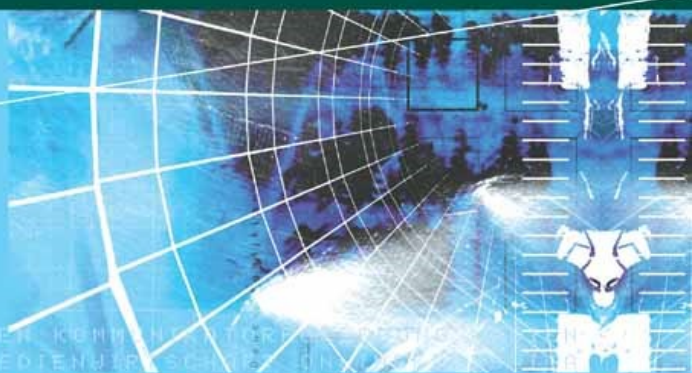Ansgar Zerfass
Betteke van Ruler
Krishnamurthy Sriramesh (Eds.)

Public Relations Research

European and
International Perspectives
and Innovations

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This book has been published as a Festschrift for Prof. Dr. Günter Bentele,
University of Leipzig, on the occasion of his 60th birthday in March 2008.

Content

Introduction

Krishnamurthy Sriramesh, Betteke van Ruler & Ansgar Zerfass

One could make a reasonable argument that public relations is an ancient practice (going back millennia) although it has been popularly perceived as a 20th century phenomenon. Scholarship in public relations, however, is more recent in origin with a history of less than four decades. During these formative years, the body of knowledge has expanded significantly, which is laudable. However, there is potential for growth and improvement in many areas of the public relations literature. Over the decades, among other things, public relations scholarship has largely remained parochial to specific regions such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Latin America, German speaking Europe, etc. as evidenced in the bibliographic references of many essays in this volume itself where authors predominantly cite work from their own regions. This is often necessitated by linguistic differences with only English serving as the "universal" language that helps permeate knowledge through most regions. Pedagogical and methodological factors also have played a role in the "regionalization" of the body of knowledge. However, we believe that knowledge flourishes most when it is shared across different kinds of barriers. Globalization has made it essential for us to recognize this reality more than ever. This volume tries to bridge the gap and presents theories and concepts from researchers around the world.

1 Stimulating the Debate on Public Relations Theory

Although there has been an increase in cross-national and cross-cultural knowledge sharing especially in the past decade, we deem this only as a good beginning that has great potential for exponential growth. It is with this broad goal in mind that we envisaged this book pooling the wisdom and perspectives of fertile minds from different parts of the world on various aspects of public relations and communication management. Whereas knowledge sharing itself might have been a laudable reason to launch such a worthy project, we had another happier reason to envisage this volume – dedicating the book to celebrate a milestone in the life of a valued and renowned colleague. As a result, we have brought together scholars from around the world to share their perspectives in this compilation to mark the 60th birthday of Günter Bentele, the most renowned German-speaking scholar and researcher in public relations.

Unlike a traditional Festschrift, we refrained from asking the most important fellows of Günter Bentele's career to contribute to this volume preferring instead to also foster research in public relations by gathering concepts advocated by those who are shaping the future of the field. This mirrors Bentele's aspiration to bridge the gap between research traditions in different cultures and disciplines, and to support fresh thinking by younger scholars. Bentele, whose curriculum vitae and impressive list of publications is presented in the appendix, has published almost 40 books and more than 200 articles or book chapters. He also has conducted numerous empirical studies and delivered speeches at conferences in many countries. He has served as president of the European Public Relations Education and Research Association (EUPRERA) and president of the German Association of Communi-

cation Science (DGPuK). He also has been member of international committees (such as the Program Committee of the annual BledCom research symposium), and has served as visiting professor at many universities both in Europe and overseas. In Germany, he has been awarded the titles "Professor of the year" recognizing his contributions to public relations education, and "Public Relations head of the year" in honour of his efforts to bridge the chasm between theory and practice.

Readers will notice that we have divided the book into four sections each with a broad theme although diversity of perspectives is evident within the totality of the volume. We offer three essays from Bentele (and his co-authors) in the first part offering readers a glimpse into his thoughts on a few topics dear to his heart. The second section highlights the work of scholars of public relations and communication management from German speaking countries. As mentioned earlier, language has been one of the primary impediments to seamless cross-national exchange of knowledge in our field. So, by providing the work of the current generation of German-speaking scholars in English here, we wish to offer their wisdom to a wider audience. The third part offers perspectives from scholars from non-German speaking European countries. The final section offers essays from international scholars hailing from the US, Africa, Asia, and Australasia. We believe that this may be a unique compilation because of its diversity in perspectives and authorship, which, in our humble view, is a significant contribution to the body of knowledge.

2   The Relevance of Epistemology and Trust

Part I *„Public Relations, Intereffication and Trust"* introduces the work of Günter Bentele. It brings together three concepts that are widely recognized as landmarks of communication management research in Germany. Inspired by the intense discussion about the philosophy of science and paradigmatic approaches to communication research, *Günter Bentele* explains the process of developing theories and models in the field of public relations. His reconstructive approach argues that natural and social reality is communicatively reconstructed in processes of public communication that emerge through public relations as well as advertising and journalistic activities. Within those processes, the principles of perspectivity, selectivity and constructivity are most relevant. Reflecting the structures of communication management enables him to build a generic model of information and relationships that guides public relations research and practice. The next chapter, authored by *Günter Bentele and Howard Nothhaft,* introduces the intereffication model for explaining the relationship between media relations and journalism. Empirical results drawn from research projects conducted in Leipzig and elsewhere demonstrate the relevance of the model for theory and practice. Relating to both the reconstructive approach and the rules of the media system applied by journalists and PR professionals, phenomena like trust and credibility gain a vast importance in modern societies. Consequently, *Günter Bentele and René Seidenglanz* dedicate their chapter to a theory of public trust. Public trust is defined as the process and result of attributing trust to publicly observable actors (individuals, organisations) and systems by the means of public communication. This theory, which has been developed by Bentele in his habilitation thesis, is of outstanding significance for the practice of communication management. It identifies various factors of trust and mistrust that

can be used to monitor the media environment and to manage public relations and risk communication.

The concept of trust can be seen as the pivotal point within Bentele's research. Trust is indispendable when describing the reconstruction of reality by relying on organisational as well as media communication and the realties they produce. It also shapes the relations between press agents and journalists and has implications for communication management on the level of individuals, organisations and society. Without both trust and credibility, professional communication is not possible.

3   From Interdisciplinary Frameworks to Applications in Business and Politics

During the last two decades, public relations, communication management and organisational communication has grown to a most lively discipline in the German-speaking countries. A broad range of original concepts and empirical surveys has been published and discussed, most of them in intense interaction with the field of practice. Regarding the number of dissertations and newly established academic positions, most other regions have been outperformed during the last years. However, the relatively large community with a qualified number of book series, conferences and business networks seldom stimulates authors from Germany, Austria and Switzerland to publish in other languages. Part II of this book *"Advancements in Communication Management"* tries to close this gap. The selection of articles resembles the tradition on focussing both the macro level of social theory and interdisciplinary approaches, and the meso level of communication management within organisations.

Ansgar Zerfass outlines a theory of corporate communication that builds upon an elaborated theory of the firm and depicts the tension between economic goals and social responsibility. He shows how communication blends into the overall framework of strategic management, identifies four ways of creating value, explains the scope of communication controlling and expands the notion of integrated communication by applying social theory to internal communication, marketing communication and public relations. *Peter Szyszka* argues on a similar level. He gives a broad definition of organizational communication by considering organizations as social systems. He refers to Bentele's reconstructive approach and specifies the reconstructive processes taking place when organisations act in society and make decisions which effect society. Trust and credibility are identified as most important principles in this context. *Anna Maria Theis-Berglmair* tries to close the gap between organizational communication and public relations. She develops a conceptual framework based on systems theory that describes communication as the core element of any organization and communication management as the management of contingency.

Mark Eisenegger and Kurt Imhof take a broader look at the concept of reputation that is conceptualized as core asset in most organisational-centered approaches. They argue that public relations is essentially oriented to controlling this parameter and can thus be understood as reputation management. They outline a general theory of reputation as a three-dimensional construct comprising the types of functional, social and expressive reputation. Key regularities of media reputation are described on the basis of empirical research.

Claudia Mast and Simone Huck add to the body of knowledge by structuring the field of leadership communication. They link leadership communication to internal communica-

tion and indicate implications for managerial practice. Whereas their chapter already stresses the importance of trust, *Ulrike Röttger and Andreas Voss* go even further by conceptualizing internal communication as management of trust relations. The authors argue that internal communication needs to address all aspects of trust – its requirements, reasons and dimensions – to establish and maintain mutual beneficial relations. They demonstrate how trust created through communication can be seen as a value driver and make the point that this is important in times where concepts of communication controlling are on the rise. *Juliana Raupp* elaborates on this discussion. She reflects the theory and practice of public relations evaluation and argues that the focus has shifted from social science approaches towards more management- and economic-based evaluation systems. According to the author, a comprehensive approach to link both traditions is still missing.

Public relations is relevant not only in the economic sphere, but also in the political system. *Romy Fröhlich* provides a critical synopsis on the interplay between media relations and press coverage in this field. Referring to and at the same time expanding the inter-effication model by Bentele, the author gives additional insights through empirical research into interaction processes and variables affecting the relationship between political actors and journalists. More specific, *Benno Signitzer* concentrates on the field of public diplomacy within political public relations. He elaborates on the applicability of different theoretical concepts and identifies political information and cultural communication as the two basic principles of public diplomacy.

Last but not least, *Stefan Wehmeier* outlines the current disciplinary status of public relations from a German perspective. By taking the terms communication management, organizational communication and public relations as starting points, the author shows overlaps in theories, methodologies and epistemological questions. The chapter points out a number of similarities and concludes that the focus should be on interdisciplinary approaches.

4   Contributing to Legitimisation, Crisis Avoidance and Reputation Management

Part III *"European Perspectives in Communication Management"* gives an overview of well renowned thinking in the non-German speaking part of Europe. Although there is a large community of professors in public relations all over Europe, original theory building is concentrated in the northern and western parts of Europe. It is striking that most European public relations scholars construct their theories out of a mix of sociological, political, organization and communication theories, and have a macro, sociological view on public relations.

Susanne Holmström from Denmark pleads for a reflective paradigm to analyse the interrelation between society's constitution and organisational legitimisation. She demonstrates first how expectations to organisational legitimacy have changed in co-evolution with society's basic ideas, constitution and regulation; second, that we may understand ideals of organisational legitimacy as a result of modernisation having reached a stage where the problems created as side-effects to the blind reflexivity of solid modernity and full functional differentiation reach a critical mass; third, that we can parallel contemporary ideals of legitimacy with the analytical concept of reflection as opposed to reflexivity; fourth, that we may relate contemporary inherent conflicts of legitimacy experienced by

globalising organisations to the different ways in which societies are constituted today. *Jacquie L'Etang* from Britain reflects upon the definitional and methodological issues that concern the relationship between public relations and propaganda. Links are made between the history of public relations and propaganda, and between these two concepts and notions of spirituality, mysticism, religion and ethics. She argues that these concepts may also help explain the fear and loathing often expressed in relation to the public relations function and she has the challenging notion that in considering the themes of religion and spirituality we come perhaps closer to addressing the role of persuasion in public relations and its relationship to propaganda.

