. Employing examples from the Federal Republic of Germany, Eckert laments the absence of broad public participation in political decision-making concerning major issues, including the proper degree of European integration and the abolition of the Deutschmark. His linguistic analysis highlights the impoverished nature of political discourse in Germany. Elizabeth Fine, in contrast, examines the Internet rhetoric of the Revolutionary Association of the Woman of Afghanistan (RAWA), devoting attention to the structure, content and style of this group's web site. She underscores the rhetorical dilemmas confronting RAWA given its critique of Islamic fundamentalism, its commitment to feminism, and the harsh ton of its attacks on its adversaries. These dilemmas are exacerbated by the fact that its web site reaches multiple audience with profoundly different political perspectives and historical experiences. Geißner highlights the reciprocal relationship between rhetoric and politics. He emphasizes the need to critically examine both formal political rhetoric (speeches, for example) and conversational rhetorics. In doing so, he repeatedly focuses attention on the need to expand democratic discourse.

The contributions of Tim Hegstrom and Jaakko Lehtonen explore communication and democratic practices, while Annette Mönlich examines business communication and socio-cultural change. Hegstrom provides a detailed analysis of the relationship between organizational communication and political change in developing nations. His particular focus concerns the degree to which the communicative practices of transnational organizations, including a commitment to stakeholder voice

and human rights, can foster progressive political change in the developing world. Lehtonen explores the declining political participation and civic engagement in Western consumer-oriented societies. His analysis is informed by past scholarship on civic engagement and social capital, including Robert Putnam's influential book Bowling Alone. Lehtonen also underscores the increasing power of corporations in shaping public discourse and in influencing political decision-making. All of these developments, in his view, threaten civil society. Mönnich discusses how social and political change can modify corporate practices, including the external communication of corporations to their publics. She also highlights how changes in values within German society have transformed the internal communication of some German corporations. She concludes her essay by contending that these social processes indicate the need to revise communication training.

In their essays, Gene Michaud, Dorota Piontek and Bernd Schwandt examine how societies experience and respond to political and social change. Michaud explores the Super Bowl, an American sporting event, as a cultural ritual that reinforces values and meanings associated with those holding political and economic power in the United States. He focuses on the first Super Bowl played and televised after the events of 11 September 2001 and how this mediated event, by celebrating both American military power and American consumer culture, represented a response to the anxiety and fears produced by the crisis of 11 September. Piontek analyzes the beginning and evolution of political marketing in Poland in the post-communist period. Her examination remains sensitive to how political marketing in Poland corresponds to and differs from this form of marketing in other Western democratic societies. In contrast to the broad societal focus of the essays by Michaud and Piontek, Schwandt examines a particular cultural context: the teaching of communication to students in the

former East Germany. This specific focus, however, allows Schwandt to document how communicative practices and patterns of East Germans 'Ossies' and West Germans 'Wessies' differ.

Stanley Rich's essay examines the political activism of Dorothy Day, an American Roman Catholic who sought extensive social and political reform. Rich documents Day's wide-ranging activism, while also placing her within the broader context of American politics and the Roman Catholic Church in the United States.

The contribution of Gary Selnow echoes many of the concerns advanced by Jaakko Lehtonen. Like Lehtonen, Selnow laments the decline of political and civic engagement in Western societies. He contends that political discourse in the United States is dominated increasingly by political elites, and he expresses concern that new communication technologies, like e-mail and the Internet, have not broadened public involvement in the political process.

Edith Slembek examines a significant and intriguing issue: the role of taboos in a society and how challenges to taboos often represent broader social or political developments. Her essay indicates that researchers need to examine the social character and consequences of taboos. For example, who is helped by or harmed by a taboo?

Semira Soraya-Kandan explores issues relating to group and cultural identity in her analysis of a regional cultural association representing immigrants in Germany. Her essay examines both the internal tensions within this group and the tension she felt as a researcher and participant in the group. The analysis, then, is self-reflexive, highlighting the complexity of the research process itself.

The volume concludes with an essay by Donald Williams examining the content, tone and style of textbooks used in southern schools of the Confederate States of America during the American Civil War. Williams

provides an extensive analysis of these textbooks, highlighting, for example, how they defended the institution of slavery.

By the way the authors are responsible for their contributions.

This book and the colloquium that preceded it benefitted from the collaborative work of many individuals. We thank the Department of Communication and Journalism at Suffolk University and its chairperson, Professor Robert Rosenthal. Our thanks also to the administrative assistants in the department, Mary Ann Landry and Ruth Hegarty, and to Ellen M. McCrave. We thank the Checkpoint Charlie Stiftung (Berlin-USA-Foundation) for its support of this volume. We also appreciate the assistance of Kirstin Gerau, Bärbel Ruzika and Eva Stabenow in preparing the book.

We end this preface by thanking our colleagues who participated in the Berlin conference and who enriched our understanding of the relationship between communication and political change.

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