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David Knoke , Mario Diani , James Hollway , Dimitris Christopoulos
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Politics, Communities, and Power

To paraphrase Harold Lasswell, politics is about the power to decide who gets what, when, and how. Power summarizes the ways in which political actors compete in political arenas, fields, or spaces to impose their preferences on the distribution of political spoils. The field of political networks has grown, applying theories and methods from social networks to political contestation in a range of fields. Political actors are creative and resourceful and coordinate their actions. They create and join collectives to change the balance of power and create and relate concepts to change each other's preferences. That is, the fields, arenas, or social spaces in which political contestation takes place are never unidimensional but contain multiple types of actors and relations. Political actors turn to or create new categories of cooperation or contestation in their efforts to build resources or flank those with whom they disagree. This volume reviews, synthesizes, and promotes developments in multimodal political networks to better understand politics.

Multimodal political networks consist of two or more types of nodes (known as modes) and the relations connecting them. For instance, citizens (one mode) support protest movements (a second mode), which sponsor protest events (a third mode), in which citizens participate. Citizens, movements, and events are different types of entities, related by different forms of ties: support, sponsorship, participation. A focus on only one of these entity modes, say protest events, is myopic and potentially distorts our understanding of politics, which regularly involves relations between (and within) multiple modes.

Two broad categories of social entities are actors and objects. Political networks usually start with actors. Actors have agency; that is, they have some capability to act and make choices among alternatives. Voters casting ballots for party candidates is a classic instance of political agency. Actors may be individual persons but can also be groups, teams, organizations, institutions, nations, and other collectivities. Relationships between individual and

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collective actors, such as voters' affiliations to political parties, are multimodal and common in political networks. Beyond individual and collective actors are objects. Political objects – such as texts, information, photos and videos, Web pages, funds, and physical resources – lack agency, but are created or employed by political actors for political purposes. For example, a voter may choose one candidate over another because of his or her record in the legislature or affiliation with certain ideas that are represented or are related to ideas to which the voter ascribes.

Complexity emerges because actors not only interact with one another, but also in communities that converge around certain sets of objects and in repudiation of others. Network analysis understands well that political relations are interdependent. But a multimodal political network analysis additionally recognizes that political actors may be or act dependent on the existence of nodes in other modes and their relationships to them. To examine politics without an appropriately full picture of the contexts of action leaves only a partial account of the meaning of actors' decisions. However, political network analysis has been relatively slow to fully adopt such an approach, despite the basic theoretical and methodological building blocks being present for decades.

Multimodal analyses of politics offer several advantages over conventional unimodal political networks. First, multimodal networks offer a richer way of graphically representing the complexity in a political arena. As in all types of network analysis, visualization plays a key role, drawing maps and topological representations of the social distances and proximities among heterogeneous entities. Multilevel and multilayer network visualization in the past had presented some additional challenges, which explains the dearth of layout algorithms for such networks in popular computer packages. Recent years have seen the gradual development of fundamental methods for visualizing such networks though, improving the amount of information that can be conveyed. Second, multimodal networks preserve all relational ties rather than erasing some information through "projections" that collapse data across modes. This feature enables multimodal methods to use as much information as possible for analytic purposes. For example, multimodal analysts can trace all paths of diffusion and contagion, through which information, ideologies, knowledge, innovations, and resources spread across political domains. Third, because network theories and network methods always advance hand-in-hand, multimodal political analyses facilitate opportunities for creative inquiry, generating and testing new analytic propositions and applications that paint a richer picture of the political world. And multimodal methods can also finally allow researchers to represent the more complex theories of real-world political interactions that previously necessitated some analytic simplification. Richer analyses and inferences promise the potential to forecast network outcomes – benefits and costs – and plausible future structural transformations, identify structural gaps or holes that impede the performances of entities, and suggest opportunities for improving systemic outcomes.

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Our main purpose is to draw the attention of political theorists and researchers to new conceptual, methodological, and substantive tools for extending political network research. We introduce multimodal network concepts, discuss how to measure and analyze them, and present a series of examples from across political science, political sociology, social movements, and international relations to illustrate how multimodal networks can help us to reveal insights into political structures and actions. In making these developments more accessible to political network analysts, we believe advances in knowledge are potentially immense. To that end, our concluding chapter sketches a handful of future projects in some detail. We hope that graduate students, instructors, and network analysts in political science, political sociology, public administration, and related fields will take up those and related challenges in their own multimodal political network projects.

