

Maarek, P. J. (ed.) (2022). Manufacturing government communication on Covid-19: A comparative perspective. Cham: Springer International Publishing. 395 pp.

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The volume edited by Philippe J. Maarek represents an insightful thematic contribution to political communication regarding Covid-19, including crisis communication, and science communication to a lesser extent. The book, besides its introduction, is divided into five sections, and unites scholars from 18 parts of the world, each focusing on their country or region using a comparative perspective. It distinguishes itself by an impressive variety of contributions, notably in geographical terms, that put into perspective Covid-related political responses and communication strategies – as both go together – covering Israel, South Korea, Brazil, the USA, China, Japan, the EU, and a dozen EU countries. By bringing together such a variety of analyses, the book widens the field of possibilities regarding the study of political communication in past, present, and future crises. Most studies were conducted between the first months of the pandemic and the beginning of 2022. The benefit of hindsight allowed the authors to contextualize the pandemic as a whole or to cover specific parts of the crisis. These contextualizations also include the technical and digital aspects of communication. Such in-depth contextualization constitutes a real added value for the reader, and does not neglect to address the diachronic dimension, which manifests itself through the multiple phases of the crisis.

In his introduction, Maarek highlights patterns of (dis)similarities of governmental communication, from relying on experts to leadership rhetoric and the employment of warlike metaphors. Following this introduction, the volume opens with five chapters dedicated to cases in which the leading strategy was based on centralized and vertical communication. The chapters put into perspective the need for factual and comprehensive communication –promoting solidarity, for instance, alongside the fight against disinformation. Subsequently, the distinctive phases of a crisis, in which governmental communication, the cooperation of citizens, and media perceptions play distinct and evolving roles, are discussed. The reader is introduced to the discrepancy between the primacy of experts in decision-making and communication processes, on the one hand, and the prominence of a more business-as-usual model where politicians keep the upper hand, on the other. This discrepancy is discussed throughout the volume.

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