

KEPPLINGER, H. M. *Politikvermittlung*.  
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### The mediation of politics – a reprise

With this book, the German and internationally renowned communication researcher Hans Mathias Kepplinger presents a collection of his articles on 'Politikvermittlung'. This term stands for the mediation of politics and is also used to analyze the relationship between the political system and the media system and those who are acting in these systems. Except one, all the articles have been published before in a range of places. They cover more than 25 years of research into political communication, ranging from Kepplinger's inaugural lecture at the University of Mainz in 1983 to the most recent publications from 2008 and an original chapter that was written for this book.

Kepplinger became a professor at the University of Mainz in 1982, where he had been an assistant of Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann during the 1970s. He studied political science, communications and history – a combination that also explains his interest in political communication, which has been one of his main research topics since the beginning of his academic career.

The predominant perspective Kepplinger takes for political communication lies in the field of media effects. One of the classic research questions that asks how television affects voting decisions is represented in this book by a chapter which is a shortened version of a book published by the author in cooperation with Hans-Bernd Brosius and Stefan Dahlem after the German parliamentary elections in 1990. This study demonstrates the clear influence of television, and particularly its visual presentations, on the perception of the candidates' competence and their character. Although based on content analysis, the conclusions of a study carried out on the occasion of the parliamentary elections in 1998, support the earlier findings. The research shows that candidates profit from successfully orchestrated stagings of their campaign appearances: positive reactions by their audiences that are shown on TV are often accompanied by positive comments by journalists and will therefore enhance the positive impression on the part of the audience.

For a long time, however, Kepplinger has also called attention to the reciprocal effects of communication processes, namely the effect that media reporting has on its protagonists. In the case of political communication, reciprocal effects are caused by politicians being made the subject of media reporting, on the one hand, and by the politicians' specific media use on the other. The reporting of the media can therefore have consequences: 1) on how politicians perceive themselves and their performance, 2) on the opinions politicians form about public affairs, 3) on the assumptions politicians have about the effectiveness of the media, and 4) on how the effects are directly experienced, such as being happy or angry about positive or negative media comments. One chapter of the book develops a systematic approach to the different kinds of reciprocal effects, while others present findings from several surveys of members of parliament who were asked about their experiences with journalists and the media.

The most recent contributions refer to the concept of mediatization, which has made impressive progress in Germany over the last few years. Here, Kepplinger discusses the difference between media effects research and studies based on the mediatization concept. He concludes that the emergence of mediatization research indicates a paradigm shift in the analysis of political communication. Particularly by focusing on organizations such as parliaments, parties or companies instead of individuals, on indirect rather than direct effects and also by considering the purposive rationality of human behaviour and thus going beyond causal explanations, research guided by the mediatization concept links the empirical approach with the theory of political systems. In another chapter, which was written for this book, Kepplinger also applies the mediatization concept and its implications for the rationality of the political system and the media. While both systems follow different rationalities, politicians may increasingly yield to the media's rationality and how they measure success, their temporal horizons, strategies, tactics and willingness to take risks. Depending on whether and to what extent politicians do adopt the success criteria of the media, Kepplinger envisages subs-

tantial functional losses on the part of the political system. He fears that political actors will neglect their task of generating long-term solutions for structural problems in the interest of short-term success.

There is no doubt that this is a fine compilation of papers by one of Germany's foremost political communication scholars. However, the book presents a collection of previously published and (in part severely) abridged articles that the interested researcher has read before and in full. There is no subtitle that reveals the nature of the book as an anthology, and even though the blurb promises chapters that have been written for this publication, the book includes just one original piece. So, altogether, the book is a bit of a disappointing package and, unfortunately, the author does nothing to tie the pieces together, for instance in an extended introduction or with a summarizing chapter at the end. After an academic career that spans several decades and almost 30 years of political communication research, one would expect the author to feel challenged not only to reissue his already published articles but rather to add an overarching synthesis of his work.

Finally, the reader would have been better served if the articles had been provided with alphabetically arranged bibliographies and not only lists of endnotes where entries, if repeated, are abbreviated and the reader has to go back and search for the first full entry.