

3. Theories & Perspectives

Lesson 02: Communication on an individual Level

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Where are we?

Episode 1.1: Social & Cultural Sciences & Paradigms

Episode 1.2: Communication on an individual level

Episode 1.3: Communication on an organizational level

Episode 1.4: Communication on a social level, communication as culture



Learning outcomes

Learning outcome 1:

Describe the diverse nature of contemporary practices of sustainability communication on an individual, organizational and societal level, the relationship of strategic communication practices to other public communication practices, the role of stakeholders and publics and the communication practitioners in and outside of organizations (corporate, NGO, political and educational institutions etc.)

Learning outcome 2:

Develop comprehensive and well-founded knowledge in sustainability communication as field of study, an understanding of how other disciplines relate to the field and an international perspective on the field.

Learning outcome 3:

Understand the key elements of communication theories, strategies and tactics, and, thus, the character and operationalization of best practice sustainability communication planning frameworks.

Learning outcome 4:

Advance your understanding of social and civic responsibility and develop an appreciation of the philosophical and social context of sustainability communication. Advance your knowledge and respect of ethics and ethical standards in relation to communication of, about and for sustainability.

Learning outcome 5:

Anticipate and Interpret current issues and challenges of a world in transformation and social change. Develop a deep understanding of and skills to create change, develop advocacy, leadership and authorship in and for sustainability communication.



Recap



Paradigms

- **Pragmatic** (communication as structure; information, education, instrumental sense of communication, functionalist/structural perspective, description of reality)
- **Constitutive** (communication as process; symbolic action, social constructivism, sense making, define sth as problem, creates attention, evokes values, orientation, activates/stimulates engagement, exploration)