Dejan Verčič from Slovenia poses the intriguing question: How hard is soft power? He argues that public relations is about soft power that operates through influence and attraction. As different social domains inter-penetrate, media of communication are partly exchangeable: power induces money, influences and/or attraction; money buys power, influence and/or attraction; influence impacts power, money and/or attraction; and attraction draws power, money and/or influence. Public relations is therefore at least theoretically on an equal footing with politics and economics as one of the three fundamental social concepts. Along this line, *Peggy Simcic Brønn* discusses the need of a greater focus by organizations on intangible assets and their application to communication and the communication function. She explicitly explores the proposition that communication itself can be an intangible asset. Intangible assets or intellectual capital is used in financial accounting to denote those production factors a firm can claim ownership for but are not physical properties. She proposes a model for communication capital that can be used to measure communication return on investment.

Bridging gaps of trust in multicultural societies is the focus of *Jesper Falkheimer* from Sweden. The main question he poses is in what way globalisation and the development of multicultural publics in national social systems may affect one of the main fields of public relations theory and practice: crisis communication. After an introduction into theories of globalisation, ethnicity, crisis communication and public relations, he discusses a case study of a local micro-public with five Arabic women making their voice heard in a Swedish neighbourhood. His conclusion is that ethnicity is relational and develops as a reaction to social pressure. It is not some kind of cultural origin that explains the differences between these women and other citizens: it is the lack of communication with mainstream society and the local social network that constitutes this micro-public. *Jaakko Lehtonen* from Finland also focuses on risks and crisis, but in a virtual publicity context. Adverse publicity in the Internet is a new challenge for public relations. It may threaten an organization's good reputation, and for many, the initial enthusiasm about the opportunities of the Internet for corporate communication, has turned into desperation. He discusses how an organization can fight against attacks in cyberspace and what the organization ca do if threatened by potentially damaging rumours on the blog. There are hardly any answers yet, but all the more questions.

Finally, *Betteke van Ruler and Dejan Verčič* give an overview of several research projects they conducted to show that what internationally is known as public relations but in Europe more and more as communication management, is a multi-dimensional concept. These different dimensions show that communication management is not just a professional function of managers and technicians, but also or preferably a view on how to manage an organization. They elaborate what typifies European communication management in

practice, education and research and propose to view it as Reflective Communication Management as a unifying concept to develop practice, education and research with the European cultures.

5   Beyond Excellence and Rhetoric: Global Developments in Theory Development

The essays presented in part IV *"International Challenges for Public Relations"* offer perspectives from authors based in four continents. We would have wished to have many more contributions but various constraints limited us to just these six chapters. *James and Larissa Grunig* from the United States discuss one of the most popular theoretical paradigms in public relations pedagogy – the "Excellence Theory" – and place it in context with other theoretical constructs of the field. They first respond to some of the critiques leveled against the theory over the years and then provide an overview of the key elements of this "general theory that incorporates a number of middle-range theories." In doing so, they have collapsed what were originally offered as a number of characteristics of excellent public relations into four categories each of which consists of "several characteristics that can be audited." Gazing into the future, they hope that researchers will help "convert public relations from a buffering role into the bridging role."

Referring to public relations as a "social influence" that can help individuals and organizations "achieve good and bad ends," *Robert Heath and Finn Frandsen* discuss how meanings are created in the social context and how "rhetorical heritage" can contribute to our understanding of this phenomenon. They argue that there are many "rhetorical implications" to many of the concepts that public relations scholars have advocated especially since mid-20th century. Arguing that "the collective management of risk is the singular and compelling rationale for society," the authors link rhetorical communication with public relations by linking rhetoric with the rise of democracy where the public sphere is accorded primacy. They conclude that "[R]hetoric and public relations are inseperable… and that [R]hetoric is the central requirement for collective choice."

Among other things, the recent increase in attention to environmentalism and responsible corporate governance has put corporate social responsibility (CSR) high on the agenda of discussion around the world. Stating that "sustainability is a multi-disciplinary concept, requiring organisations to ponder over their operations and actions across many aspects of business," *Ronel Rensburg, Elsamari Coetzee and Estelle de Beer* from South Africa discuss the crucial nexus between sustainable development, corporate reputation, and public relations. They argue that good strategic communication, the domain of public relations, helps organizations build better reputations and quality relationships with stakeholders. Therefore, it should have a voice in the strategic management of organizations. Corporate social responsibility has become a popular term particularly in the past decade or so for many reasons. *Steve May* links CSR to public relations positing that CSR "repositions public relations practitioners within the ethics/economics bind that has been so common and problematic [to the profession] in the past." After presenting a brief historical account of the nexus between CSR and public relations in the United States, the author states that because of the overemphasis on the fiduciary goals of corporations, "[P]ublic relations, which had emerged as a core competency within the ranks of corporate leaders, was reduced to a secondary, staff function" after the 1970s. He therefore suggests that rather than

focusing so heavily on "external" stakeholders in order to improve reputation and economic performance, proponents of CSR initiatives should focus on "ethics inside corporations…"

Is public relations science or art or both? In his thoughtful essay, *David McKie* from New Zealand places the "ascent of science" to the 17th century when physics gained recognition as the dominant scientific discipline. Since then, the author comments, various other disciplines including public relations have struggled to obtain recognition as science. The author also highlights how even during this struggle, public relations has been trying to find its own identity as a discipline as illustrated in the exchange between Stuart Ewen and Edward Bernays on whether public relations deals with "reality" or "images." McKie notes that the increasing number of students who wish to study public relations behooves us to assess "the academic construction of public relations as brand." In doing so, one would have to keep in mind that the current trend to position public relations as "a brand selling reputation management has a low image intellectually as a discipline and a scandalous reputation as a practice."

The final essay of this volume looks to the future by highlighting the potential for growth both in public relations practice and scholarship brought about by globalization. *Krishnamurthy Sriramesh* argues that whereas globalization has increased in the importance of public relations around the world, it also has highlighted the many gaps in existing body of knowledge much of which is ethnocentric. "Ethnocentricity has definitely contributed to limiting the efficacy of most public relations strategies and tactics especially as the profession expands to newer societies and markets," the author contends. The author strongly urges that diversity – typified by differences in the socio-political, media, and economic environment – needs to be addressed by the body of knowledge if public relations scholarship is to become useful to practitioners and students who are increasingly operating in a global environment. The author contends that the very success of public relations practice and education depends on how well both can adapt to the demands of globalization. This chapter sets the research agenda by offering several questions that need to be addressed by future research endeavours especially since these questions are relevant fro researchers around the world.

6   The Future and Thanksgiving

We offer this volume primarily in appreciation of the contributions of Günter Bentele. In doing so, we also intend for this Festschrift to help us look to the future of the body of knowledge and scholarship in public relations and communication management. Therefore, quite fittingly, the final chapter of the volume addresses the latest trend – globalization – and poses some questions that scholars of public relations need to address as we progress into the 21st century. Because of the dire need to develop the body of knowledge to prepare it for the challenges of the 21st century and globalization, we see this volume not only as an offering but also a challenge to students, scholars, and practitioners in the field of public relations and communication management. We thus see a much broader spectrum of goals for this volume. The resulting cross-pollination of ideas and perspectives is bound to take public relations scholarship to the next level, a vital need in a globalizing world. Therefore, it is our fond hope that this humble Festschrift will be the harbinger of increased cross-regional dialogue in the future.

A good concept is only as good as its execution. This project would not have been possible without the able and willing help of many friends and colleagues. At the outset, we offer sincere thanks to the 32 contributors (not including Günter Bentele) hailing from at least a dozen countries for enthusiastically agreeing to participate in this Festschrift and delivering thoughtful manuscripts on time even though we had forced them to work to a tight schedule. We believe readers will join us in offering our gratitude to the many leading minds of public relations scholarship included in this volume for sharing their perspectives here but more importantly for helping build the body of knowledge to its current form. Once the manuscripts came in, we needed a lot of administrative help, which came from several members of the staff and graduate assistants at the University of Leipzig. In particular, we would like to recognize the diligence of Kristin Köhler who was most efficient in bringing all manuscripts to a uniform and publishable format in a very short span of time. Without a sponsor, the final manuscript could not have been published and for that we next offer our sincere gratitude to the Erich Dorp-Foundation. Finally, we thank the publishers, especially Barbara Emig-Roller, for bringing out this volume in a most professional format and on time.

Part I

Public Relations, Intereffication and Trust

Public Relations Theory: The Reconstructive Approach

Günter Bentele

Reflecting the structures of communication management, Günter Bentele developed his reconstructive approach as a theory of public relations. Reconstruction processes take place in processes of public communication that emerge through public relations as well as advertising and journalistic activities. In the process of communicative description of reality, natural and social reality is communicatively reconstructed. Within those processes, the principles of perspectivity, selectivity and constructivity are most relevant. Thus, the reconstructive approach combines social information and communication relationships in an overall model based on different theoretical approaches and lines of thought.

1   Reconstructive Approach and Social Theory

The approach introduced here was initially developed by considering *communication norms for public communication*, for instance, by focusing on journalistic norms of truth and objectivity (Bentele, 1982, 1988b). By reflecting on such key reporting standards within an epistemological, historical and theory of science framework, the analysis put forward in my *Habilitation* thesis was epistemologically grounded in order to take account of a central aspect of media reception, the perceived *credibility* of the media. Subsequently, this also incorporated a reflection of *ethical norms in PR* (Bentele, 1992b), of *references to reality* made by television (Bentele, 1992a) and public relations (Bentele, 1994b) as well as the development of a *theory of public trust* (Bentele, 1994a). In this regard, since the 1980s, theoretical considerations were based on biologically founded evolutionary epistemology (EE), which cannot be described within the limited confines of this analysis. There are certainly similarities with biologically argued concepts of "radical constructivism," although the crucial difference lies in the epistemological position: EE[1] advocates and argues for a realistic position, that is, a *hypothetical-realistic* position (Lorenz, 1975; Vollmer, 1975). Such positions can indeed be compatible with approaches of systems theory, as made clear by the assertion put forward by systems theorist, Helmut Willke, who regards "reflective reconstructivism" as more appropriate than "radical constructivism."[2]

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[1]   In place of the many contributions such as Campbell (1974), Irrgang (2001), Lorenz (1975), Vollmer (1975, 1985, 1986, 2002), cf. also Popper (1984). In Bentele (1988a, 1992a), EE is introduced as a basic theory for communication science.

