

7 Communication about Sustainability

Lesson 01: Key Concepts of Communication

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Where are we?

Episode 7.1: Key concepts of communication

Episode 7.2: The „public“ & public discourses

Episode 7.3: Sustainability issues & crises

Episode 7.4: Sustainable Consumption



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.



Overview

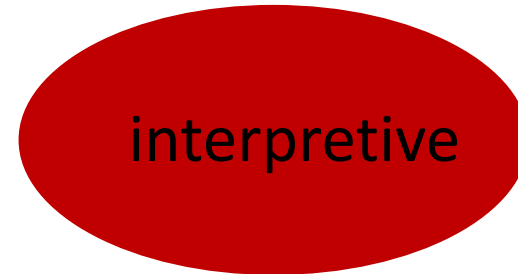
- A. Key concepts of „Communication *about* Sustainability“
- B. Subsystems & Communicators
- C. Function, effectiveness and key narratives



A. Key concepts of communication



pragmatic



constitutive



A. Key concepts of communication



Paradigms

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

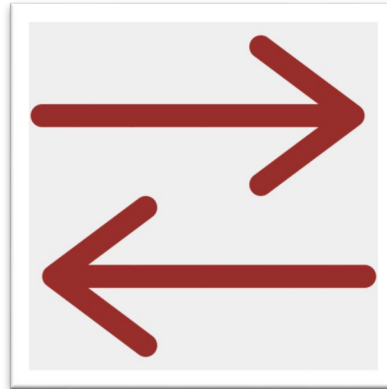




A. Key concepts of communication



COMMUNICATION *OF*
SUSTAINABILITY



COMMUNICATION
ABOUT CSR



COMMUNICATION *FOR*
TRANSFORMATION!

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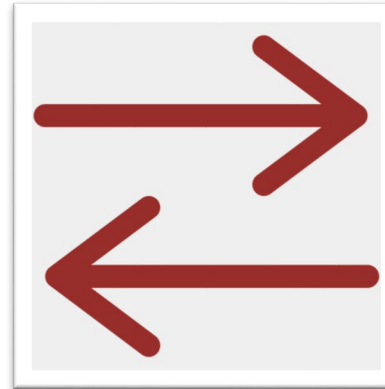
A. Key concepts of communication



COMMUNICATION *OF* SUSTAINABILITY

**Direction / mode of
communication:**

One-directional, transmissive,
sender-receiver, one to many



COMMUNICATION *ABOUT* CSR

**Direction / mode of
communication:**

Deliberative, horizontal,
many to many



COMMUNICATION *FOR* TRANSFORMATION!

**Direction / mode of
communication:**

Participative, self-
organized, many to one

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A. Key concepts of communication



COMMUNICATION *OF* SUSTAINABILITY

Function:
Transmission, information and
knowledge transfer towards
an objective



COMMUNICATION *ABOUT* CSR

Function:
Deliberation, production of
intersubjective/shared
concepts, frames



COMMUNICATION *FOR* TRANSFORMATION!

Function:
Participative, sense- and
meaning-making, social
change, cultivation



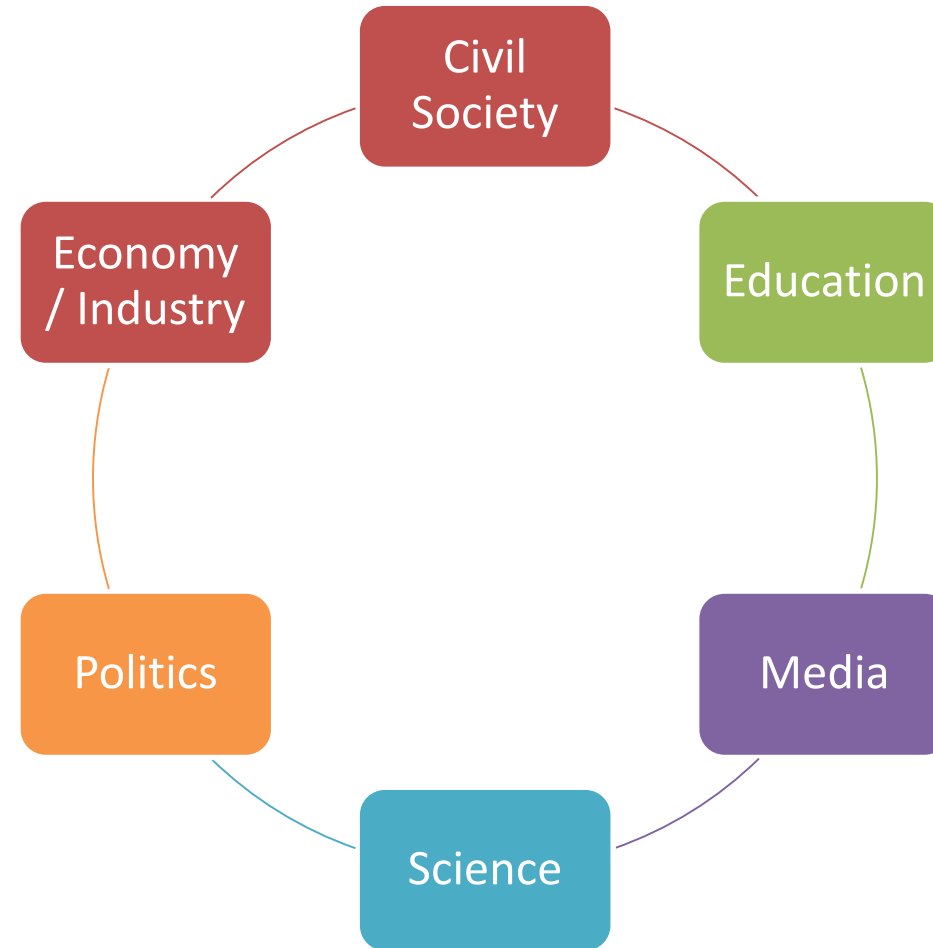
A. Key concepts of communication

Communication *about* Sustainability

- Culture oriented
- Quality of public discourses, social deliberation
- Meeting the uncertainty challenge by producing socially robust knowledge
- Meeting the ambivalence challenge by producing shared visions on sustainability
- Meeting the implementation challenge by producing better accepted decisions



B. Subsystems & Communicators





B. Subsystems & Communicators

Discourses on SD
in alternative
media,
assemblies, social
networks

Civil
Society

Engagement
with different
interpretations
of SD

Education

Talks shows,
commentary,
online-
discussions, letter
to the editor

Media

Scientific
discourse on
theories &
concepts of SD

Science

Raising public
awareness &
initializing
communication (gov,
bureaucracies)

Politics

Workshops,
conferences, on
SD, CSR

Economy /
Industry



C. Function, effectiveness and key narratives

- Discourse oriented
- quality of discourse
- compatibility of concept of sustainability



C. Function, effectiveness and key narratives

Communication of Sustainability

- S. as alternative within capitalism, conservation, compensation, sustainable growth

Communication about Sustainability

- S. as alternative to capitalism, abandonment, abstention, degrowth, restrictions

Communication for Sustainability

- S. as revolution, restoration and regenerative practices; new ecological identities, cultural change, innovation



Reflection

- Try to briefly characterize communication *about* sustainability from
- What are the main differences between communication *of* and communication *about* sustainability?
- Try to reflect again on sustainability and sustainable development and the role of communication structures and processes in general.