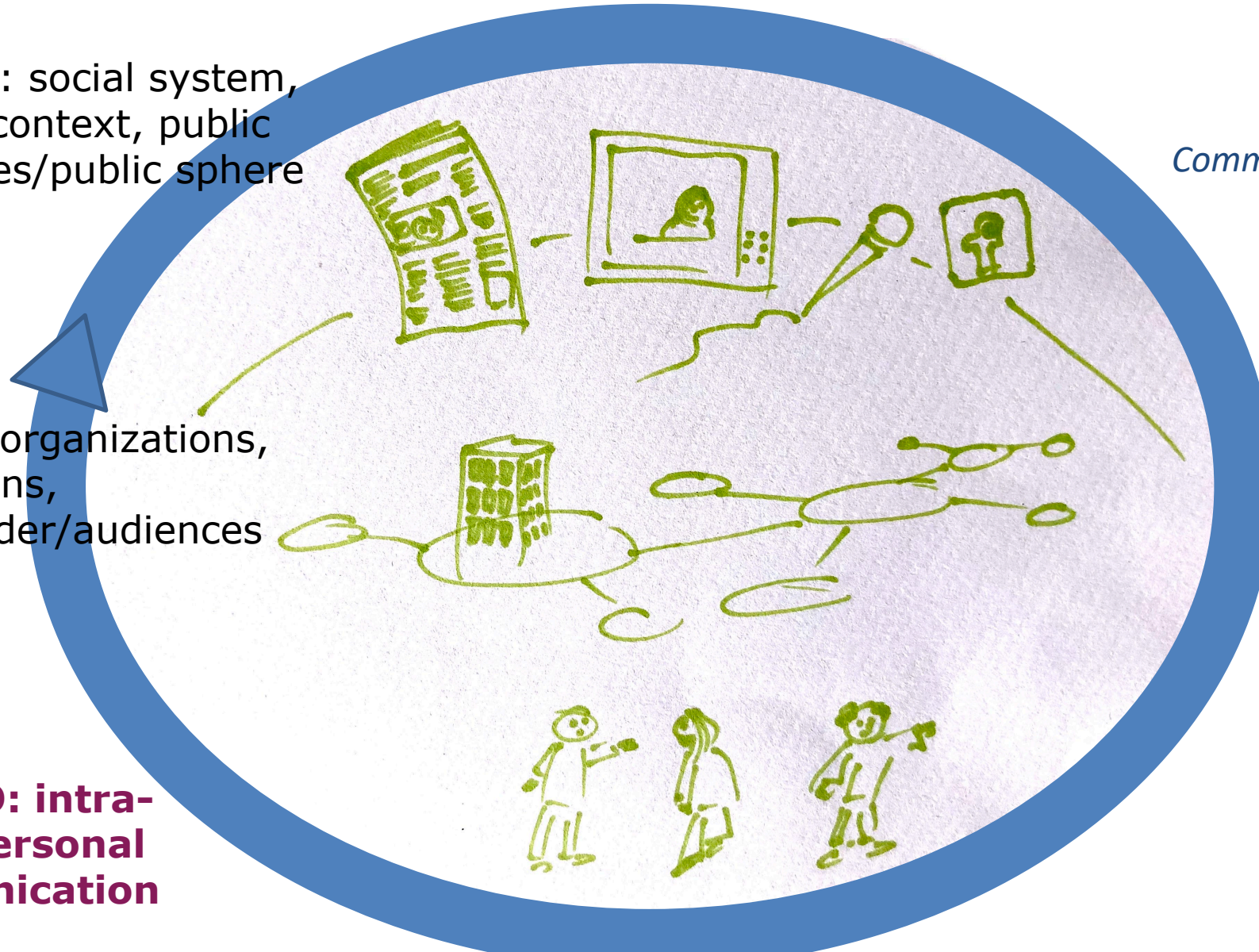
Recap

_MACRO: social system,
cultural context, public
discourses/public sphere

Communication

_MESO: organizations,
institutions,
stakeholder/audiences

**_MICRO: intra-
/interpersonal
communication**





Overview

- A. Interpersonal communication
- B. Communicators



A. Interpersonal communication

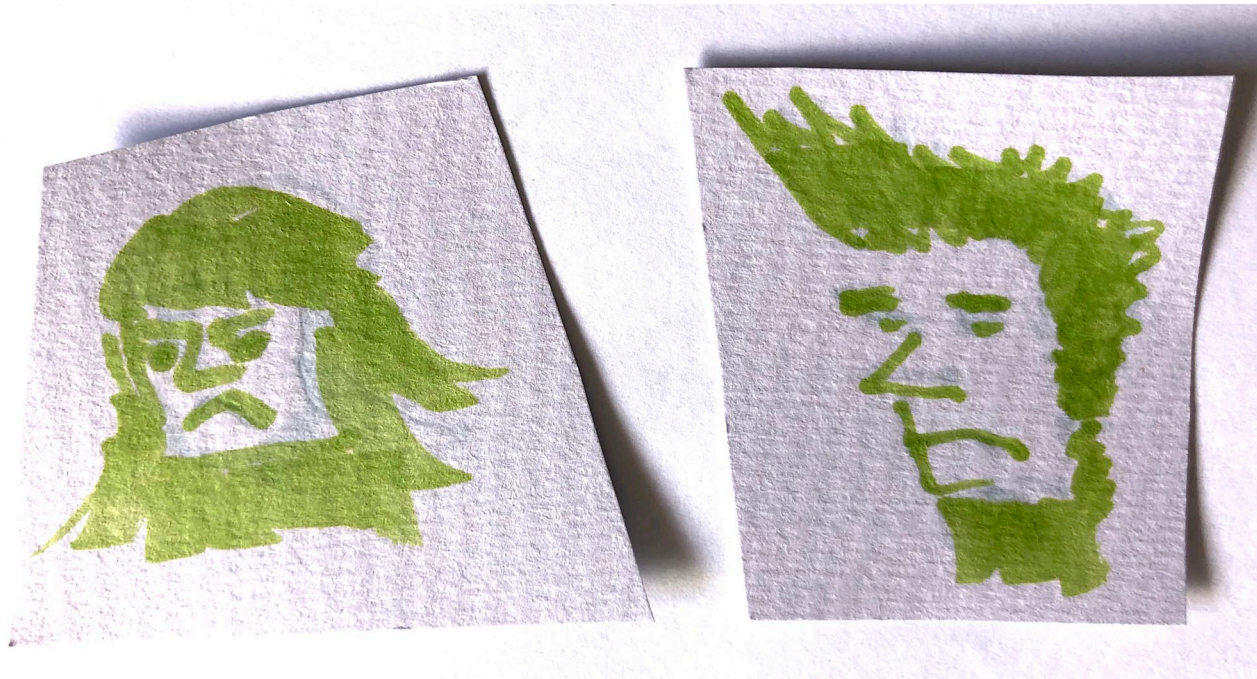
Interpersonal communication is

- an interaction between two or more people
- a process of...
 - understanding
 - exchange
 - participation
 - relationship
 - social practice
 - social behavior
 - interaction