[2]   "Note that this does not mean adopting "radical constructivism" […] as epistemology. Rather, a *reflected reconstructivism* seems appropriate (author's emphasis, G.B.), thus a process of gaining recognition, whereby the cognitive system may be exclusively linked to one's *own* means of observation and understanding and can therefore find grounds for the object of its recognition, not as "objective" or "real", nor in fact as "reality". However, on the other hand, this does not mean that the cognitive system simply invents some arbitrary products of fantasy and can define these as the correct recognition. Evidently, a plausible relation is required between explanation and the explained, an alignment, "a goodness of the fit" […], a kind of key-lock relationship …" (Willke, 1996, 167ff.). Willke represented a "functionally genetic" approach in sys-

The term "reconstructive approach" refers to a concept of reconstruction, which defines a process of *cognitive (and communicative) model formation*, in other words, the process, whereby a structural, isomorphic model is created that is "suited" to the focus of observation. The concept and process of reconstruction therefore refers – in relation to the perceptive and cognitive process – to relations existing between *the observer and observed*, or (in traditional terms) between *subject and object*. In terms of the communication process, the concept refers to relations between *the characterization and the signified*, *the description and what is described* as well as between *media reality and reality as such*. This process is *cognitively* reconstructed in the *observation* of reality. In the process of the communicative *description* of reality (by signs, words, texts and topics), natural and social reality is *communicatively* reconstructed. Other observers do this in exactly the same way. Moreover, if they also reconstruct observed reality in communicative forms (texts), this reconstructive character of texts ensures that different communication partners have the impression that they are communicatively referring to *the same* reality. Communication that is to facilitate understanding requires the same referential realities.

This approach is epistemologically founded and was developed in the discussion of constructivist approaches (Bentele, 1993). Moreover, Giddens (1995) can link it with systems theories that are "recoupled" with theories of society based on action, such as represented by, for example, Schimank (2000), or in the theory of structuration suggested. This connection cannot be demonstrated here. Nevertheless, a basic assumption here is the existence of a functionally structured society and therefore also the existence of functional subsystems, such as the economy, law, politics, education and science. However, these aspects include *social systems with a capacity for action* as, for instance, companies, political parties, ministries, associations, research communities, social movements, religious sects or political protest movements. Their action generally occurs within pre-existing structures that are set by the systems, while simultaneously producing the action of organizations and the structure of the defining system. In this sense, it is possible to speak of a duality of action and structure (Giddens, 1995, pp. 77-81). The social systems with the capacity to act – generally collective actors (Willke, 1996, p. 178ff.) – are structural elements of the functioning systems and mutually define each other as strategically calculating. *Specific actor constellations* and *dynamic (action-based) developments* emerge from mutual observation, the collection of information about each other and interpretation of such information. Social dynamics result from the interplay between these levels.

Based on this outline, it seems reasonable to differentiate between *three levels of analysis*[3] for the purposes of PR theory, which meanwhile have largely become a commonly accepted part of discourse. At the *first level of microanalysis*, observation and analysis are focused on the action taken by individual actors, their motives, objectives, the *rules* that they use and create the effects of their actions etc. On the *second – organizational – level*, the description focuses on the communication process within the organization and between organizations and their social environments ("publics," "stakeholders"). Organization is understood as the level that mediates between social functional systems, society as a social system in its entirety and the individual actor. In this case, the analysis centres particularly on the tasks, functions, actions or – to adopt the terms of systems theory – *decision*

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tems theory. This also appears to be ideally compatible with the author's central thoughts, e.g. on genetic semiotics (Bentele, 1984) or the functionally-integrative layer approach (Bentele, 1997).

[3]   Cf. also Ronneberger & Rühl for a slightly different definition of the three dimensions (1992, p. 249ff.).

and action programmes of the PR organization in connection with the supra-status of the "parent organization" or client. The *third level* of analysis refers to the *macro analytical level,* on which the question is posed of the connection to society, for instance, the question as to whether or to what extent public relations itself can reasonably be outlined as a social functional system or part of a social functional system (e.g. publicist activity, public sphere), or what kind of social system it otherwise portrays. In this essay, the focus of attention is on the first two aforementioned levels.

2   Structures and Processes of PR or Communication Management

On the first two levels of analysis, public relations is initially viewed as a *structured, communicative action* on the part of individual actors in *organizational contexts*, that is, either *within* social organizations or in systematic relations *with* organizations. *The organizational forms,* within which PR occurs, as action by actors, are firstly *communication departments* within organizations; and secondly, special *service organizations* such as communication, PR or also advertising agencies, consultancy firms etc. In addition, *individual actors* that contribute consultancy and communications services for their clients never exclusively work *in isolation* (for instance, writing press releases and compiling information brochures, organization of a press conference, and advice on redesigning the company logo). They cooperate with individual actors (for instance with freelancers), although their service always represents an *interaction* between client and the commissioned party. Therefore, the *organizational context* is a constituent part of delivery of the communications service, even if individual actors accomplish this service. Within organizational contexts, the actors perform in specific *positions* and *roles, that is, a package of behavioural expectations. Vertically*, positions within *management*, *completion* (*operational*) and *support* positions (e.g. secretaries) can be distinguished. The first two positions are referred to within empirical PR role research, for instance, as "communication manager" and "communication technician" (cf. in summary Grunig & Grunig, 2002, p. 196ff.). Positions or roles are organized within different *organizational forms* (Kieser & Kubicek, 1992) such as lines, divisional structure or matrix organization etc. *Horizontally*, a structure is differentiated according to object or communication areas: sub-departments or parallel communication departments such as press and media relations, visitor sponsoring, public affairs, investor relations, location communication etc., to mention a few examples. They are organized according to the respective target groups or instrumental orientation.

As with all social systems, organizations only endure *by means of* communication (Luhmann 2000, p. 62). Communication occurs within organizations and they communicate – as collective actors – with their external world (Theis, 1994). *Internal* communication processes can be distinguished into those that:

a) proceed relatively *uncontrolled* (informal communication such as conversations at the lunch table, at the coffee machine, creating rumours) and those

b) are consciously *controlled* by the organization, that is, internal communication processes.

In one sense, this includes the processes that are accomplished by means of (internal) media and communication instruments (e.g. notice board, employee magazines, intranet etc.). However, it also includes the procedures, which occur in preparation of the actual (internal and external) communication processes, particularly in the communication departments themselves. These are oriented towards planning, implementation and production of communication and organization-specific media. Communicative *products* are generated as *results* (texts, images, topics, PR media, and events).

Depending on how structured, differentiated and specialized the process is represented, we can refer to *unordered, routine* or *strategically planned PR*. Insofar as the process approaches the ideal model of strategically planned and implemented PR, the concept of "communication management" is appropriate. Here, the division of work and hierarchically organized *process of control* is to be described as *communication management* (CM) which incorporates the complex process of (environment) observation, analysis, strategy development, organization, implementation and evaluation of organization-related communication processes. In the extreme case, this process occurs as an unstructured or only slightly structured chain of action of an individual (within the organization management).[4] In a large company, in terms of the division of labour, this process is organized vertically and horizontally and entire departments are responsible for the individual phases and areas. In this process, *communication instruments* (e.g. press releases, employee magazines), *methods* (e.g. media resonance analysis) and communication technologies are implemented, which can involve complex *procedures* (e.g. issues management or campaigns). The input of these kinds of instruments, media and procedures ideally relies on strategies.

Strategies are plans of chains of action, which involve conditions and show *objective* and *temporal* dimensions. These are also known as *programmes* (Luhmann, 1987, p. 432). All internal and external communication programmes depend on available personal and financial *resources*. The chief executive levels within the organization generally take the decision about the magnitude and orientation of organizations' internal communication resources, although resource allocation is also dependent on *external* conditions for the organization (e.g. the level of economic activity).

3   Connections to Reality and Reconstructing Reality

3.1 Construction or Reconstruction?

In the same way as it is possible to criticize a lack of connection to the actor in some versions of systems theory (Schimank, 1985), I note a *missing connection to reality* in many approaches adopted by systems theory and constructivism with respect to the theory of communication and PR. Merten and Westerbarkey (1994, p. 219), for example, define public relations as the "process of intentional and contingent construction of desirable realities by production and anchoring images in public." Setting aside the fact that in this definition, the idea of "desirable reality" remains unclear, as Merten (2000, p. 251) himself acknowledges, this definition leaves open whether and, as applicable, which *constraints* exist to

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[4]   The new sole trader company observes the organizational environment, decides after brief reflection (analysis) to provide the press with information (strategy development), also acts upon this decision (implementation) and two days later reads the newspaper article (evaluation) that published its information.

define what is meant by "desirable" and how these desirable realities behave in relation to the empirically determined organizational realities. Press releases or business reports, as constructed "desirable" PR realities by the media, are not Christmas wish lists – neither are journalistic news or reports. On the contrary, they have to be "constructed" according to guidelines and within the context of observed reality. To that extent, therefore, they represent "reconstructed entities." The reasons for discussing this relation to the reality of communication processes and products as a whole and, in particular, to the PR process in a theoretical sense lie, firstly, in the fact that the connections to reality occur and are reflected in concepts such as truth, objectivity, precision, accuracy, credibility and trust. These qualities are just as important in professional practice as in scientific reflection. Secondly, if an attempt is made to avoid the discussion, significant theoretical problems emerge and questions remain unanswered.[5]

3.2   The Reconstructive Model of Observation and Communication

3.2.1   Perception, observation and reconstruction

In my *reconstructive* model (cf. for example Bentele, 1988, 1994a) I argue on the basis of "hypothetical realism." Every *construction* of *cognitive* and *communicative reality* can only be adequately described and understood if its *connection to reality* is appreciated, in other words, if these processes are regarded as *reconstructive processes*. In this sense, *reconstruction* can be defined as the information, perception and observation process, whereby at different levels they process (perception, thought/cognition, and communication) reality that exists independently of living beings by virtue of their faculties of perception and cognition. This occurs in such a way that isomorphic (structurally similar) constructs, or more precisely, *reconstructs* emerge. *Cognitive* reconstruction occurs in human perception and thought processes, *communicative* reconstruction within human communication processes. This is to say that they also occur during the production and comprehension of *communicative realities*. Thus, reconstruction processes also take place in processes of *public communication* that emerge through PR activities, advertising and journalistic activities.

