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CHAT SHOWS
Mediated Public Deliberation.
New Patterns of political Communication and Political Behavior.

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My proposal for Spain on the new media and political communication has two-parts: A) Fragmentation (segmentation of audiences and users), and B) Public Property and the public use of the new media. Both parts converge on the central theme of the “mediated public deliberation” (Shoenbach, 1995; Kolhun, 1995; Negrine, 1996). Our hypothesis - with the empirical data which we have is to demonstrate that the new media today has a diffuse influence in the mediated public deliberation- added to the new media and its influence is the political protagonism that the chat shows (the conversation) have on the present process of political communication.

With the data that we have, we cannot think that a "shared political culture" exists between the users that allows us to identify them as a group with political significance. The only common characteristic that we know today is their knowledge of the English language. A process of "technology enculturation" (socialization) is being produced, but not a process of political socialization. The interactions that are realized today are: WEB (www), 95%. Mass Media: newspaper, etc.: Searchers and Directories. E-Mail, 80%. Filing (FTP), 38%. Chats, 16%. 61% is in their first year of Internet use and 15% in the second.

The use of the new technologies appears to be a demonstration of membership in a new sociability (Garnham, 1992). It is easy to think of these net-users as an potential electorate. The so-called impact of the "cognitive mobilization" (Inglehart, 1991) does not gather the net-users under an explanation of behavior and current political values. What type of political participation can these people realize?. What political interests do they defend?. Can they establish political Agenda-setting on the Internet?. The old thought on-line political participation (such as votes and referendums over the Internet) by personal computers appears closer and more possible.

Internet, electronic mailbox, and E-mail. Interaction with the outside on-line "data-base" is not possible. The members of parliament can consult 4 "data-bases" of Congress that contain the following: A) Base-Anta (HRGO): parliamentary initiatives, index of the record of the Chamber (all that enters the Congress). The remaining three "data-bases" are also utilized by the rest of the civil servants. B) Daily Record of the Sessions. C) Data-Base: Order of the Day (programs of plenary meetings and commissions). D) Data-Base: composition of the Chamber (members of parliament).

The personal computers of the MPs permit access (visits) to two Spanish news agencies: EFE (national and international) and Europa Press, in real time. Each MP has a television set in his office with 6 channels. The first channel carries state television (public and private) and two satellites. The other 5 channels carry the activities of the Chamber (plenary sessions and commissions). One channel is connected to the Press Room. We do not have reliable data about the use of the new technologies by the MPs in their legislative work. The fax, cellular phone, face-to-face relations and "press clippings" remain the instruments of choice for the majority of the deputies. The "dossier" is another medium of privileged communication between the MP and journalists.

The central government in Madrid, the Presidency of the government and all the ministries have the WEB. The 17 regional governments have different WEB organisms than the central administration in terms of political criterion and technical support. The type of information -always official- is about distinct themes.

Ventana Moncloa (Window Moncloa) is a free information service for the public on the Internet offered by the Office of the Government Spokesman since the 26th of September, 1995. The following information is included: agenda of activities of the government, reference of the cabinet of ministers, press conferences (President, ministries, spokesperson), official communications of the government, information about Spain in the European Union (Spanish presidency of the EU, Bulletin of the EU and Spain), agenda of communication 1996 (Guide of the mass-media). Since its beginning, 192,768 visits have been logged. There is a daily total of 1,228 visits ([Http://www.Lamoncloa.es](http://www.Lamoncloa.es)).

CHAT SHOWS

The chats were born as the “new public space” in the eighteenth century and since then have become custom in Spanish political, literary, and academic life. Their historic study is situated in the study of the public sphere (Habermas, 1981; Baker, 1990; Rospir, 1990; Calhoun, 1992).