A. Interpersonal communication

_verbal & nonverbal

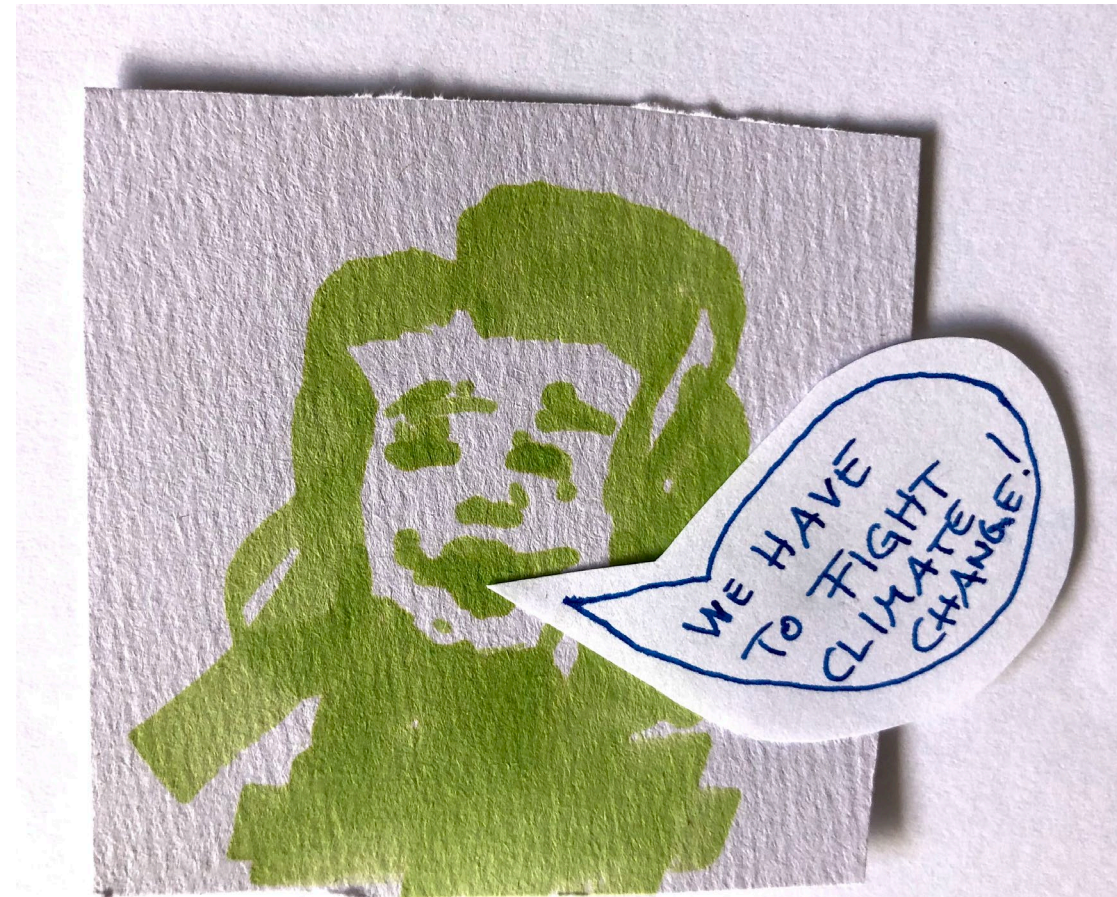




A. Interpersonal communication



_formal & informal





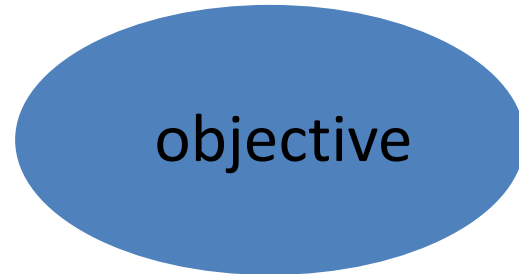
A. Interpersonal communication

Questions:

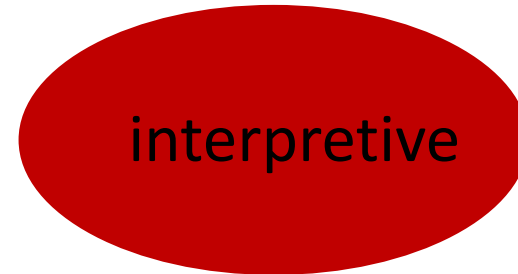
- how humans adjust and adapt their verbal / nonverbal communication in face-to-face interactions
- How are messages produced and transmitted
- How does uncertainty influence behaviour and information-management strategies
- How is communication changed, distorted, varied
- Relationships and dialogues and
- mediated social interactions



