

English Abstracts



Almost an Upset

by Gianfranco Pasquino

Berlusconi does best what he likes most. Because they offer him the possibility to get in contact with the real and the virtual people, electoral campaigns and television appearances in which he can show off his protagonist behaviour make him substantially happy. Governing through compromises; brokering among political partners; being questioned by those who ought to credit him for their political success are all phenomena that annoy him utterly. His 2006 electoral campaign started in a situation of clear disadvantage. It ended in a quasi tie. The key word is almost an upset. This short article attempts to explain how and why.

An “Audience Democracy”?

by Ilvo Diamanti

Berlusconi was able to close the gap in a situation apparently compromised, with a throbbing and alarmist campaign, which fed the preoccupation and the fears of the apathetic and disappointed voter. Berlusconi used the polls as electoral tools, in order to contrast the conviction that the competition was lost, to mobilize his allies and shake his voters. Hence, the campaign has been “dramatized” to wake up the apathetic and disappointed voter. Nevertheless, the “audience democracy” paradigm works only in part, as the connection between voters, territory and parties still plays a leading role.

Reflections on Berlusconi’s “Long Campaign”

by Carlo A. Marletti

“Long campaign” and “permanent campaign” are not synonymous terms. The permanent campaign is the “electoralization” of the period between two elections, the blurring of the boundaries between the legislatures, the multiplication of the elections and their growing mediatization. Within this context, the lengthening of the times of the very campaigning period is a dependent variable, with a voluntaristic and subjective character, which interacts with the structural trends. An opinion climate can’t be switched very easily in a few months; nevertheless, Berlusconi was able to interpret it in his own favour, riding it as a surfer without being overwhelmed by it.

Agenda Setting, Personalisation and Opinion Climate in the 2004-2006 Campaign

by Paolo Mancini, Rolando Marini

This article propose the main results of an agenda setting survey, carried out on a long term perspective, and more exactly during the two years before the vote of April 2006. The aim of this survey is to verify the influence both of the media and of the opinion climate on the public's priorities and therefore on the cognitive process of vote decision..

At the beginning an overview of the principle theoretical problems is given, more precisely about the possible connections among media agenda influence and the dynamics of the opinion climate and those of the permanent campaign.

Then, the media's and the public's agenda are reconstructed and analyzed. Their priority structure allow us to hypothesize that during the observed period an opinion climate has developed, which was characterized by uncertainty and a worried perception of all matters concerning the national economy. In the last month, though, the growing polarization of the contest (with a high level of personalization) redefined the priorities of the centre-left and the centre-right electorates, that tend to significantly differentiate.

High Noon. The Prodi-Berlusconi Face-to-Face as Media Event of the Tv Campaign

by Marinella Belluati

The two Prodi-Berlusconi television debates have been the most important media event in this electoral campaign, at least if we consider the tv audience and the relevance on the media. In a political climate in which the conflictuality has been high, the debates between the leaders have represented, symbolically, a moment of synthesis for the public opinion.

With the help of the research and of other theoretical contributions about political debates, we have reflected about the impact of this media event on the media and on the opinion climate. The connexion between the latter and the voting is not easy to prove, although many signs show that the two debates have influenced the electoral climate.

Even the determination of the debates' winner has not been easy, as the effect of an immediate success can be modified in the long term. Although Berlusconi has lost the elections, he had won in all the debates in term of both performance and ability to control the effects.

"Who Wins and Who Loses". A Way to Influence the Opinion Climate

by Marco Mazzoni

The article deals with different methodologies to set up an opinion-driven climate by mass media during the campaign for 2006 political elections. In particular, the image of winner and loser built through the mass media is analyzed. The paper

tries to link this image to the perception of the voters through data coming from surveys. Results show that the opinion-driven climate, in favour with specific candidates or parties instead of others, puts voters under pressure and, finally, can even affect the final election result. In short, the April 2006 electoral campaign can be defined as *climate oriented*.

The 2006 Campaign On Line: The Audience, the Web Sites, and the Agenda

by Cristian Vaccari

The article analyzes the impact of the internet in the 2006 Italian elections with respect to three aspects: the dimensions and the characteristics of the audience of on line politics, the quality of parties' web sites, and the issue agenda of such sites. The analysis shows that the audience for political web sites is still small, but not negligible, and that it is more diversified and cross-cutting than is often acknowledged. However, most Italian parties still do not take full advantage of on line political communication tools, although some notable exceptions exist. As for the contents of political web sites, policy issues are discussed quite extensively on line, but parties' agenda on the web mirrors the one set in other media, which is a further sign that political actors do not yet see the internet as a tool with which to actively affect the political debate.

The Living Room and the Stage: The Political Conflict in *Porta a Porta*

by Fausto Colombo, Patrizia Catellani

The paper analyses an episode of the "Porta a Porta" talk show, opposing past Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi to trade unionist Luigi Angeletti and industrialist Diego Della Valle. Communicative conflicts between interlocutors, deriving from the violation of negotiated rules, are investigated, taking into account the distinction between an *ad rem* conflict and an *ad personam* conflict. The peculiar communicative triangle the politician is involved in when participating in a talk show is focussed on: on the one hand, the guests' living room with its rules; on the other hand, the requirements of the television stage with its public. The effects of the communicative conflicts on the television language are also analysed. The viewing figures and the television editing of the programme are taken into account, and some hypotheses on how these two dimensions are correlated with the communicative conflicts arising in the programme are put forward.