The chat shows, as a journalistic genre, form a shapeless genre. They do not correspond exactly to American talk shows; their organization and journalistic and managerial functioning is different (Herbst, 1995; Feature Article 1997; Page, 1996; Chutz, 1995; Scanneil, 1995). The chat shows belong to the old media -radio-, but their real success inside the mainstream media is recent. As a consolidated journalistic pattern, they have a history of between 7 and 10 years. They appear just before the entrance into Spain of the new media technologies halfway in the present democratic stage (1997-1997). The chat shows are a political communication experience whose analysis takes full meaning inside the proposed denomination “media-center-democracy” (Swanson, 1996; Ferry, Wolton, 1989) or “civil communication” (Blumler Gurevitch, 1995). Their journalistic practices and political effects treat each other like transformations, like “dynamic change in political communication systems” (Blumer, Gurevitch, 1995). From another perspective, psycho-sociological, the chat shows relate with the importance and influence that the conversation has on the formation of public opinion. Since G. Tarde discovered in 1901 their causal chain: press-conversation-opinion-action, the conversation has not stopped being present in all the explanations about the formation of public opinion (Tarde, 1986).

In the 70s and 80s, the mass media -the press, principally- have commented on or criticized laws and pre-determined political agreements. Today, the mass media has gained influence and power because they participate in the public debate before the institutions (parliaments and parties, for example). In this context, the chat shows appear like a new ideal public space for the exchange of multiple points of view and the development of new interactions between politicians, journalists, and representatives of civil society. The chat shows have demonstrated that the informative structures (the genres, patterns) of the mass

The chat show (old media) has created a new pattern of political behavior and political communication that permits the politicians communicative opportunities that the new media technologies have not yet demonstrated. The chat show allows a new presentation of politicians, an interaction between citizens and politicians that express sentiments and emotions.

Chat shows can offer a type of popularity distinct from that of the use of the Internet and other new technologies. The human factor of the politician has become more pronounced with the use of the old mediums. This factor in the electoral campaigns continues to have great importance.

The presence of the politicians on chat shows influences the rhythm and content of the process of political communication. They accelerate the "spin cycle" by allowing the politician to comment upon, modify, or deny information appearing in the newspapers that the chat show centers on. The entertainment and spectacularization of that which the politician submits in these radio programs triggers accusations of demagoguery and "trivialization" of the public sphere. In defense of the chat shows one can argue that political dialogue is a good of democracy. Chat shows give expression -presence and voice- to sectors of citizens that find in this new pattern a break in the dialogue between the governing and the governed. Opposite the isolation of the Internet and E-mail, the chat show offers a new presence in the public sphere which cannot be denied.

The representatives of civil society participate and contribute with experience from their professional and cultural backgrounds. Their political sympathies place much of the political news that is commented on in a new cultural and intellectual plane for the audience. They contribute with a distinct vision of the world than that of the politician and the journalist.

The journalists in the chat shows are members of the political-journalistic establishment. The role-playing is of the commentator that popularizes, explains or divulges the political questions. The political agenda is supplied by the news chosen by the newspapers of the day. The grade of personalization in the explanations and commentaries

OLD MEDIA VERSUS NEW MEDIA

The Spanish, like the rest of the Europeans, obtain their political information largely from the television and radio. Although 73% of the population lives in the urban environment, the number of readers of the press (newspapers, magazines) only reaches 42%. The Index of Difusion in 1996 is 105.8/1000 inhabitants (the average for the EU is 220). Television is the dominant medium with 91% of the audience (210 minutes per person per day). In consumption of television, Spain is the second largest consumer in Europe, behind the United Kingdom -216 minutes- and in front of Italy -208 minutes-.

The radio has an audience of 56%. Men, 53%, and women, 47%. It is principally an urban and metropolitan audience. The consumption of minutes by person and day is not among the first in Europe: Spain: 113 minutes, Belgium: 412, Finland: 220, Germany: 168, France and the United Kingdom: 125 minutes.

The audience of the chat shows presents the following characteristics (ASEP 1996). They reach an audience of 10%. In the mornings -8:30 a.m. to 10 a.m.- the average audience is 13.2%. The majority of the listeners are at home (70%). In the evenings -11 p.m. to 12 p.m.- the audience is smaller: 10.7%

Men listen to the chats more, oscilating between 53 and 66%. By economic sectors, retired people make up the majority, as much during the morning as during the night (47% to 52%). The rest are distributed between small employees and entrepreneurs, civil servants, etc. The ideological situation of the audience is another significant figure. The situation on the left is a majority for the audiences of all chats: 26-28%. For the whole of radio-listeners in Spain, the number is about 27%.

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