A. Interpersonal communication



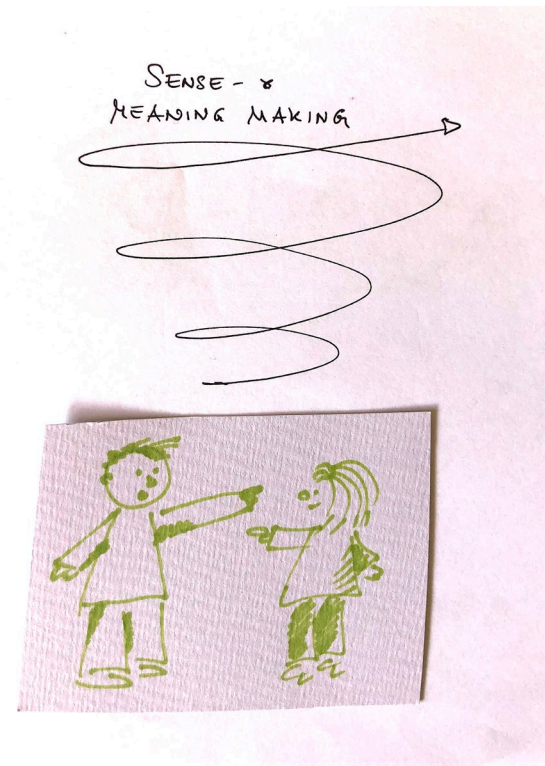
pragmatic



constitutive



A. Interpersonal communication



_"the ongoing retrospective development of plausible images that rationalize what people are doing" (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005, p. 409).



A. Interpersonal communication





B. Communicator

... a person who communicates, especially one skilled at conveying information, ideas, or policy to the public.

In other words:

- Speaker
- Public speaker
- Conversationist

Professional communicators

make information available as well as evidence to inform the public about issues that matter to them - in the most neutral way possible



B. Communicator

- Wide range of „roles“ in communication practice: creative artists, writers, editors, journalists, bloggers, influencers, activists, educators, social advocates, politicians, businessmen and businesswomen, preachers, scientists, journalists, PR & marketing professionals, consultants
- Common ground of „professional communicators“: desire and drive to send and receive messages and make an impact on a certain audience; to serve the general public and the public of their choices
- Operate with a wide variety of mediums and media and communication techniques & tools
- Competences: along their delivery of roles and functions; listening, reading, writing, and speaking skills



B. Communicator

„The Journalist“

- Information function
- Social functions: orientation, socialization, integration
- Economic function: circulation, regeneration, issue management
- Political functions: creation of the public sphere, articulation, education, critique, control



B. Communicator

„The Marketing professional“

- Market segmentation & evaluation; market research
- Marketing goals
- Planning of new products/services; innovation management
- Planning, strategies of marketing
- Composing the marketing mix
- Customer relationship, sales & distribution structures
- Controlling, evaluation