In the next section, we quickly recount a history of political networks that highlights its breadth, points to new opportunities afforded by contemporary data resources, and its coevolution with methods development. The third section elaborates the relationship between political networks and power, as mentioned in the introduction, and discusses three literatures that conceptualize the challenge of drawing borders for political networks: arenas, fields, and social spaces. Politica nodes may be individuals or collective actors, or various kinds of objects. In the fourth section, we expand on the notion of community, which speaks to the first division, and a key component of political networks.

A SHORT HISTORY OF POLITICAL NETWORKS

The field of political networks has existed for nearly as long as social networks and, like social networks, has seen increasing attention and growth as a community in the last 30-odd years. Three contemporary developments are worth observing here.

First, political networks constitute a big tent and have been growing rapidly since David Knoke's *Political Networks: The Structural Perspective* (1990a). Researchers have applied social network analytic methods to a wide range of political dynamics and structures, including: the European Union (Van de Steeg et al. 2010; Marshall 2015), interest groups (Beyers and Braun 2014; Box-Steffensmeier and Christenson 2015; Heaney and Strickland 2018; James and Christopoulos 2018), intergovernmental organizations (Ingram et al. 2005; Hollway and Koskinen 2016b), policy diffusion (Garrett and Jansa 2015; Milewicz et al. 2018), political parties (Grossmann and Dominguez 2009), social movements (Diani 1995, 2015; Tremayne 2014), protest politics (Bearman and Everett 1993), terrorism, insurgency, and revolution (Zech and Gabbay 2016; Bruns et al. 2013; Walther and Christopoulos 2015), transnational policy analysis and think tanks (Stone 2015), urban, national and cross-border governance (Ponzini and Rossi 2010; Bang and Esmark 2009;

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Sohn, Christopoulos and Koskinen 2020), banking regulation (Christopoulos and Quaglia 2009; Chalmers and Young 2020); policymaking (Knoke et al. 1996; Christopoulos 2017; Ingold, Fisher and Christopoulos 2021), elite formation (Bearman 1993), local politics (Stokman and Zeggelink 1996), and virtual political communities (Kawawa-Beaudeu et al. 2016; Halberstam and Knight 2016; Chao et al. 2017). Moreover, many other disciplines now regularly study politics using networks, even as they pursue their distinctive foci; for example, scholars studying environmental governance (e.g., Bodin and Crona 2009; Lubell et al. 2014; Bodin 2017; Ceddia et al. 2017; Inguaggiato et al. 2019). This book does not aim to review all this literature (see Berardo, Fischer and Hamilton 2020). The field of political networks is by now too broad to be integrated and is already well promoted. Nor is our aim to propose an overarching theory of political networks, if such were even possible. Though cross-fertilization is certainly possible, different scales and kinds of politics demand different theories. Rather, this volume demonstrates that across all the areas of political networks that we have examined, a multimodal network approach can be applied to yield insights into political dynamics.

Second, a wealth of new, multimodal data is already being exploited by companies but that can also be used to gain new understandings of political processes. A wealth of multimodal data is available on political topics as we recognize the importance of digital data and content for contemporary political life. Computer scientists have been quick to highlight multimodal folksonomies, created by private "folk," on the Internet. A familiar example is Facebook users who "like," tag, and add comments to a wide range of posts, photos, videos, and other content uploaded on their friends' personal pages. The controversy surrounding Cambridge Analytica's influence on recent elections has highlighted the political salience of this information. Not just contemporary data are becoming more available. Various archives are being digitized, giving us new opportunities for insight into the past, and marked improvements in text digitization, recognition, and automatic coding provide researchers a wealth of new political objects to study.

Third, as they always have, network theory and methods co-evolve. Oddly though, recent advances in network methods for multimodal networks have not yet been picked up by scholars in any sustained way. For example, a family of community detection algorithms has been developed among mathematicians, physicists, and computer scientists for two-mode networks, and yet the analytic leverage this allows has rarely been utilized in political networks. While network pedagogy typically begins by analyzing unimodal networks – for good reasons, we think – it is too often satisfied to stay there, perhaps including only a brief mention of two-mode networks. This volume advances the idea that since political networks are multimodal, pedagogy in political networks must progress beyond unimodal analysis and also introduce methods for examining multimodal networks. Our purpose is therefore to highlight the additional opportunities multimodal political networks offer, especially to a new

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generation of political network researchers, by introducing intermediate and advanced methods for analyzing such networks and presenting vignettes that apply these methods empirically.

POWER

Power is often simplified as a one-dimensional "force" where one actor's will prevails despite the resistance of another or others (see Niccolò Machiavelli, Max Weber, and many others). A limitation of that conception of power is its inherent intangibility and abstractness: power can only be inferred from its observable effects. However, we know that in many cases power is latent and can exist without being exercised. Some powerful actors prefer to remain inscrutable. John Padgett and Christopher Ansell coined the term "robust action" to capture the essence of Cosimo de Medici in Renaissance Florence, whom they described as multivocal, sphinxlike, and a flexible opportunist (1993:1263).

