

CALL FOR PAPERS
PROTAGORAS Conference
«European communication: toward an agonistic future?»
30 and 31 May 2018
IHECS – Brussels

Argument

The acceptance of the crucial role which communication plays in building the symbolic of politics (Aldrin, Hubé, Olliver-Yaniv and Utard, 2014) has deeply influenced and reinvigorated the research in public communication. Even better, it has paved the way for very enriching interdisciplinary research in the field of European communication (Foret, 2008).

Many authors of political philosophy (Laclau and Mouffe; Rancière; Lyotard), of rhetoric and argumentation studies (Plantin; Amossy; Angenot; Nicolas) have been interested in studying the role of dissensus and its representation in a democracy. The confrontation of opposing views and its manifestation are acknowledged as the backbone of the political community. The model of agonistic democracy proposed by Chantal Mouffe is about political opposition between adversaries. Those are « paradoxically [defined] as « friends-enemies », people who are friends because they share a common symbolic space but who are also enemies because they want to organise this space differently » (Mouffe, 2005: 13).

The *resurgence* of conflict, analysed in its democratic function, makes of the European consensus an even more fertile ground for research, as European institutional communication has long remained dominated by a double paradigm. It is diffusionist-pedagogical on the one hand, with communication seen as unilateral and top-down, and managed for the most part by agencies and external communicators. And it is procedural on the other hand, with communication about participative

processes « calling for openness and transparency of institutions toward citizens » dominating their actual participation and its content (Aldrin and Utard, 2010). In such a context, European communication toward citizens has been strongly centralised following a logic of « institutional smoothing » around a « negotiated collective enunciation » (Oger and Ollivier-Yaniv, 2006).

Within and between institutions, the culture of compromise and decision-making processes have contributed to neutralising and erasing divergences (Bendjaballah, 2016). Just like the European Union, international organisations' tendency to smooth their discourse and hide conflict (Rist, 2002, Launay, 2005) contributes to the depoliticisation of their media staging in the international public space (Gobin and Deroubaix, 2010). Today this institutional discourse « of one voice » is strongly opposed by public opinion, is confronted with successful national counter-discourses that are particularly polarising, and media coverage that classically favours conflicting views (Giasson, 2012; Burger 2010; Burger, Jacquin and Micheli, 2011). From the polyphonic confrontation of discourses about the European Union emerges an object halfway between politics and media, feeding controversy.

This second PROTAGORAS colloquium follows in the footsteps of its forerunner, taking shape where disciplines meet: social and political sciences; information and communication sciences; linguistics. The colloquium focuses on the tension between consensus and non-consensus, which is at the centre of European public and political communication and of its media coverage. Three levels of analysis are suggested: the linguistic/textual level; the semiological level; the communication level and its practices.

The proposals will have to follow one of the three thematic pillars:

The **first** (socio-organisational) **pillar** considers the evolutions of the *institutional* communication of the European Union and that of its *actors*. These evolutions push one to reflect on the interdependence between a *rational-legal* logic and *personal-individual* matters. Next to the institutionalisation process Internet is undergoing (and the representations of Europe this media creates), one will question the consequences, on a

communication level, of the initiatives born from the *White paper on the future of Europe and the way forward*, published by the European Commission in March 2017. This thematic pillar addresses the *question of incarnation* [embodiment] and *organisational leadership* – the discourse of European Union leaders –, as well as *inter-institutional cooperation* between the various communication services (including the impulsions created by communication agencies) and the search for representatives of civil society with whom a dialogue can be fostered.

The **second thematic pillar** studies the *media staging* of this communication, how the information media format aesthetics and discourse. Considering how « classic » media favour conflict in their representations of public and political life, this pillar examines how framing and agenda-setting (Scheufele, 2000) influence the visibility and legibility of the EU's institutional communication. The objective here is to consider both the space dedicated in newsrooms (*agenda-building*) and the constraints governing media coverage.

Le **third thematic pillar** looks at the European project in its composite discursive dimension, by considering how the arguments and rhetoric speeches are mobilised in *national political discourses* of individual and/or collective stakeholders. The objective here is to question their agonistic and communication value in the European public media space(s). One will make the hypothesis of a *return to the politicisation* of the European project in national political actors' programmes, whilst also considering the persistent *depoliticisation* as seen in its edification and condemnation by party-led and/or personal strategies favouring its mystification. This pillar will emphasise analyses of current research corpus and field research.

The proceedings of the colloquium will be published in the « Cahiers PROTAGORAS ».

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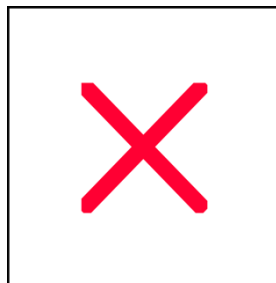
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Associated to the programme of this second PROTAGORAS colloquium, several researchers of the GRIPIC (Groupe de recherches interdisciplinaires sur les processus d'information et de communication – Paris IV-Sorbonne – *CELSA / Interdisciplinary research group on information and communication processes*) will bring their scientific contribution to the project of an interdisciplinary approach to European communication: the agonistic question will be considered at the level of the socio-discursive strategies of European institutional actors as well as at that of the political and media formatting of national discourses on Europe.



The conference is labelled by the French society of information and communication sciences (SFSIC)



Expected communication proposals and submission procedure

Proposals must be sent to us **before the 1st of March 2018** by email: info@protagoras.be.

Next to an abstract of between **1,000 and 1,500 characters** (sent in a .doc format), proposals must include: the name, professional or academic status, the institutional attachment, the contact details of the author(s) (emails and mail addresses), and contain, possibly, a list of publications.

Communication proposals can be presented either as **reflexive analyses** based on recent and completed empirical research, or as **analyses of professional communication practices** – testimonies about practices and analysis of the conditions of the action, its justifications, and its consequences.

Proposals will be examined by a double blind jury, after which the steering committee will let its decisions known to the authors (31st of March at the latest).

The **costs for registration** and participation are of **80 €** (or **50 €** in the case of unfinanced researchers).

Steering committee

Nicolas BAYGERT – Docteur en sciences de l’information et de la communication (Université Paris IV-Sorbonne/UCL), Chargé de cours (IHECS, ULB, CELSA, Sciences Po Paris).

Esther DURIN – Doctorante en Sciences du langage (UPV – Montpellier 3 / Praxiling), Chargée de cours à l’IHECS.

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