Reality as such, which is understood as everything that ever did, does or will exist, is defined in terms of information theory. In this case, the assumption is that reality potentially "contains" an endless array of many different pieces of information. Reality cannot be grasped in *its entirety* or as *a whole entity* by human perception or cognitive activity, at a

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[5]   Cf. further Bentele (1993). Some representatives of *radical constructivism* set this connection to reality to one side by way of the *construction* metaphor (media reality is *not* reproduction, *but* construction). However, this does not solve the theoretical problem. Von Glasersfeld (1987, 1992) attempts to approach the problem via the viability concept. Viability, that is, cognitive representations' fitness for survival, is correctly introduced as a concept in contradistinction to a naive concept of reproduction. However, it is no solution to the basic problem of the production of correct or true statements, because it cannot be explained *why* some ideas are viable while others are not. In addition, the constructivist von Glasersfeld argues *realistically*: "In order to survive, the organism only has to "cope with" the restricting conditions in his environment. Expressed metaphorically: it has to force itself through the bars of the cage of these conditions." (von Glasersfeld, 1987, p. 137ff.) This is (involuntarily) a key argument for realistic epistemological theory: for the observing system, the point is to recognize these "cage bars" as something that exists and to have the capacity to distinguish the situation from a state in which the bars are not present. This is possible in a much more convincing way with a suitability concept of evolutionary epistemology (Vollmer, 2002).

specific point neither in time, nor within the duration of an individual's lifetime, or within the existence of humankind. From the limitless and abundant *potential information* that fulfils the function of *information offers* for an individual's brain, a specific part of reality is *actualized* within the human perception, cognitive and communicative process (Bentele & Bystrina, 1978, p. 96ff.).[6] While observation of a (biological, physiological or social) system is always an operation *internal to the system* and based on the generation of distinctions, these are not made *arbitrarily* or even by pure *chance*. Rather, they are made in accordance with the existing *rules*, in accordance with previously existing objective and subjective information, that is, *also* in accordance with the *observed pattern*. For this reason, the process of actualization is not only a process of *construction,* but *reconstruction.*

The production of communicative realities occurs as the production of signs, texts, images, sounds, noises, television programmes, advertising spots or scientific theories. The analysis of communicative realities relies on at least three *main levels*: *signs, texts* and *topics.* Production and reception on these levels occurs according to specific (human-specific) *rules* that developed historically and change accordingly. Moreover, the rules themselves do not emerge *arbitrarily*, or purely by chance, but in accordance with constraints which are to be discovered in social reality and the necessities of human co-existence. The actualization of potential information means to select from a specific perspective (*perspectivity*) and a wide variety (*selection*), thereby generating new information (*construction*). This initially occurs as a reflective process and, in a second stage, with the aid of material media. The material use of information in the mode of communicative and technical media (speech, language, writing, images, texts, books, brochures, films) also initiates the process of communication for others and – as soon as the public realm is involved – the process of public *communication* that many people observe.

3.2.2   Three basic principles: perspectivity, selectivity and constructivity

Within the reconstruction process, three essential *basic principles* (also on different levels) play a key role: *perspectivity, selectivity* and *constructivity.* Every observation and every description of anything takes place from a *specific perspective.* This is necessitated by every observer's and each communication's connection to time and place. The inclusion of specific spatial and temporal perspectives is *constituent* for each actor who observes his environment or initiates communicative contact with it. Furthermore, in a social context, there is the necessity to act from within *social perspectives. Perspectives of age* and *gender* may be tied to biological facts, but they also have important social dimensions. Income, education, lifestyle, political interest, links to political parties are factors that constitute *social perspectives* and thus influence the observation and communication process. *Spatial, temporal and social perspectives* are to that extent constituent for every observation and communication. *Changing perspective* is possible and frequently occurs. However, it is not possible to include all or even only 100 perspectives *simultaneously.* Observing any one subject and communication with any one individual, we can achieve a change of perspective – this may be less or more so, depending on the individual; and it is a skill that must be

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6   This idea is entirely compatible with the notion of a basic operation of *observation*, understood as the *determination of a distinction*, as widely acknowledged in systems theory, cf. for example Willke (1999, p. 12ff.), Luhmann (1984), Kneer & Nassehi (1993, p. 95ff.).

learned. In public communication conveyed by the media, an important basic principle must be accepted.[7]

In the process of perception and recognition as well as in communication, *selectivity* is an equally fundamental principle and constituent necessity. Selection occurs in every communication process, also in public communication, in the production, dissemination/broadcasting and, equally, in the process of comprehension.[8]

In linguistic communication, communication partners select from a particular vocabulary; and they choose specific sound patterns, style and even grammatical forms. In public communication within the relevant responsible organizations, that is, the media, specific *selection patterns* and selection procedures emerge as, for instance, the procedure of selecting information (news) according to *news factors*. One rule of self-presentation for organizations forbids characterizing one's own organization in a consistently negative or too negative light. Selection also occurs in the process of observation and communication in public relations on the three levels of signs, texts and topics.

The aspect of *construction* of communicative (and media) realities is essential to the understanding of cognition and communication as a whole. During the process of perception and observation, our brain constructs cognitive realities. As actors in the communication process, we construct *communicative realities*, which can be clearly distinguished from other forms of realities (material realities, social realities). However, if the relation to reality of the construction process is not implicitly included in the reflection, this represents – in scientific description – an inadmissible *reduction* of the entire process, which leaves out essential aspects, thus preventing an adequate description. Yet if the constraints that are inherent to the process of observation and communication ("reality constraints") are included in the reflection, the concept of "reconstruction" is quickly arrived at. What establishes the constraints and controls the *perspectives* for the media's construction of reality is not only the observing system, but also the *structures of reality* themselves. These control the *selection process* within the different phases of communication management, and thus the *constructivity potential*. What might that imply? In observation and the communication process, yet also in the persuasive dimension of organizational communication, there is a kind of coercion, a necessity to orient according to *reality structures*.[9] For the PR process this means, for instance, that a press release or information released in a press conference in respect of the issue at hand must represent this "correctly." Another example is the requirement for the annual report to reflect the economic situation "adequately," or that a so-called "ad hoc announcement" of a public limited company contains correct and relevant information. In the sphere of investor relations, where everything is about investor's money, it is essential that the reference to reality of the information produced by the company be *legally* approved.[10]

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[7]   When viewing a landscape, with and without a telescope, it is possible to switch quickly from a near and far perspective. A wall with 40 television monitors can simultaneously show a hotel detective, the different rooms and corridors in the hotel; and in television news, the change of perspective is a very important means to facilitate an insight into wider areas of reality.

[8]   Cf. in this regard, Luhmann's communication concept which understands communication as "processing of selection" as a "synthesis" of three selections: information, utterance and understanding (Luhmann, 1987, p. 194ff.).

[9]   This insight has nothing to do with an outright copy of reality, but has to be understood as "structure isomorphics", that is, structure similarities between description and the described, between text and social reality.

[10]   Cf. for instance the contributions of Zitzmann, Taubert, & Leis in Kirchhoff & Piwinger (2001).

3.2.3   Event types and rules of the reference to reality

For professional PR communicators – individual or corporate actors – "external" reality is primarily represented as a complex of *actual situations* and *events*. These events (cf. Figure 1 with regard to the following comments) either occur on a natural basis (*natural* events), are socially initiated or constructed (*social* events) or else are specifically defined for public communication (*media* events such as, for instance, press conferences, events etc.). Events are perceived in accordance with occupation-related, media-related and genre-related *rules* and *routines*; they are reconstructed and, in a second phase, translated into *texts* and *topics*, in accordance with media-specific rules and codes.[11] In the case of media events, not only the texts, but also the events themselves are actually *constructed* in accordance with such or similar rules and professional routines within a social process (social construction) and are linked with texts and mostly with topics.

In practice, in PR, the existing *rules of the reference to reality* are those that set out how the *facts in PR texts* (for instance press releases, company reports) are to be accurate and undistorted, how word and deed are to be consistent, and how the generated external company *images* should correspond with the perception the company affiliates and employees have of that company.

The assumption may be that communications activities of actors in social organizations and the media essentially generate the public sphere – understood as a communication system that is comparable to a public arena (Neidhardt, 1994). In this case, it may be observed that communication processes also occur, on the one hand, between PR actors, PR organizations and the professional PR system and, on the other hand, between journalistic actors and the media as journalistic organizations. These processes can be described as perspective-related selection, construction and reconstruction processes and subjected to empirical investigation in terms of their reciprocal induction and adaptation action.[12]

The communicative "products" resulting from both communicator subsystems emerge as journalistic texts (in the extended sense) or topics[13] for media actuality or *media reality*. The *thematic function*, that is, the generation, production and availability of relevant topics for the public, can – at the social macro level – be viewed as a key function not only of the media, but also of PR. Media reality that can be differentiated for the purposes of analysis into communicative realities of the media as a whole, individual media, topics and texts is a *communicatively constructed* reality. However, in its informative components (news, reports etc.), it is essentially an *ex post-constructed* or *reconstructed* media reality, in accordance with existing patterns. Information generated in this way is, in manifold ways, *in relation* to the original potential or currently available information and information structures. The degree of structural agreement between already existing (natural and social)

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[11]   Cf. for the analysis of media-specific codes for instance Bentele (1985). On the media-specific routine concept cf. Saxer among others (1986).

[12]   Cf. in this connection the relevant contributions in this volume, in particular, the "determination thesis" developed by Baerns and the intereffication model developed in Leipzig.

[13]   (Public) topics are understood here as sign or meaning complexes which emerge in a complex communication process in an interplay of a) observed actual facts and events b) expressions of actors (descriptions, interpretations and evaluations of actual facts/events) and c) statements about the statements. Different types of communicators generate the topics in the context of a historically created reservoir of themes. The topics' career, duration, acceptance and relevance with the public are dependent on how the public perceives the relationship between the underlying actual facts/events and the topics themselves (Bentele, Liebert, & Seeling, 1997).

realities on the one hand and media realities that were constructed by the communicators on the other hand is controlled in processes by professional norms of adequacy such as truth or objectivity and can be examined in this regard. The degree of *adequacy* of media realities is simultaneously a quality criterion for professional communication. A *difference* principally exists between social realities and media realities that cannot be suspended. This difference between actual facts and events on the one side and their representation on the other also holds true in the case of "media events," that is to say, wherever an element of social and communicative reality was organized by PR professionals (for instance, a press conference, an anniversary event, etc.) in order to generate public awareness and reporting. The description of such events in the media is also subject to the same *rules of adequacy* for this event type (truth, objectivity) as the reconstruction of other event types. The most *adequate reconstruction* of events that is possible can be characterized as a basic form of the – necessary – *reference to reality* (see Figure 1).

The *recipients* or the *public* who are involved in the game as *sub-publics* or *stakeholder groups*, observe media realities and therefore perceive the actual facts, events and media events for the most part only *indirectly* via the mass-communicative construction and reconstruction process. However, this is true only for the most part. This is because on the one hand there are *segments of the audience* who participate directly in the events as *participants* or *concerned parties* in relation to reported events. These individuals (similar to journalists reporting on location) can compare directly and subjectively experienced reality with media reality within the context of a *reality comparison* (Kepplinger, 1992).[14] However, part of the public that does not participate in events – by far the greater part – will, for instance, have at least a partially independent perception of reality than that reflected in media reports by gaining information through personal connections or by the *comparison of different media*.

The public can evaluate the adequacy of information contained within media reality both through the *reality comparison* as well as through the *media comparison*. This results in indicators for the perceived *credibility* of reporting of the media as a whole and the professional communicators that are involved in the media (Bentele, 1988a, c). The public's possibility of undertaking such evaluations of credibility of media reality should be a key cause, historically and functionally, in the emergence of *adequacy rules* (truth, objectivity) on the part of the communicator. If the communicators within communicator systems do not observe these rules, media reality contains perceptible *distortions* for the recipients. The public can perceive *discrepancies* between directly observed excerpts of reality and media realities (reality comparison) or between the different media realities (media comparison).