Actors will also choose the strategic points at which to exercise their power, since it involves expending political capital. The European Commission, the European Union's executive body, is widely recognized as powerful, even when its power is not exercised (Thomson and Hosli 2006). Indeed, the Commission often makes its preferences known in draft regulations, engages in wide consultations, but is circumspect in overtly using its power to force its will on other actors. Yet, lobby groups, member state governments, other supranational institutions, and global actors invariably recognize the European Commission as a powerful actor because it can set the agenda and, thus, frame the preferences of others. We contend that the presence of latent power can be deduced by examining the structure of relations among political actors. Put differently, the way that political actors are patterned or connected into clusters or groups by their relations reveals to others the presence of both their apparent power and their latent power. Actors are therefore assumed to have the *potential* to exercise power on one another through recurrent exchanges of information, political support, debates about public policies, collective decision-making, and so on but are not a priori presumed to be powerful because of their relations, status, or position. Power relations can also be implied by association; in its simplest form, an indirect affiliation can be assumed among actors who jointly participate in multiple political events and activities. To paraphrase Woody Allen, ninety percent of political life is just showing up.

ARENAS AND FIELDS AS SETTINGS FOR MULTIPLE ENTITIES AND MULTIMODAL NETWORKS

Power contestation takes place in specific settings. A multiplicity of terms has been used to denote those settings or "social spaces" (Bourdieu 1985, 1989;

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Pattison and Robins 2004; Stark and Vedres 2006; Hollway et al. 2017). Among the most popular are "arenas" (Flam 1994: Chapter 1;) and "fields" (Martin 2003; Armstrong 2005; Bottero and Crossley 2011; Zietsma et al. 2017), though "architectures" (Biermann et al. 2009) and regime, institutional, or governance "complexes" (Raustiala and Victor 2004; Alter and Meunier 2009; Keohane and Victor 2011; Oberthür and Gehring 2011; Zelli and van Asselt 2013; Hollway and Koskinen 2016a) are also common terms within International Relations.

The notion of arena is often used in an inclusive way, to evoke systems of interactions in which actors adopt each other's orientations without assuming the development of strong shared norms or understandings. According to one definition:

> An arena is a bundle of rules and resources that allow or encourage certain kinds of interactions to proceed, with something at stake. Players within an arena monitor each other's actions, although that capacity is not always equally distributed. Like players, arenas vary in the degree to which they are institutionalized with bureaucratic rules and legal recognition as opposed to informal traditions and expectations. They also vary in the extent to which they are literal physical settings, like a courtroom or Tahrir Square. (Jasper et al. 2015:401)

The concept of field has been the subject of intense scrutiny and debate in social science (Martin 2003), which may be referred to in social psychology, most notably in Kurt Lewin's Gestalt theory (1951), Pierre Bourdieu's opus (1992), and the work of neo-institutionalist theorists such as Paul DiMaggio and Walter Powell (1983). These diverse approaches share nonetheless an ultimate vision of fields as sets of agents, sharing institutional patterns of behavior and understanding, while simultaneously competing to modify their positions. For example, in DiMaggio and Powell's classic formulation, an organizational field consists of "organizations that, in the aggregate, represent a recognized area of institutional life" (1983:64–65). In the case of civil society, the civic field may comprise all individuals and voluntary organizations engaged in the promotion of collective action and the production of collective goods (e.g., Diani 2015). A policymaking field is the set of actors relevant to a specific public policy issue (also called a policy domain by Laumann and Knoke 1987). In the arts, a field consists of all artists focusing on one particular activity, whether French painting (White and White 1965), American nonprofit theaters (DiMaggio 1986), or alternatively, practitioners spanning diverse artistic endeavors and genres (Bourdieu 1993). Actors having agency within a field are capable of identifying each other as mutually relevant, share some understandings regarding the rules that regulate behaviors and role expectations in that field, while they struggle to gain advantage and to secure more influential positions over other actors in the same field.

Despite the differences in their internal level of articulation, both arenas and fields provide a focus for interaction patterns that involve not only a

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multiplicity of entities but, as we have seen, entities that differ remarkably in their nature. When the multimodal/multilevel aspects of arenas and fields are fully appreciated, we see that they represent a multilevel social or political space in which the actors interact, compete, and collaborate (Hollway et al. 2017). Understanding them calls for a multimodal approach to political networks. Multimodal network analysis attempts to deal with the complexity of political ecosystems by the judicious use of theoretical principles and empirical methods that can provide novel insights into relations among different types of entities. Fundamentally, multimodal analysis often deals with instances of nested entities and the methodological challenge of a key feature of relational data, the interdependency of entities. At the same time, classic problems with nested data, such as the ecological fallacy, can be addressed by considering nested data levels in tandem (Tranmer and Lazega 2016).

