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Theory of Information and Communication

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1.4 Information Policies

What is an information policy?

Politics is defined in different ways: as the exercise of power, the exercise of authority, the making of collective decisions, the allocation of scarce resources, the practice of deception and manipulation, and so on. (Heywood, 1997)

In this course, we refer to politics as a set of principles and strategies that guide a course of action to achieve a specific goal. These policies can be developed at the organizational or institutional level (micro-politics) and the national, regional, or international level (macro-politics).

Policies materialize into what we know as policy instruments, which can take various forms. These include legal instruments, such as constitutions, laws, and regulations; professional instruments, such as codes of conduct and ethics; and cultural instruments, encompassing customs, beliefs, traditions, and social values.

In summary, politics encompasses a complex set of actions, decisions, and regulations that influence the organization and operation of different entities, whether at the local, national, or international level. Understanding and analyzing them is fundamental to understanding how societies are structured and operate in various areas.

When we refer to information policies, we speak of a framework or fundamental guideline to align the general objectives of a specific context with the efficient management of information. These policies establish principles and priorities related to the use, management, and technology of information, cost-effectiveness criteria and human resource management. Furthermore, these policies are dynamic and serve as a basis for developing organizational information strategies, facilitating effective decision-making, promoting internal and external communication, and allowing constant feedback to improve the policies of the context they represent. Information policies are closely related to a country's general policies, public policies on education and culture, and historical and social realities. In addition to information policies, information technologies and networks present new ingredients that converge in a new landscape of information use (Morales, 1999).

According to the Royal Spanish Academy Dictionary, politics is defined as the guidelines that guide the actions of a person or entity in a specific area. In the case of an information policy, these guidelines regulate citizens' access to information. Following theorists like Montiiloff, a policy of this type consists of principles and strategies that direct actions to achieve specific objectives. In the context of information, these policies offer guidelines for developing resources, services, and information systems. Although initially focused on revaluing the use of information, they must now interact closely with policies in related fields such as computing and telecommunications.

Information policy comprises laws, regulations, doctrinal positions, and other decision-making and practices with society-wide constitutive effects involving information creation, processing, flows, access, and use. (Bramman, S, 2011).

Caridad, Mendez, and Rodríguez (2000) comment that the central role of an information policy lies in providing the necessary legal and institutional framework to facilitate the formal exchange of information. From this perspective, an information policy addresses political and bureaucratic objectives arising from the government structure or state apparatus. Therefore, its formulation, implementation, and development must be accompanied by the production of various legal instruments or documents. These authors also define the evolution of an information policy, identifying two key phases:

> 1. Initiation of a course of action: This initial stage generally involves enacting a document establishing the policy's guidelines, objectives, and approaches.
> 2. Legitimation or institutionalization of the course of action: In this phase, specific projects or actions are carried out to implement the proposed information policy.

Undoubtedly, information policies are essential to ensure that information is managed effectively and aligned with the goals of the organization, government, or country. They serve as a guide for the development of strategies, the allocation of resources, and the promotion of communication, both internally and externally, thus contributing to the success and operational efficiency of the organization.

The Origins of Information Policies in the U.S. and the European Union

Articulating or simply discussing information policies gained worldwide prominence, especially since the Clinton-Gore administration in the United States launched its proposal for the National Information Infrastructure (NII) in 1993. This project aimed to create a national information network connecting all American citizens, businesses, educational institutions, and organizations to promote equitable access to information and stimulate economic growth.

The NII was conceived as an initiative to drive the information society, recognizing the importance of information technology and communications in socio-economic development. It proposed establishing an advanced communications infrastructure, including fiber optic networks and high-speed communication systems, to facilitate data exchange and promote technological innovation.

The concept of "information highways" emerged as a metaphor to describe this vision of a national information network. It echoes the construction of interstate highways in the 1950s, which transformed mobility and the economy in the United States. Just as physical highways connected cities and regions, information highways aimed to connect people digitally, providing fast and efficient online access to information and resources.

This event marked a significant milestone in information policy history by recognizing information infrastructure's strategic importance for economic and social development. The NII sought to establish a framework to facilitate equitable access to information and promote technological innovation in the country. Since then, interest in information policies has increased considerably worldwide. This is partly due to the growing recognition that access to information is a fundamental right that drives progress and equality. Technological advancement has radically transformed how information is produced, distributed, and consumed, generating the need for new regulations and strategies to manage this change.

In this context, information policies have become a key area of focus for governments, international organizations, and civil society. These policies ensure equitable access to information and foster innovation, protect privacy, and promote transparency.

In the European Union (EU) context, information policies are closely linked to the economic and technological development of the continent. During his presidency of the European Commission, Jacques Delors played a fundamental role in promoting European economic integration, which included initiatives to foster information exchange among member countries. His report laid the groundwork for the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) and addressed the need to coordinate and harmonize information policies across the EU to facilitate economic convergence.

The Bangemann Report, on the other hand, emphasized the importance of information and communication technologies (ICT) in European competitiveness. It proposed specific measures to promote investment in digital infrastructure and universal access to digital services, driving the development of information policies focused on innovation and equitable access to technology across Europe.