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[14]   In a war, soldiers and the affected civilian population can make this kind of direct reality comparison.
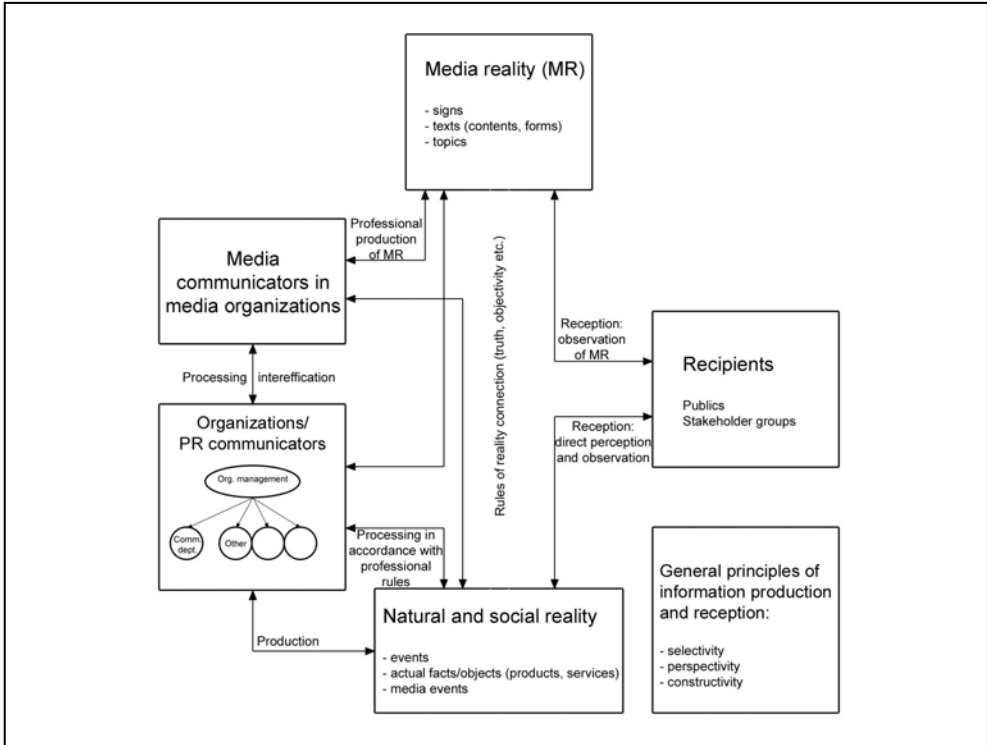
Figure 1: Model of social information and communication relationships in the
reconstructive approach

Examples of discrepancies are untruths, taboos, perceptible glossing over, the omission of negative information etc. Perceived discrepancies lead to a decline in credibility and trust values in communication. This trust mechanism (Bentele, 1994a) not only exists between public and communicator systems, but also *between* each of the communicator systems. Journalists also estimate these sources as more or less credible due to their professional experiences with PR representatives. This is also the reason for the *rules of adequacy and appropriateness* that exist in PR professional practice, at the latest since Ivy L. Lee.

4   Concluding Remarks

Communicators and recipients expect that media reality – at least if it does not concern entertainment, but rather reports on events and topics that actually occur in the real world – is in an *adequate* or *suitable relation* to these events. In this case, similar *rules of the connection to reality* are valid for PR instruments, PR media and for mass media texts. Different *topic constructions* are possible with regard to these social realities. However, if such texts and media representations go beyond a certain "corridor" of reality, the *discrepancies* between immediately experienced reality and the media's version of reality, which is to

reflect the former, becomes so vast that this creates problems of credibility and trust. In centrally controlled, totalitarian societies, observable discrepancies can be identified between social reality and the state's desired images, insofar as these emerge as negative propaganda effects. An adequate construction of reality in perception and thought is a biologically explicable achievement, whereas adequate construction of reality by PR and the media is a socially justified necessity that leads to a sanction of loss of trust, if that intricate link is interrupted.

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The Intereffication Model:
Theoretical Discussions and Empirical Research

Günter Bentele & Howard Nothhaft

The Intereffication Model proposed by Günter Bentele, Tobias Liebert and Stefan Seeling in 1997 offers a complex and dynamic description of PR's relation with journalism. Ten years since its publication, the model is well known in Germany and has been employed as a theoretical foundation for quite a number of empirical research projects. The article outlines the model's basic assumptions, clarifies the discussion, and presents some empirical results.

1   The Intereffication Model

The aim of this article is to present, explain and, in part, clarify the so-called "Intereffication Model" (IE) which was developed by Bentele, Liebert and Seeling about ten years ago.[1] The IE model offers an analytic description of the relationship between journalism and public relations. It is a well-known model in Germany, and has proven its value as a theoretical framework for empirical research. Therefore, in addition to discussing the model itself, the authors will present results from research projects – Master theses, in particular – which have utilized the IE model in order to analyze the relations of journalism and public relations in various areas and fields, ranging from politics in the German federal state of Saxony to the EXPO 2000 and Formula 1 Racing.

1.1   From Determination to Intereffication

The IE model evolved from a research project undertaken in 1996/1997. The project investigated the public relations activities of the East German cities Leipzig and Halle/Saale. In the course of the project, Bentele, Liebert & Reinemann (1998) carried out an extensive analysis of the press relations of the Department of Public Relations in Leipzig and of the Press and Advertising Office (*Presse- und Werbeamt*) of the city of Halle/Saale. In addition, interviews were conducted with the staff of the respective press departments as well as with various internal sources of information and communication, i.e., predominantly the heads of functional departments. Furthermore, there was a series of interviews with journalists covering affairs in both cities.

When the project started, theoretical considerations revolved around an *influence model* – in particular Barbara Baerns' determination model, which is well known amongst German communication scholars. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Baerns conducted

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[1]   Cf. Bentele, Liebert, & Seeling (1997). An article which introduces the IE model is also available in English language. It is dedicated to Jaakko Lehtonen on behalf of his 60th birthday. Cf. Bentele (2002).

several studies and drew attention to the fact that a significant part of journalistic work relies on public relations. Contrary to what audiences commonly believe, Baerns proved that a lot of journalistic output can be traced back to PR input, no matter whether primary or secondary media, printed media or broadcasting are concerned: "Hence, public relations does not only dominate journalistic investigation but all types of information sources (...)."[2] Another frequently quoted statement by Baerns is that public relations "determines" both the *topics* of media activities and the *timing*, i.e., the point of time when an issue is supposed to be on the agenda. Because Baerns used the word "determination" to characterize PR influence, the term "Determination Thesis" was coined and rapidly adopted by other scholars.[3] Baerns' observations, backed by empirical evidence, had a strong impact on the professional field of communication as well as on communication studies. Many PR practitioners became aware of the fact that their professional activity resulted in much greater overall influence of PR than they perceived from their respective individual perspectives. From a practitioner's perspective, it often appears difficult to get a message *through* to journalists. Baerns' study made practitioners aware of the fact that although they themselves may not always succeed, the overall influence of PR remains significant. Baerns' conclusions also sparked intense discussion in journalistic circles. As journalists often regard themselves as independent and neutral observers virtually immune to influence and manipulation, the idea of news coverage being *determined* by PR ran contrary to journalistic self-perception.

With a view to research, Baerns' studies stimulated a wealth of further studies investigating the relationship between journalism and public relations. In fact, it is no exaggeration to say that Baerns' classical studies founded a research tradition.[4] What is even more important, Baerns' work forced a different perspective of reasoning upon communication scholars. While the majority of scholars traditionally focused their empirical and analytical interest on journalism and media, Baerns drew attention to the fact that journalism is not conceivable without referring to *sources of information*, and that relying on sources has consequences: As soon as a journalist implicitly or explicitly utilizes a source, at least a *topical* or *issue-related* influence must be considered. Due to the discipline's traditional preoccupation with media, however, it was very difficult to analyze and investigate communication sources, i.e., non-media organizations. Only with PR research gaining ground within communication studies, were sources treated as a factor in their own right, with their own interests and agendas, not merely as variables influencing journalistic coverage.[5]

So, while the research work on the Leipzig/Halle-project began based on Baerns' work, it soon became clear that the *concept of determination* – despite its heuristic merits – was not, in itself, sufficient for the task. One of the main reasons was that the determination thesis focused on only one direction of influence within the complex relationship – namely the influence of PR on journalism. To the authors, however, there seemed to be other, reciprocal influences. In order to come to grips with the complexity of the municipal public relations, a more elaborate model was needed. Consequently, Bentele, Liebert and Seeling

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[2]   Cf. Baerns (1991, p. 87), Baerns (1979). Primary media are, for example press agencies, secondary media are newspapers, radio and TV programmes, etc.

[3]   Cf. for example Burkart (2002, p. 293ff.), Szyszka (1997).

[4]   Cf. for example Barth & Donsbach (1992), Fröhlich (1992), Grossenbacher (1989), Saffarnia (1993), Schweda & Opherden (1995), Rossmann (1993). For more recent overviews cf. Schantel (2000), Raupp (2005).

[5]   Cf. for example Ronneberger & Rühl (1992), Theis-Berglmair (2003).

developed a sophisticated approach, which took the mutual influences of both the journalistic and the PR system into consideration. Wishing to avoid metaphoric terms, the team coined the expression *intereffication* – a phrase derived from the Latin words "inter" and "efficare," meaning "to mutually enable."

1.2   The Intereffication Model: A Non-Metaphorical Approach

Even within scientific circles, the relationship between PR and journalism used to be described with *metaphors* such as "symbiosis" or "Siamese twins."[6] The IE model attempts to come to grips with what is behind these metaphors. It models the PR-journalism-relationship as a complex relation of mutual influences, mutual orientation and mutual dependence of relatively autonomous actors or organizations. In mature liberal-democratic societies, the activity of one side is only possible when the other side exists and co-operates. Under normal circumstances, the entire PR system as well as individual PR departments or PR practitioners rely on the cooperation of the media system, on individual media/editorial offices and journalists, to achieve their respective communicative objectives – such as publicity for particular topics or the change of attitudes.

On the other hand, the existence of the media system and its elements has come to depend on the PR system's ability to provide information in a professional, fast and reliable manner. Without public relations, the media system could no longer perform its "information function" – which, according to the German Constitution, is one of its democratic functions. This insight has led PR-theorists to the view that *both* journalism *and* PR must be considered as basic constituents for democratic political systems (Ronneberger, 1977; Bentele, 1996) – a view shared by the German Federal Constitutional Court (Bundesverfassungsgericht) (BVerfG March, 2, 1977). Thus, Bentele, Liebert and Seeling coined the term *intereffication* to describe a highly complex relationship between journalism and public relations while deliberately avoiding connotations with which common terms and metaphors are necessarily burdened. "Symbiosis," for example, always carries the positive meaning of a mutually beneficial relation, while "Siamese twins" suggests a somewhat negative, pathologic state of affairs. In contrast, "intereffication," being a neologism, is neutral.

