



the media's role should be exposed in increasing the public's awareness and shaping their opinion in the sphere of omnipotent politics. Another factor to be considered is the unpredictable behaviour of the audience itself which may either cherish the possibility to participate in public life, or reject this chance and ignore what the media offers while portraying various facets of political culture.

The content of the book is constructed within the framework of two distinct dimensions of political communication: i) the horizontal, which involves a constantly changing shift of power between politicians and the media; ii) the vertical, which investigates the relationship between political communication elites (journalists and politicians) and citizens as the addressees of their messages. The two processes that accompany the developments occurring in both dimensions are *mediatization* (horizontal) and *de-centralization* (vertical), the latter emphasized as being more and more frequently encountered in postmodern democracy. As advanced by the contributors to this volume, the new form of citizenship tends to challenge the primacy and credibility of institutionalized politics in public life, often opting for a partial or even entire disengagement from active participation in political life. This new phenomenon may thrive due to the emergence of new forms of communication, primarily the Internet, which counterbalances the traditional style of mass media, providing space for active, independent and creative citizenship.

The book is divided into three parts devoted to the analysis of three different issues, namely: i) new approaches to political communication; ii) mediatization which touches on the ongoing shift of power between politics and the media; iii) de-centralization that discusses new forms of citizenship and political communication. The introduction presents the chief premises of the book as well as depicts the rapidly changing face of contemporary communication in postmodern democracy which is continually affecting the performance of present-day politics. The remaining parts contain a certain number of essays which discuss one of the above-mentioned subjects in a diversity of contexts provided by real-life instances from both the British and Dutch political public sphere. Interestingly, most of the results are supported by empirical evidence in the form of interviews, experiments conducted on selected individuals and statistics based on data obtained from various sources, particularly different kinds of media.

Part 1, *New Approaches to Political Communication*, consisting of two theoretical essays, explores the themes of audience democracy (horizontal dimension) and political representation viewed as a mediated act (vertical dimension). The latter work seems to be particularly interesting as it accentuates the role of surveillance media technologies, including blogs, webcams, Twitter or YouTube which have posed a serious threat to politicians' visibility and are constantly questioning the authenticity of their everyday performance.

Meanwhile, Part 2, *Mediatization: The Changing Power Game between Politics and the Media*, examines the horizontal relationship between politicians and jour-

nalists, specifically the part spin doctors play on the British and Dutch political scene and their metacoverage in the media, the changing patterns of political news coverage in British and Dutch newspapers, the culture of political journalism in the UK and the Netherlands or the interaction between politicians and journalists in political broadcast interviews. Also, what can be found interesting is that the emergence and popularity of satirical television shows such as *Have I Got News for You* (BBC) and its Dutch counterpart, *Dit was het Nieuws*, have demonstrated an increasing need of politicians and candidates for political posts to participate in such programmes and interfere with their standard media representations by exposing their normality, authenticity and humour to the audience.

Part 3, *De-Centralization: New Forms of Citizenship and Political Communication*, shifts its focus towards the vertical dimension of political communication, investigating the recent trends observed on the British and Dutch political scene, especially concerning an enhanced role of the general public in reshaping the present-day political order. Among the most salient issues discussed here are the growing disconnection of citizens from the active political life of their countries, the scope of political consumerism and the way it affects the citizens' involvement, various forms of political participation in the realm of popular culture or the development of participatory and citizen journalism. One of the most interesting theses involves a statement that fruitful political discussions flourish on the Internet forums related to the reality television shows such as *Big Brother* or *Wife Swap* or a suggestion that the format of such programmes tends to imitate some forms of citizens' participation in political life.

The volume remains one of the newest and most precious publications on the ongoing interplay between politics, citizens and the media from the perspective of political communication discussed in a variety of contexts. An indisputable asset of the book is that it offers a deep and fresh insight into the investigated matters by means of empirical evidence provided in each chapter to support a given hypothesis. A wide range of figures and tables presenting statistical results, being strongly grounded in verifiable data, is what contributes to both the credibility and reliability of the proposed theses. Additionally, a well-written, logical and clear structure of the work as well as frequent use of well-known examples from everyday reality to explain an intricate nature of debated phenomena, can appeal not only to scholars trained in the field. It is also aimed at those who are not professionally acquainted with the subject, yet interested enough to probe into contemporary patterns of political communication. The book may be strongly recommended to anyone whose interests revolve around different forms of representation of media-centered politics in the eyes of citizens seen as critical observers and commentators of the political scene in the era of postmodern democracy.

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