Additionally, European Regional Development Funds (ERDF) have played a crucial role in funding projects to improve digital infrastructure and promote innovation in less-developed regions of the EU. These funds have strengthened regional information policies, facilitating connectivity and access to information in areas that might need to catch up in the digital context.

The Lisbon Strategy, adopted by the EU in 2000, highlighted the importance of innovation and technology for sustainable economic growth. This strategy set ambitious goals to promote research and development and improve education and training in the field of information and technology. Together, these initiatives have contributed to

developing information policies to promote economic growth, digital inclusion, and competitiveness across the European Union.

European Digital Agenda. Covid-19: European Recovery Plans. Spain: Digital Agenda. Recovery Plan

The European Digital Agenda is an initiative of the EU to drive digital transformation in Europe. Adopted in 2010, this agenda sets out a series of objectives and measures to promote digitalization in areas such as broadband infrastructure, interoperability of digital services, cybersecurity, and digital inclusion. It aims to enhance Europe's competitiveness in the global economy and ensure that all European citizens benefit from the opportunities offered by the digital age.

The EU has implemented recovery plans to accelerate European digitalization in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and its economic impacts. These plans, part of the EU's Recovery and Resilience Instrument, are designed to boost investment in digital technologies such as artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, and cybersecurity to stimulate economic growth and job creation on the continent. Some of the information policies developed include:

- Boosting digital connectivity: Funds have been allocated to improve broadband infrastructure and expand internet access in urban and rural areas, ensuring that all citizens can access essential digital services such as online education and telemedicine.

- Promoting digital transformation: Digitalization programs for businesses and public administrations have been promoted, aiming to facilitate remote work, digitalization of processes, and adoption of innovative technological solutions for crisis management.

- Strengthening cybersecurity: Given the increased online activity during the pandemic, measures have been implemented to protect critical infrastructure and sensitive data from potential cyberattacks.

- Supporting digital research and innovation: Funding programs have been launched for research projects in artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and digital health to develop innovative solutions to combat the pandemic and prepare for future crises.

- Promoting international collaboration: Platforms for cooperation and information exchange have been established among EU member states and with international partners to share best practices, epidemiological data, and technological solutions to address the pandemic in a coordinated manner.

In Spain's specific case, the country has developed its own Digital Agenda and Recovery Plan aligned with the EU's objectives and priorities. These initiatives seek to modernize the country's digital infrastructure, promote the adoption of digital technologies in key sectors such as education, health, and public administration, and foster innovation and entrepreneurship in the digital field. The goal is to drive Spain's economic recovery and improve its competitiveness in the European and international context through digital transformation.

Sustainable Development Goals (Agenda 2030) and information policies

The United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development sets forth ambitious goals to address the most urgent global challenges, from poverty eradication to climate action and the promotion of gender equality. In this context, information policies play a fundamental role by providing the framework to collect, analyze, and share relevant data to guide informed decision-making.

Implementing the 2030 Agenda requires equitable access to information and the ability to use it effectively to monitor progress, identify priority intervention areas, and assess the impact of policies and programs. Information

policies ensure transparency, accountability, and citizen participation in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Information policies are vital in promoting innovation and technology and facilitating the exchange of knowledge and best practices among countries and communities. More effective and efficient solutions can be identified by strengthening data infrastructure and analytical capacity to address our world's complex challenges.

Within the Agenda 2030, critical goals related to objectives 1, 3, 8, 11, and 16 seek to ensure universal access to public services in legal and sexual, reproductive health, and support entrepreneurship, creativity, and innovation. In this context, implementing open government digital platforms and global statistical systems is presented as an inclusive solution that empowers citizens to participate actively in their development. These platforms also promote the collaboration of private entities directly or indirectly linked to the provision of public services, thus promoting a comprehensive approach to achieving the goals of the Agenda 2030.

Information policies are involved within government platforms, as there is no Open Government if the data being handled is not freely accessible, structured, in reusable formats, and in spaces where citizens can comment, discuss, and evaluate. However, the mere creation of the platform does not guarantee this access; solid norms and practices are needed to ensure proper management and use of the information.

Citizen observatories are used to monitor the implementation of public policies and open government platforms. In them, information policies are crucial to establishing hierarchies and the flow of information within governments and their administrations. This is an elemental fact where information policies stand out in decision-making, as citizen language allows for feedback on the normative framework of the Agenda, especially in gender, food, and health issues.

The academic context is also integrated into the Agenda. Goal 4 focuses on quality education, while Goal 9 focuses on innovation and research. Their goals address two common elements:
- Free, equitable access.
- Availability of scientific research to foster innovation.
- The number of people researching with quality.

These goals challenge academic communities that must modify their education and publishing systems to the Open philosophy. To provide universal access to education, the instrumental bases of OC must participate in the design and development of MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) as systems to enable inclusive and open education at the primary, pre-university, and university levels. MOOCs allow online courses aimed at many participants through the Internet, according to the principle of Open Education.

When using these platforms, student communities and teacher audiences need information policies to achieve accessibility and effective resource use. Internet-based courses must adapt to each cultural context to be inclusive, especially if the Agenda targets underprivileged audiences. From this idea, linguistic relational models are key to the development of platforms, as they optimize information retrieval and eliminate ambiguities to achieve maximum coherence possible in education topics.