In addition to being neutral, intereffication is also an abstract term. One can speak of intereffication with regard to relations on the *organizational level* – such as between PR departments and a community or editorial offices, which cover local events – as well as on the *individual level* between journalists and PR practitioners within particular fields of reporting (e.g., politics, economy). Whether one can speak of a *system* of public communication comprising a PR- and a journalistic-subsystem respectively is debatable. While the authors of the original study of 1996/1997 assumed the existence of such a system, scholars such as Schantel (2000) or Hoffjann (2001) argued that it is problematic to conceive of public relations as an autonomous subsystem within society. Instead, one should model PR as a subsystem of its mother organization. As there is no room here to pursue the question

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[6]   Cf. Bentele (1992), Ruß-Mohl (1994, 1999). The notion of „antagonistic co-operation" proposed by Rolke (1998) has not been elaborated yet. Scholl & Weischenberg (1998), referring to Luhmann (1987), suggest to describe the relationship as „structural coupling". Another non-metaphoric approach based on economic theory was proposed by Ruß-Mohl (2004).

further, let it suffice to say that the IE model needs be integrated into a macro theory of public relations' role in society – whether there is no alternative to systems' theory in the Luhmann-tradition is questionable, however.

Now the question is what constitutes the interefficational relationship? As illustrated by Figure 1, the IE model conceives of a double-dual system, in which two types of influence are subject to empirical investigation, namely communicative *inductions* and *adaptations*.
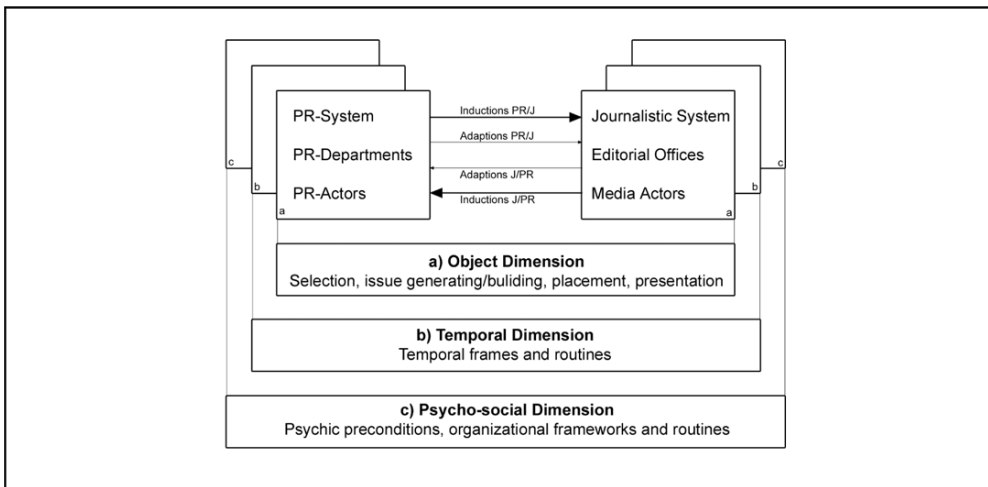
Figure 1: The intereffication model (adapted from Bentele & Nothhaft, 2004, p. 68)

Within the intereffication model, *inductions* are defined as intended and directed communicative *offers* or *stimuli*, which result in *resonances* in the respective other system. The resonances are open to observation and, to a degree, measurable – for example, as *media resonances*. A typical example is the utilization of a *story* offered by PR to a newspaper. This would be called "PR-induced" coverage.[7]

Adaptations can be defined as communicative and organizational processes of *adjustment*. In other words, actions by which actors or organizations consciously adapt themselves to changing circumstances (e.g. organizational or time routines) in order to optimize their own communicative success. To a degree, mutual adaptation is the prerequisite for any successful interaction; if adaptation is insufficient, interaction is hindered or even impossible. Adaptations also rely on expectations and past experiences, which evolve within professional work and which are already conveyed in education (as *rules of the trade*).

It has to be emphasized that the IE model – though its graphic description might suggest otherwise – does *not* constitute a balanced or symmetric model. Inductions and adaptations do not *neutralize* each other and can vary from actor to actor. While one organization may be very powerful and able to impose its own rules on journalists, another organization may find it necessary to make concessions in order to attract any journalistic

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[7]   Cf. summarizing and as overview Baerns (1995).

attention at all. In her IE-based analysis of the media relations of four Formula 1 Racing teams, Julia Schlenz (2002) gathered empirical evidence which proves that this indeed is the case: While press officers of powerful and successful racing teams forced journalists to adapt to *their* routines and schedules, PR people of less resourceful teams behaved far more accommodating towards special wishes or requests. On the other hand, journalists representing powerful institutions, such as RTL, Formula 1's TV partner in Germany, exerted far more power to demand cooperation than the correspondents did of small, insignificant newspapers.

In the light of this, it is important to note that the IE model is *descriptive* in character. It does not furnish a ready-made answer to the question of who controls whom. Instead, it provides a theoretical basis for studies, which seek to answer the question *empirically*.[8] In the authors' view, it is a question of empirical investigation to what extent and by which means concrete PR actors or institutions control concrete journalists or media – and vice versa.

As the multi-layered illustration in Figure 1 indicates, both inductions and adaptations occur in three dimensions: namely the *psycho-social*, the *temporal* and the *object dimension*.

What are inductive activities of the PR system directed at the journalistic system? Obviously, there are the two aspects, which have been investigated in the tradition of determination thesis, namely *agenda-building/issue-generating* and *timing*. Theoretically speaking, these "classic" cases constitute inductions in the objective and the temporal dimension. In addition, there is the *psycho-social dimension*, where the issues at hand are personal and social relations between the actors.

Adaptations of the PR system are also temporal, objective and psycho-social. Temporal adaptation is reflected by the fact that PR-practitioners time their work in order to meet editorial deadlines, for example. The object dimension comprises many aspects, beginning with the fact that PR adapts the criterions of relevance of its respective target media or employs formats, which are compatible with the target media's formats (e.g., footage material for broadcasters). Finally, psycho-social adaptations reflect the fact that PR actors and organizations adapt to the journalistic mindset, to the way journalists work, and to journalistic hierarchies.

Journalistic induction can be interpreted in two different ways: On the one hand (and that is what the authors had in mind when the IE-Model was introduced), there is induction activity aimed at material, texts or media offered by PR sources. In this interpretation, the journalistic end-product is regarded as some kind of virtual co-production of PR and journalism. While PR supplies journalists with a constant stream of facts, figures and stories, journalists select *which* information is published, decide on placement and importance, assess, evaluate and comment on facts, supply additional information etc. There is, however, an alternative interpretation. Here, induction activity is understood as being aimed at the PR actor or his organization. For example, one would speak of the media-induced

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[8]   It has to be noted that the model's validity depends on political circumstances. One can only speak of IE with a view to developed, industrialized societies enjoying a democratic and relatively autonomous media system. In authoritarian societies such as the German Empire (Seeling, 1996), and even more so in dictatorial societies, the media system has only limited autonomy. Cf. Bentele (2005) for a study of public relations in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR).

actions of companies when it is clear that corporations are influenced by media or public pressure, be it actual or anticipated.

Finally, journalistic adaptation to PR routines and rules is observable where journalists are forced to adhere to rules imposed upon them by the PR side. This is commonly the case in parliamentary journalism, where accreditation goes hand in hand with a professional code of conduct – be it explicit or implicit. An illustrative example is the "embedding" of journalists into the US Armed Forces during the Operation "Iraqi Freedom." Here, the Armed Forces were in a position to impose certain, very strict rules on the participating journalists.

Prima facie, adaptation activities of one system seem identical to the induction activities of the other system, and *vice versa*. However, a closer look reveals that *congruence* might be the case in certain circumstances, but this is by no means always so: Induction and adaptation processes occur simultaneously on both sides. This is a very important point to note, because it sheds light on the issue of power and on the question of who controls whom.

Within the framework of determination thesis, a PR-induction, which leads to PR material being published, was, understandably, interpreted as PR succeeding in "controlling" news coverage. The concept of adaptation makes us aware of the fact, however, that the message PR succeeded in conveying is not necessarily identical with the message PR *originally* wanted to convey and would have conveyed if PR really "dominated" the media in a strict sense of the word. As PR adapts to journalistic routines and rules of the trade, it might well be that the message conveyed merely is the message PR thought it *could* convey. Remember, for example, that journalists are wary of overly positive or enthusiastic statements. While the boss of the organization would have liked to present his recent marketing efforts as a "brilliant success," the PR executive advises him to tone down his enthusiasm in order to suit the journalist's expectations. So, one has to bear in mind that there are "tacit adaptations" – things that are not written and said because of assumptions about the other side, although perhaps one would have liked to write or say them. Hence, it is difficult to speak of *control*, *determination* or even *domination* in the strict sense of the word, when the controlling side only attempts to achieve control within limits set by the apparently controlled side. That is why the IE model is conceived as a *double-ended* and, at the same time, *dual* communication system. The "poles" and their objectives do not only depend on each other, but do, in fact, mutually enable their own activities.

2   Research based on the Intereffication Model: A Selection

With regard to empirical research, the IE-model was conceptualized with a threefold intention: First, the researchers wanted to provide a framework capable of integrating *existing* empirical research. Here, the researchers felt that the data collected based on Barbara Baerns' determination thesis would still be valuable when re-interpreted along the lines of a more complex, multi-layered model. The second intention was, of course, to provide a theoretical framework for *future research.* Thirdly, the model was aimed at overcoming limitations inherent in unidirectional concepts which conceive of a one-sided influence of PR on journalism only (Bentele, Liebert, & Seeling, 1997, p. 247) – in other words, the researchers wanted to point out the "blind spots" created by overly simplistic renderings.

Keeping these objectives in mind, one has to state that while some important steps have been taken, much work remains to be done. So far, there have been only limited attempts to employ the IE model in its entirety. Especially with regard to the third objective, there appears to be a marked imbalance: Even researchers explicitly referring to the IE-model concentrate on those aspects, which have already been focused in the context of the determination thesis. Empirical research so far has neglected media-initiated inductions affecting the PR side – for example, the power of journalists to force statements and ad-hoc press conferences in crisis situations by sheer weight of presence. In addition, the way media actors adapt themselves to PR routines, as happens in parliamentary journalism, has been examined superficially at best. The main area of interest still remains PR induction affecting the media, e.g., PR induced coverage. In a couple of projects the classic questions are, however, supplemented with an awareness of PR's adaptation to journalistic routines and programmes.

So far, there have been a number of research projects that have employed the IE model. Apart from the original study by Bentele, Liebert and Reinemann there has been Rinck's analysis of BMW's dialogic PR strategy (2001) and Wenzel's research of political PR in Saxony (Wenzel, 2000; Donsbach & Wenzel, 2002). Christina Stockfisch's Ph.D. thesis (2005), which focuses on media relations of the Association of German Trade Unions (DGB, *Deutscher Gewerkschafts-Bund*), also relies on the IE model for its theoretical foundation. Furthermore, a considerable number of master's theses explored various aspects of the intereffical relationship. As these master's theses are not easily accessible to the scientific community, we will summarize some of their results here.[9]

2.1 Induction

As has been explained earlier, inductions represent stimuli or influences initiated by one side and leading to observable effects or consequences on the other side. The IE model assumes the existence of inductions initiated by both PR- and by journalistic-actors. Without necessarily implying balance or equilibrium, one can therefore speak of a *double-sided* and *dual* system of PR- and journalistic inductions. As the two are observable as both stimuli and effects, they are open to empirical research.