Political outcomes in these arenas or fields are regularly contested. Moreover, the distribution of power in most political arenas or fields is rarely equally distributed. Even formally equal political systems see a de facto distribution of power that varies considerably, whether from inherited or acquired sources. Collectively, such resources can be thought of as *political capital*, that often correlate with decision power and political reputation. While some theorists see political capital as a facet of social capital (Lin 2001), we see good reasons to view it as distinct. Political capital can be seen both as an individual resource and as a structural property of a political system. It is inherently a relational property of an actor in that it encompasses all those resources that constitute their power, leadership, reputation, skill, and previous accomplishments into an intangible asset akin to personal social capital. Yet, political capital is also a resource that actors acquire and expend through their relations with others and because those others allow them to do so. In that respect it is distinct from say, decisional power or an actor's leadership or skill. Political capital therefore is a relational resource that actors employ in influencing political outcomes.

Actors have two main strategies in increasing their political capital. First, they can pool their political capital together with others by creating or joining political communities, organizations, groups, movements, or alliances. Second, they can try to change the value of the political capital they have by creating new objects, such as bills, propositions, policies, texts, concepts or arguments, or relationships among them. Both of these strategies, which we elaborate in the chapters of this book, are premised, as political capital itself is, on *legitimacy*. Most political contest does not involve gladiatorial combat; instead, individuals working in teams, or within organizations, attempt to influence and coordinate their actions with others. Put differently, maintaining political power "ultimately rests on domination combined with influence" (Knoke 1990a:6–7). Although actor legitimacy can be perceived as an attribute, associated with network embeddedness, Ronald Burt contended that the network approach allows for legitimacy to be "keyed to the social situations of a person, not to the

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person's attributes" (Burt 1998:35). Both collectivities and objects are potential resources of political capital because they relate to political legitimacy, solidarity, and identity.

Political networks are inherently multimodal because political actors are creative. Faced with an unfavorable distribution of power, they will seek to change the topography of the field by creating or joining groups and creating or associating ideas to outflank the opposition. Of course, their opponents will be doing the same, and this is where the dynamics of political networks lie. A multimodal political network structure thus reflects, restrains, and enables the use of political capital. The key is not to ignore, but to embrace, this multimodalism. In the next section, we outline the relations between individuals, organizations, and events as they relate to multimodal analysis.

INDIVIDUALS, ORGANIZATIONS, EVENTS

Analyzing a political network means looking at a multiplicity of entities, including some that have no agentic capacity. One type of political entity consists of individual actors (such as citizens, politicians, and donors) or collective actors (such as organizations, interest groups, and governments). Those entities can be assumed to have *agency*, that is, an individual or collective capacity to decide and act toward advancing their interests and goals. Relations that connect different types of entities comprise a *multimodal political network*. As an example, Figure 1.1 shows a schematic network of three types of agentic entities and two political relations. Citizens vote for politicians running for elective office, and donor organizations, such as political action committees of business associations and labor unions, give campaign contributions to politicians. No direct ties exist between citizens and donors in this structure, although presumably some voters are members of donor organizations and may also contribute funds to politicians, either directly or indirectly through union dues or corporate donations.

Political networks may consist of entities at different levels of analysis, in which some units are embedded within others. Figure 1.2 illustrates a hierarchy consisting of three levels of authority. City councils pass laws and ordinances which municipal law enforcement agencies (police, courts, jails) are required to enforce on citizens who violate those regulations. Two entities are formal organizations and the third is a set of individual persons. Not shown in the

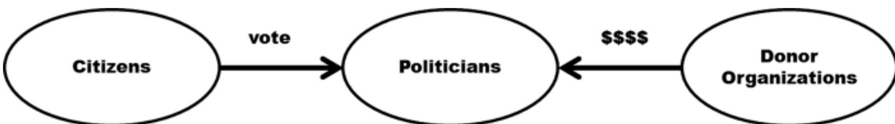

FIGURE 1.1. Political relations among three types of entities

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FIGURE 1.2. Political relations among entities in an authority hierarchy