B. Communicator

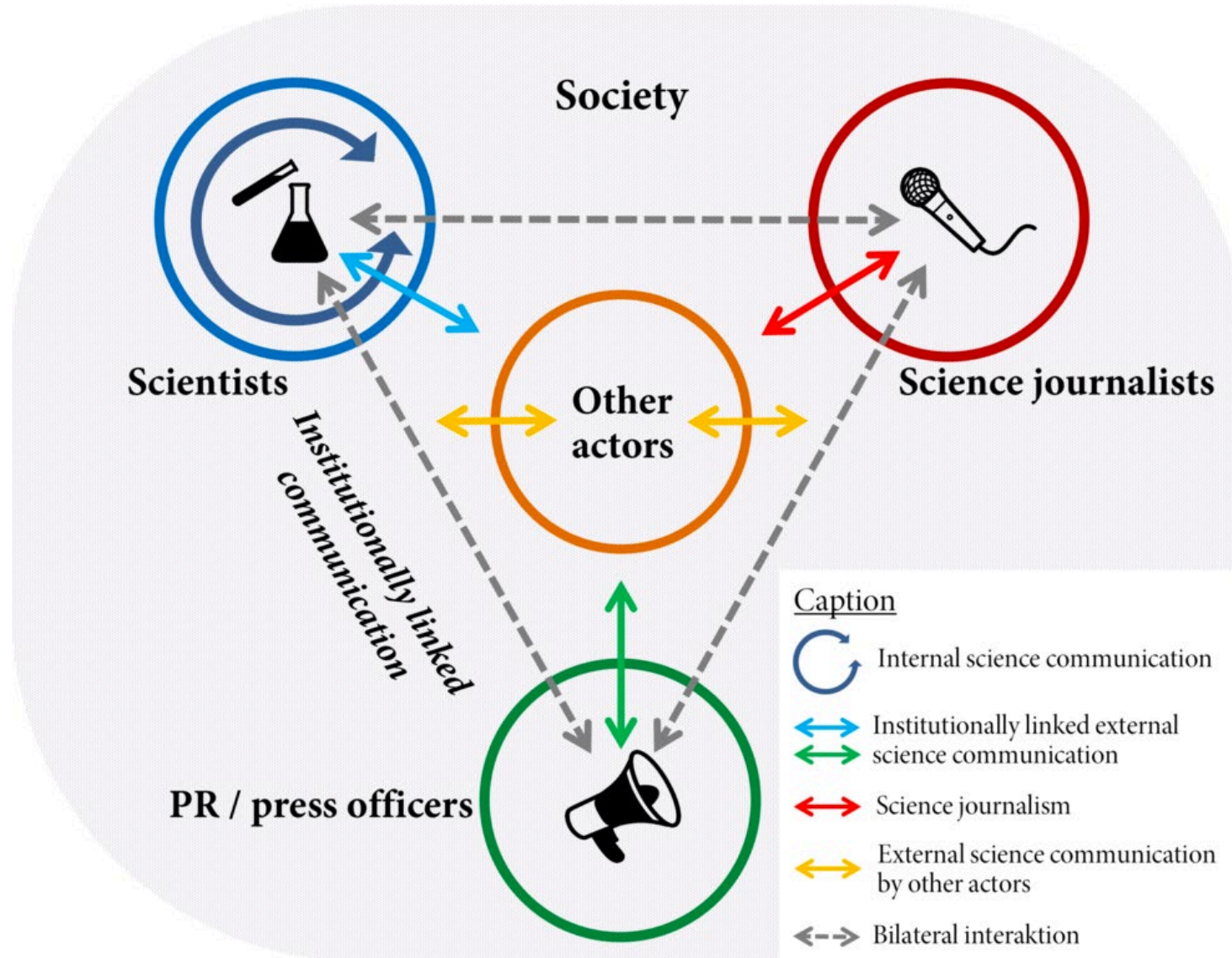
„The PR professional“

- Information
- Contact, networking
- Image building
- Harmonization, balance
- Stabilization
- Coherence, continuity
- Social function



B. Communicator

Schematic Overview of the field and the actors of science communication according to Carsten Könneker
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B. Communicator

„The Scientist/science communicator“

- Information
- Education
- Raising awareness of science-related topics,
- Increasing the sense of „wonder“ about scientific discoveries and arguments
- Advising policy makers about scientific issues,
- Building/creating scientific exhibits and curating of exhibitions



B. Communicator

„The Environmentalist/campaigner“

- Information
- Research
- Education
- Lobbying
- Advising policy makers
- Fundraising
- Campaigning



B. Communicator

“Participatory” communicator roles

- Citizen journalists
- Blogger (Vlogger, Instagramer etc.)
- Influencer



B. Communicator

And what about you?