The theses of Schmidtke, Schmidt-Heinrich, Lausch, Rehhahn and Röwer deliberately employ the same research design to produce comparable results. Schmidtke's thesis (2002) investigates the intereffical relationship between journalism and PR by an input-output-analysis focusing on Saxony's state-owned television, MDR (Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk, representing Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt and Thuringia). The author compared more than 1000 articles mentioning the MDR or covering MDR-relevant topics to press releases issued by MDR's PR department KO/MA. Christina Schmidt-Heinrich's thesis (2002) concentrates on another MDR-owned institution, RADIO JUMP. Again, the author compares press releases and 265 media articles covering RADIO JUMP itself or JUMP-related events. Katja Lausch (2001) took the opportunity to take a close look at the public relations efforts of the mega-event of the year 2000, namely the EXPO. In her work, the author compares 27 press releases issued by the Expo GmbH Hanover to 239 articles in the national and

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[9] Apart from the theses presented here, there have been other projects in Leipzig and elsewhere, cf. Schwesinger (1997), Beyer (1999), Richter (1999), Hoffmann (2000), Köbcke (2001).

international press. Rehhahn (2001), on the other hand, examines the day-to-day media work of Leipzig's sports clubs. Here, 73 press releases are compared to 286 articles in Leipzig's local newspapers, LVZ and BILD-Leipzig. Finally, Röwer's thesis (2002) focuses on the Leipzig trade fair for real estate, "The ImmobilienMesse." The author examines 35 press releases and the way they generated 72 articles in the daily and trade press.

2.1.1   Object dimension

Although various other aspects are touched upon, most of the projects presented here focus on PR-inductions in the object dimension – replicating Baerns' classical question. In its original form, the IE model assumed that inductions in the object dimension should be analyzed along four sub-dimensions: a) topics and their selection; b) relevance of and c) judging of facts, persons and topics; d) presentation. It is not surprising, however, that the majority of the projects aim at topics and selection – tracing whether, how and when topics and materials offered by PR are selected by journalists and find their way into journalistic products. Although some of the works mentioned here do inquire into the way journalists judge facts or "neutralize" judgments offered by PR, the three sub-dimensions have so far not attracted much attention. Probably that is due to research difficulties, some technical, some theoretical. On the technical side, most students made use of press clippings provided by the various organizations – consequently, there was only a limited possibility of assessing presentation. With only clippings at hand, not whole pages or newspapers, it was difficult to decide whether the articles figured prominently or not. On the theoretical side, deciding whether reporting is neutral or biased (judging facts, persons and topics) requires intimate knowledge of the various topics as well as considerable background in linguistics. The same holds true for the aspect of relevance, which is context-dependent to a very high degree.

Figure 2 illustrates some results concerning selection, as generated by the Master theses already mentioned. Note that there are two different figures here. First, there is the figure representing the percentage of articles, which were probably or certainly induced *by press releases.* This figure, in dark grey, results from input-output-analyses where the authors compared articles to press releases. Second, in the case of Schmidtke, Schmidt-Heinrich and Lausch, there is another figure. This figure, in light grey, indicates the percentage of articles that the authors traced back to some kind of PR activity *other* than press releases. This would be the case, for example, when there is a clear reference to a press conference in the text of the article ("… as a spokesman announced in a press conference today"). Admittedly, the data here is not as unambiguous as percentages resulting from a matching of press releases and articles – however, given the fact that uncertain cases were treated as *not* induced by PR, there is very strong evidence that PR exerts a substantial influence on journalism. In the cases of Schmidtke, Schmidt-Heinrich and Lausch more than two thirds of the overall media coverage of the respective organizations could be traced back to press releases and other PR activities. In Röwer's case, press releases alone accounted for 84.7% of articles covering the Real Estate Trade Fair "ImmobilienMesse" in Leipzig.
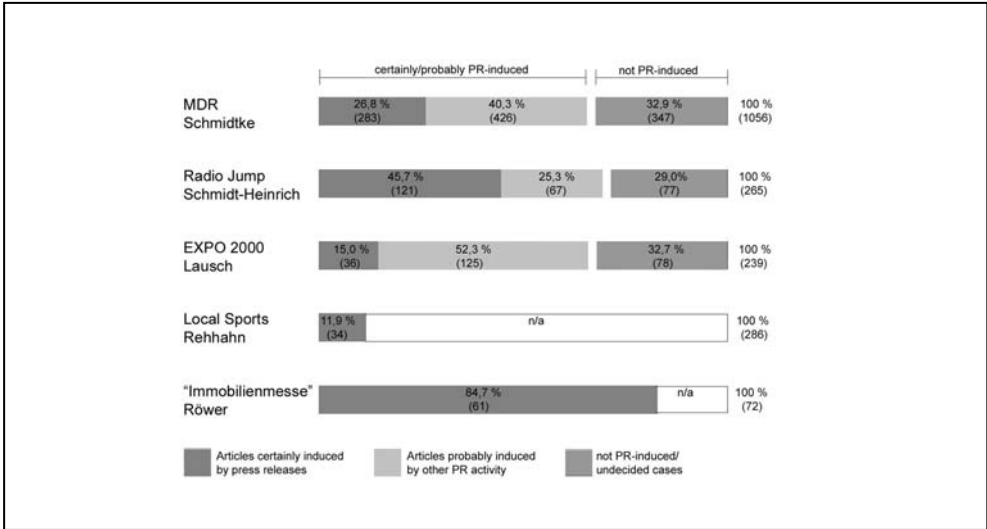
Figure 2: Ratio of certainly/probably/not PR-induced coverage in various studies (adapted from Bentele & Nothhaft, 2004, p. 83)

In the face of two thirds of media coverage being PR-induced (except in the case of Rehhahn), one has to consider the question of what that figure actually means. One should be very careful not to over-interpret the data. Of course, two-thirds of media coverage being PR-induced undoubtedly suggests a strong influence of PR. Nevertheless, the data do not prove that journalism as a system, or media organizations, or even single media actors, are "determined" by PR in the sense of PR having the media in their grip. Alexandra Schantel has pointed to the ambivalence that the notion of determination carries. As Schantel puts it, determination can be understood from a *PR-centred perspective* as well as from a *media-centred perspective* (Schantel, 2000, pp. 82-83.). From a media-centred perspective, one would have to analyze the media in their entirety to prove PR determination. In order to prove that there is a powerful PR influence on the *Handelsblatt* or on the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, for example, one would have to analyze both newspapers in their entirety, scrutinizing every article and tracing every scrap of information back to its roots. That is, and has never been, the purpose of the projects presented here. The projects discussed so far operate from a PR-centred perspective. What they examine is the relation of PR-induced coverage to editorially-induced coverage with regard to single organizations (such as the MDR) or certain areas of interest (such as politics in Saxony). In contrast to research focussing on PR *efficiency*, however, they do not limit themselves – as Schantel seems to suggest – to the question of how many of the press releases issued by a certain organization have been utilized by the media. They answer the question whether the media coverage of a specific organization is determined by journalistic initiative or by the organization itself.

2.1.2   Temporal dimension

With regard to the *temporal dimension*, one has to bear in mind that Baerns' determination thesis postulates that PR determines not only the topics, but also the *timing* of media coverage (Baerns, 1991, p. 98). Consequently, the research projects examined the "latency period" which occurred between the issuing of a press release and its eventual utilization. As data is only comparable for daily newspapers, the overall number of n's in Figure 3 differs from figures in earlier tables.

   As was expected, data shows that daily newspapers utilize the overwhelming majority of press releases within three days of receiving them (see Figure 3). There is always a remainder of delayed utilization, however. In Schmidtke's project, for example, there were 24 press releases, which resurfaced in media articles after more than a week.

Time	MDR Schmidtke 2002	Radio JUMP Schmidt-H. 2002	EXPO 2000 Lausch 2001	Sports Clubs Rehhah n 2001	Immobilen M. R wer 2002
Output/ Dailies	n=207	n=113	n=36	n=27	n=27
Following Day	18.3% (38)	55.7% (63)	88.9% (32)	~25% (~7)	66.6% (18)
Two Days	15.8% (33)	22.1% (25)	2.8% (1)	~25% (~7)	3.7% (1)
Three Days	20.1% (42)	2.7% (3)	8.3% (3)	~11% (~3)	7.4% (2)
Four Days	9.2% (19)	6.2% (7)			3.7% (1)
Five Days	9.2% (19)	5.3% (6)		~25% (~7)	
Six Days	12.0% (25)	-			18.6% (5)
Seven Days	3.9% (7)	1.8% (2)			
Week+	11.5% (24)	6.2% (7)			
Overall	**100.5% (207)**	**100.0% (113)**	**100.0% (36)**	**86.0% (36)**	**100.0% (27)**

Figure 3: "Latency period" between issuing and publication of press releases
      (adapted from Bentele & Nothhaft, 2004, p. 92)

Future research should pay close attention to the nature' of the topic covered in the press release, and separate current topics with a "best-before-date" from non-current topics. Radio *J*UMP's media work, as analysed by Schmidt-Heinrich, is characterized by many releases simply announcing events, for example. While it makes no sense to announce an event *after* it has taken place, there are non-current topics, which can be published when

nothing else of interest is happening. Parthey (1999), in particular, examined the utilization of a press release covering a non-current topic – namely "windmill-climbing." Her data shows that 50% of its utilization occurred after three months, with 15% occurring even after six months (Parthey, 1999, Vol. II, p. 148). Apparently, journalists "hoard" suitable non-current topics for later use – a fact PR-practitioners are aware of, but one that is seldom discussed when it comes to input-output-analyses.

2.1.3   Psycho-social dimension

With regard to the psycho-social dimension, the authors have already pointed out that personal or social factors have not been the object of systematic research so far. Arguably, this is, once again, due to practical problems. In the authors' opinion, the obstacles could be overcome by innovative qualitative designs, however. For example, one could ask a PR practitioner how many journalists contacted throughout a campaign were personally known to him and how practitioners and journalists alike view the relationship. Another approach would seek to identify the importance of "contacts" (either with regard to media or in the line of business). The databases of recruiters specializing in the field of public relations and communication management (such as GK Personalberatung in Germany) should provide a wealth of information, which, in principle, is open to secondary analysis.

2.2   Adaptation

With regard to adaptation, various researchers have gathered evidence supporting the assumption that PR adapts to journalistic rules of the trade, and does so in order to increase its own chances of inducing material. One example is Seidenglanz's project, which – among other variables – examines how the *professionalism* of a press release – its perceived compliance with journalistic standards – affects its chance of being published. The data displayed in Figure 4 leads to the assumption that journalists tend to use professionally-written releases more often than releases which display a low or very low level of journalistic professionalism. While only two of eleven releases (18 %) with very low professionalism resurfaced in newspaper coverage, 55 releases with high marks for journalistic professionalism appeared 26 times, e.g., in almost 50% (47%) of the cases. What is interesting, however, is that there is a limit: press releases with very high marks were not published more often than those with merely high marks. It seems that "polishing" a press release is only advisable to a degree. What should be polished is the headline though: releases with a concise and to-the-point headline were published in 81% of the cases, while those with a vague headline were rejected in 94% of the cases (Seidenglanz, 2002, p. 159).