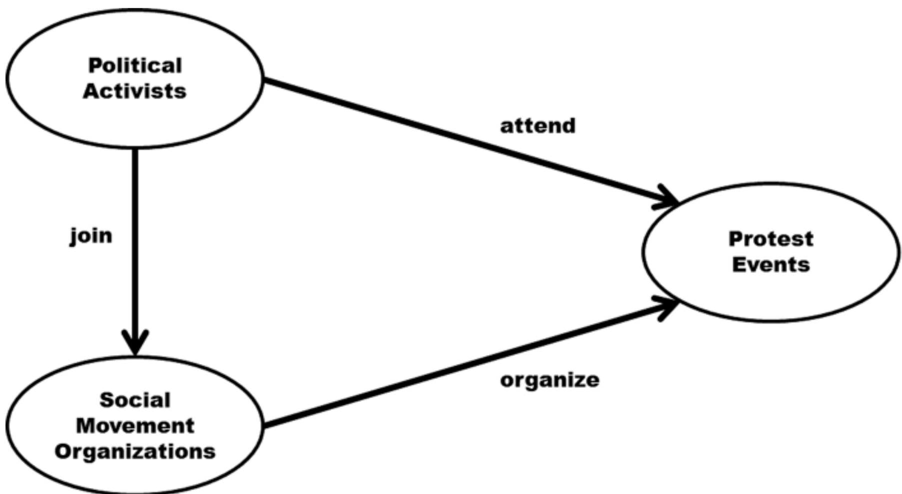

FIGURE 1.3. Political relations among agentic and nonagentic entities

diagram are other collective entities, such as street gangs and organized crime families, which could add complexity and greater realism to the network.

Nonagentic entities – exemplified by protest events, party policy platforms, legislative bills, and campaign websites – lack autonomy to choose and undertake political actions. Rather, they are typically the outcome or consequence of choices made by agentic entities. In Figure 1.3, individual political activists join social movement organizations, which sponsor protest events, such as marches and sit-ins, in which some of their members participate. Additional complexity could be added by examining interpersonal friendship and kinship ties among individual activists to help explain which persons show up at which events.

Entities intermingle in increasingly complex patterns of interaction as we move across levels of analysis from individual actors to broader macro-social structures. Still, we can view the latter as various combinations of basic dyads and triads. This possibility does not mean that all kinds of sustained interaction automatically generate a structural pattern proper. It means, however, that we can conceptualize macro-structures, such as institutions, in relational terms. As John Levi Martin wrote

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> ... there are conditions under which interpersonal interactions tend to align and structure themselves. ... Instead of simply noticing that there are recurrent patterns, we can make reference to these patterns as independent entities that make predictable demands on us. It is at this point that we speak of an institution. ... social interactions, when repeated, display formal characteristics; and this form can take on a life of its own, ultimately leading to institutions that we (as actors) can treat as given and exogenous to social action for our own purposes. (Martin 2009:3)

The process element in this view – and one which is highly consistent with the network perspective – is illustrated by the possibility that "at any moment (or at least at some moments) these institutions may crumble to the ground if not rejuvenated with compatible action" (Martin 2009:3). This remark points at two elements: First, institutions (and indeed social structures at large) are sustainable only to the extent that they are reinforced by innumerable micro-interactions. Second, reinforcing actions are possible only if actors share the same understanding of interactions to which they are involved:

> ... it is unlikely that such structures would continuously reappear as forms of regular interaction were the people in question unable to understand the formal principles of these structures in some subjective terms. It is not necessary that people be able to visualize or define the structure ... but it is necessary that they understand how structurally consistent ties are formed ... a heuristic is a rule that could be induced by an observer as a guiding principle of action on the basis of observed regularities in this action. (Martin 2009:16–18)

We follow a similar logic in laying out our conceptualization of the political process. We see it as a series of interactions among a multiplicity of actors who are patterned to varying extents; are guided by actors' heuristics that are universal though variably deployed; and in which the institutionalization process is subject to continuous renegotiation. In the next chapter, we identify three primary types of entities – individuals, groups/organizations, and events – although this typology could easily encompass other types of entities. In doing so, we follow Anne Mische's (2008) lead in exploring Brazilian protest campaigns, but we extend her approach to include a broader set of actors, organizations, and nonagentic entities.

Many of the interactions between individual citizens do not follow any particular pattern and do not create any distinctive solidarity. However, even occasional and noncommittal interactions – like those occurring in public spaces, such as commuter trains, street conversations, shopping centers, and children's playgrounds – may contribute to forming shared understandings of social and political life. Solidarity is much more likely to arise through (largely non-political) interactions that occur within families, workplaces, educational and religious institutions, and other social settings (Putnam 2000). A minority of interpersonal interactions consists of relations that carry greater continuity and a stronger sense of mutual obligation. Some are rooted in ascribed ties such as those originating from family, community, ethnic group; others develop out

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