B. Communicator

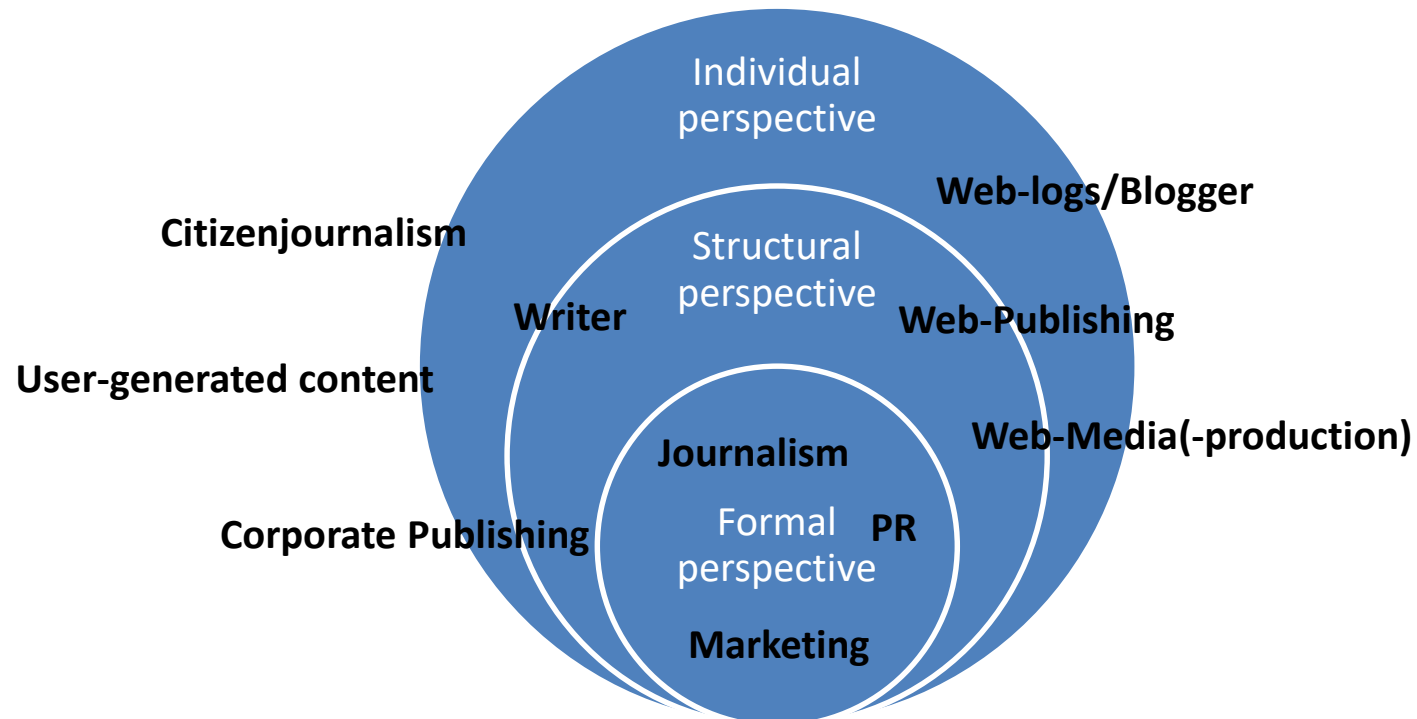
Challenge: New communicators

- Social media influencers (vloggers, bloggers, instagramers, youtubers), not only promoting products & brands, also communicate their political opinions to a large network of followers (Allgaier, 2020; Zimmermann et al., 2020)
- Availability of social networking sites makes it easier to voice opinions outside the political establishment
- New: „Digital opinion leaders“ (Schmuck, 2021), powerful impact on attitudes & behavior of followers



B. Communicator

- Communicator - What does it mean today?
- Related to the **role** (salary, degree of institutionalization)





B. Communicator

- Communicator - What does it mean?
- Related to the role (salary, degree of institutionalization)
- Related to the **understanding** of the role (ethics)...



B. Communicator

Sustainability Communicator

- Sustainability Communication as “ethical duty” (Cox, 2008)
- “knowledge & learning is not utterly dominated by abstract theoretical notions but where it is material, interconnecting, affecting & urgent”
- Sustainability Communication as “field” das “challenges conventional academic & cultural norms”
- We are ACTORS & POTENTIAL CHANGE AGENTS (empowering agents of change, Hooks, 1994; O’Sullivan, 2002; Kahn, 2008; Milstein, 2012)



Outlook

Challenges in Sustainability Communication from a communicator perspective

- Mediatization, Digitalization
- Role shifts & conflicts: Freelance journalists working in public relations
- Professionalized communicators needed (with journalism skills, training and backgrounds)
- Changes in the media industries - networked society, shifting dynamics, new forms of content production and distribution, new economic models
- Ethics / idealism
- Communication *for* sustainability & transformation: Individual vs. Organizations



Reflection

1. Think about professional communicators
 1. Who are new communicator roles?
 2. How easy / hard is it to communicate about climate change?
 3. How easy / hard is it to communicate about sustainability?
2. Think about you, yourself: where do you communicate? What do you communicate about? And what happens with your communication / messages?