



Call for Papers for volume 7, n° 1(13)/ 2014

ESSACHESS – Journal for Communication Studies¹

www.essachess.com

Environment and communication

Coordinators:

Pieter LEROY (Radboud University Nijmegen, Netherlands) and Marie-Gabrielle SURAUD (CERTOP, Paul Sabatier University of Toulouse 3, France)

Over the last 40 years, scientific research on environmental issues has become a well-established field worldwide. These environmental issues, on the one hand, have provoked a series of novel questions in a variety of scientific disciplines. Simultaneously, they have led to a series of controversies over political, technological, economic and related issues with and between public authorities, industries and civil society. Communication is a quintessential part of these questioning and debating, and a precondition for scientific, societal and political responses to environmental challenges at large.

This special issue envisages a better understanding of ‘communication’ on environmental issues. We would like to pay attention to the specific features of communication over environmental issues, to its role in the controversies about them, to their mediatisation, to their role in public and political debates, and in negotiation and policy making. What role does ‘communication’ play in all this? What forms and functions does it take? What are the implications thereof when it comes to societal and political action? And under what conditions can communication contribute to the gradual institutionalisation of these environmental responses?

Making the environmental issue into a challenge for collective action affects every single societal sphere: the world of science and technology as well as the associative world of citizens, communities and non-governmental associations; the sphere of public authorities as well as market representatives; employers as well as employees, and farmers as well as banks; agencies at local as well as at global level. Within each of these spheres and between them,

¹ The journal „ESSACHESS” has been indexed in the databases ProQuest CSA, EBSCO Publishing, Ulrich’s, Gale, J-Gate, DOAJ, CEEOL, Index Copernicus, SSRN, DRJI.

‘environment’ not only has become a discourse, it also created new discursive spaces for concern and mobilisation, it contributed to novel platforms for debate and decision making, resulting into new practices and new standards. While one has to study their mechanisms and effects in more detail, environmental concern in general made citizens to adopt new daily practices - and to conquer other practices -, market agencies developed their ‘social responsibility’ and sustainability standards - either *con amore* or as green washing -, while public authorities engaged in the development and implementation of environmental policies. In comparable ways, ‘the environment’ informs certain technological options, while challenging others. And above all, communication over the environment created novel ways for these spheres to interact, through a variety of multi-actor and multi-sector arrangements, covering a series of environmental topics, and ranging from the local to the global.

In brief, we regard ‘communication’ to be the link between discourse and action, between discourse and institution, and - under conditions still to be more precisely unravelled and understood - as a motor for societal change.

Within this approach, we call for contributions that could cover four complementary perspectives.

First: *the emergence of environmental issues* or particular sub-issues thereof, such as GMOs, the nuclear, climate change, biodiversity and others. What are the factors that drive and further their mediatisation and their politicisation, and what are the factors that block or hinder these processes? What is the role of scientific information in this emergence of environmental issues, and what role does citizen science or societal expertise play? How get these different sources of information articulated into different discourses and problem definitions? And how then do the latter enter in confrontation and debate, and eventually result in negotiation and collective decision making?

Second: *the institutionalization of environmental discourses*. When concern and mobilisation over environmental issues results in successful agenda-setting, these discourses institutionalise into concrete practices, into new ways of interaction, into novel strategies of intervention, either within or among public authorities, market agencies and civil society representatives. What processes do generate successful institutionalisation? What hinders it? To what extent and through what mechanisms this institutionalisation then actually affects the day to day practices of public authorities, of market enterprises, of citizens and the interactions between these stakeholders? Is ‘environmentalism’ indeed a catalyst of institutional change? And how does, within and beyond the well-known mechanisms of ‘implementation’, institutionalisation at one level of governance trigger institutionalisation at other levels?

Third: *co-operative arrangements for negotiation and decision-making on environmental issues*. As stated above, ‘environmentalism’ has led to the set up of a whole series of new ways of interaction, negotiation and decision-making. While initially environmental impact statements, risk assessments and cost-benefit analyses reflected a technocratic discourse, they all adopted, albeit in various ways, a ‘participatory’ variant. Moreover, environmental issues induced the coming into being of new arena’s and platforms for negotiation and decision-

making, their stakes ranging from the location of hazardous activities at local level up to the gradual institutionalisation of some global environmental governance. The recent ‘Grenelle de l’environnement’ in France reflects a trend that encompasses a whole bunch of participatory and interactive initiatives, including the IPCC and, more recently, IPBES. While some of these platforms link the public, the economic and the societal sphere, others relate science to policy, and still others can be regarded as private governance initiatives. Here again, questions arise as to what extent these newly institutionalised arrangements echo certain discourses while, in turn, they facilitate some definitions of the problem and might hinder other forms of communication.

Fourth: *the role of sensitizing events and crises*. Under normal circumstances, communication, also environmental communication tends to be business as usual. Yet the very character of environmental communication changes dramatically when sensitizing events occur, let alone in times of crisis. While the first pictures of ‘planet Earth’ - the blue marble - created such a sensitizing moment in the late 1960s, creating sensitizing moments seems part of any environmental communication strategy, with logo’s and icons - from the panda to the ice bear – in a prominent role. Yet environmental catastrophes and crises in particular, such as Seveso, Erika, Chernobyl, AZF and Fukushima, do generate specific patterns of communication. Parts of these communications regard the people and the region directly affected, while other parts regard the amplification and multiplication of the scientific, moral and political messages that (should) go with this particular crisis. Sensitizing events and crises, therefore, make environmental communication more visible, yet it remains to be seen what their long term impact is, whether they give rise to the institutionalisation of new practices and new rules. And, of course, while public media and social media do play a role in whatever environmental communication, their role is even more accentuated under conditions of crises. The latter raises questions as to how they take up their ‘societal responsibility’, be it here and now or in a wider frame of time and space.

Important Deadlines

- **July 15, 2013**: submission of the proposition of article in the form of a summary of 400-500 words. The proposal must include a list of recent references;
- September 30, 2013: acceptance of the proposal;
- **February 15, 2014**: full paper submission;
- May 30, 2014: full paper acceptance.

Papers should be between 6,000-10,000 words in length. Papers can be submitted in English or French. The abstracts should be in English and French, max. 200-250 words followed by 5 keywords. Please provide the full names, affiliations, and e-mail addresses of all authors, indicating the contact author. Papers, and any queries, should be sent to:

essachess@gmail.com

Authors of the accepted papers will be notified by e-mail. The journal will be published in July 2014.