There have been other projects focusing on various aspects. Parthey's research concentrated on press pictures, for example. After conducting interviews with 23 journalists the author concludes that there is certain, limited adaptation to standards of journalistic photography, but much room for improvement remains. 43% of the journalists complained about PR pictures being inferior to genuinely journalistic pictures, while 48% conceded that some PR pictures are on a par with journalistic photography while others are not. Only two journalists did not see any differences.

Apart from her interviews, Parthey then attempted an experiment with two series of press pictures – one in the somewhat "sterile" fashion typically associated with PR pictures, another created by a professional press photographer. Unfortunately, the experiment failed because neither series was used frequently enough to allow comparison, but the design in itself should inspire other research to deliberately experiment with adaptation variables.

Professionalism	N Press Releases published	Selection Quota *Number of press releases utilized at least once*	Induction Quota *Number of articles based on press releases selected*
Very low	11	18% (2)	8
Low	39	28% (11)	21
Medium	80	31% (25)	62
High	55	47% (26)	58
Very High	62	42% (26)	55
Overall	**247**	**36% (90)**	**204**

Figure 4: Influence of "professionalism" on selection and induction quota (Seidenglanz, 2002, p. 157)

3   Conclusion

The aim of this article was to present and explain the intereffication model and to demonstrate that it constitutes a useful theoretical framework for research investigating the journalism-PR-relationship. A selection of results drawn from research projects conducted in Leipzig and elsewhere shows that IE-based research generates data consistent with and comparable to past research – while offering the additional bonus of a theoretically sound, common terminology.

Looking at current research, there have been quite a number of IE-based projects, but there is a marked tendency to employ the model in part only. While the overall concept and the terminology are utilized as theoretical background, actual empirical research tends to focus on a few selected variables. Future studies should aim at ambitious approaches, which employ the model in its entirety. The authors are aware, of course, that a complex, multilayered model such as the IE model, with its double-ended and dual structure, cannot be operationalized easily. As the relationship between journalism and PR is highly complex, however, research has to match this complexity with adequate research designs.

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Trust and Credibility – Prerequisites for Communication Management

Günter Bentele & René Seidenglanz

In today's modern societies – frequently described as information, communication, media or knowledge societies – people perceive and experience world affairs largely mediated, through public communication. The construction of public communication involves the production of information by public relations prior to their publication on the one hand, the selection and construction processes which create media realities on the other hand. Because mediated information is usually not directly or immediately verifiable, trust – particularly public trust – appears to gain more relevance in such societies than it does in others. For the same reason individual political and economic actors as well as corporate agents (organizations) increasingly rely on the attribution of (public) trust. Consequently, academia is challenged to investigate phenomena such as trust and credibility more thoroughly than has been the case thus far.

1   Trust, Public Trust and Credibility – Definition of Terms

Following Luhmann (1973, p. 23ff.) *trust* can basically be defined as a (communicative) complexity-reducing mechanism, as a risky prior concession in which expectations of future events, which are usually, however, based on the knowledge of past events, that is, experience, take on a key role. On this basis it seems sensible to define *public trust* as a process and result of *publicly generated* trust in publicly visible actors (individual actors, organizations) and systems (social subsystems such as the pension system, the party system, the political or economic system, or the whole of society as a system) (cf. also Bentele, 1994, p. 141). Credibility, which can be conceptualized as a sub-phenomenon of trust, can be defined as a feature attributed to individuals, institutions or their communicative products (written or oral texts, audio-visual presentations) by somebody (recipients) with regard to something (an event, matters of fact, etc.). As such, credibility is not a characteristic inherent to texts, but an element within a multi-positioned relationship (Bentele, 1988, p. 408). While in everyday language the attribution of credibility is limited to the communicative dimension, the meaning of trust is somewhat more extensive: not only does one trust to a greater or lesser extent in the statements of an agent, but also in the technical dimension of objects (e.g., automobiles), in social institutions (e.g., unemployment insurance, political parties), in geographical settings (e.g., the weather situation) or in social systems (e.g., the pension system, market economy or parliamentary democracy).

Etymologically *"vertrauen"* (to trust) and *"glauben"* (to believe) are related to one another: From the original use of the word in the sense of *"glauben, hoffen, zutrauen"* (to believe, to hope, to have confidence in) emerged the denotation *"Vertrauen schenken"* (to confide in), and from the reflexive *"sich trauen"* (to dare) the denotation *"wagen"* (to

brave) developed. *"Vertrauen"* (trust) stems from the Old High German word *"fertruen"* and the Middle High German word *"vertruwen."* Middle High German for *"hoffen"* (to hope) is *"truwen."* The verb *"glauben"* (to believe) goes back to the Germanic *"ga-laubjan"* (to hold dear, to approve of), which already among the pre-Christian Germans referred to people's friendship-like trust in God. Subsequently it was used in slightly weakened meaning in the sense of *"für wahr halten"* (to believe) or *"annehmen, vermuten"* (to assume).[1]

2   "Trust" as the Subject of Scholarly Research

2.1 Paradigms and Perspectives

Scholarly engagement with the phenomenon of trust brought forth a whole range of different definitions and, particularly, approaches, each emphasizing different aspects of this complex construct. This calls for an attempt at a meta-analysis. To begin with, different approaches to "trust" reveal themselves from the vantage point of the respective disciplines with their own paradigms regarding the theoretical processing of both the concept and the phenomenon and, if applicable, the methods of researching them empirically. In this regard, various perspectives from fields such as psychology, political science, communication studies, business studies, sociology and others (e.g., educational studies) can be identified.

Aside from the distinction between systems-theoretical and action-theoretical perspectives, other options for structuring definitions and theories of trust would be top-down or bottom-up approaches. Bottom-up strategies try to understand and define trust based upon the function it has for society as a whole or for one social system. Here it is often conceptualized as a vital "mechanism" and as a constituent for the functioning of a society. This strategy is primarily encountered in works surrounding systems theory[2], but also, for instance, in disciplines such as political science.

Bottom-up strategies are those approaches that describe and explain trust by starting out from the smallest social unit – the individual or the actor. Here, with reference to the singular individual, trust is usually understood as an attitude towards other individuals or organizations (Vercic, 2000). Based upon knowledge about the experience and actions of the individual, this strategy to a degree develops wider reaching theories. The majority of (social-) psychological approaches can be attributed to this strategy. Additionally, there is published material from business studies explaining economic processes based upon the everyday world of the individual.[3]

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[1]   For a more detailed account cf. the German etymological dictionary *Duden-Herkunftswörterbuch* , Volume 7, p. 225. (*glauben*) and p. 716 (*trauen*). Hebrew even uses the same word for "trust" and "truth".

[2]   Some academic literature, however, uses both strategies. Luhmann (1973), for example, takes up both bottom-up elements from social psychology and functional-structural aspects typical of top-down strategies.

[3]   For a summary of approaches in psychology cf. e.g. Petermann (1996), in business studies e.g., Bittl (2003).

2.2   General Approaches and Theories

In Luhmann's *structural-functionalism* approach, trust is declared a social relation which is subject to an inner logic of its own (Luhmann, 1973, p. 4). Trust is understood as a necessary, inevitable mechanism for the reduction of complexity, as a "supererogatory performance" (ibid., p. 46), one that there is no claim for, but which has to be given voluntarily. As a prior concession for the future, trust is time-dependent and needs to be continually confirmed. Distrust is not only understood as the opposite of trust, but at the same time as its functional equivalent.

Anthony Giddens (1990) develops and explains the necessity of trust in modern societies by using a macro social model, which corresponds with what we call the top-down strategy. A mechanism he deems central to our modern social formation is trust in "abstract systems," especially *expert systems* (law, science, politics, and the economy). Because validity is no longer merely a question of truth, but one of social acceptability, trust gains the function of a reflexive steering mechanism. Modernity, in this concept, is considered a "high trust era." With regard to modern societies, Giddens substitute the concept of "certainty" – which characterized traditional societies – with "trust."

James S. Coleman presents a psychologically founded model of trust processes (1982, 1995). Systems of trust are made up of individuals guided by instrumental reason. It is assumed that in the pursuit of their interests the involved individuals have to make decisions. At least two parties are involved in this process: the *trustor* and the *trustee*. These two represent the basic elements constituting the trust system. In many trust relations, the trustor is only prepared to put confidence in the trustee because of a mediator who knows the trustee better than the trustor does. The trustor, in turn, has sufficient confidence in the judgement of the intermediary. Following a bottom-up approach Coleman also develops from such microstructures – smallest trust units – entire communities of mutual trust conceived as "vast systems of trust relations" (Coleman, 1995, p. 243ff.).

3   "Trust" from the Vantage Points of Various Disciplines

3.1   "Trust" in Psychology: Interpersonal Trust

Different disciplines bring forth different approaches to trust and credibility. Nevertheless, parallels, cross-references and overlaps can be found: for instance, psychological findings resonate in political science and economics. However, since the psychological view is limited to observing merely the interpersonal aspects of trust[4], its application to the realm of public trust is not entirely apt. At the same time this narrowing-down and thus concretising of the research focus has led to a huge amount of empirically founded results. One fundamental assumption is that trust is based upon the expectations about future events. This approach is made more concrete by Deutsch's expectancy-value model (1958, 1973). According to this model, the decision to grant trust depends primarily upon whether or not a positive outcome is likely as a result of this decision, as well as upon the significance attributed to this outcome. This decision, in turn, rests upon knowledge, which is based upon experiences of one's own or the information imparted by others. Positive experiences, thus,

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[4]   Cf. e.g. Petermann (1992, p. 9).

are crucial for the development of trust. In this regard, and according to Rotter (1967, 1971, 1980) an expectancy of trust can be described as the result of a learning process. Rotter differentiates between specific expectations on the one hand – relating to individual situations – and generalized expectations in the sense of a relatively stable personality trait on the other. Rotter's "Interpersonal Trust Scale" (ITS) facilitates the scrutiny of such generalized expectations. The instrument tests how trustworthy a person is generally perceived.[5]

Beyond locating the topic theoretically, (social) psychology, especially within the scope of attribution research, deals with trust and credibility. The intention is to measure if, resulting from which causal nexuses and caused by which criteria, individuals are assessed as credible or not.[6] A psychological research area that looks into credibility more deeply is forensic credibility research and its adjacent credibility assessment. This research tradition devotes itself to the question of how credible or credibility-lacking behaviour can be registered from determined, objectively measurable features (e.g., facial expressions, gestures, psycho-physiological phenomena) (cf. also Köhnken, 1990).

3.2 "Trust" in Economics

From economic science's point of view, the problem of trust may be characterized as the "*deus ex machina* of economic theory" (Albach, 1980, p. 6) which "failed to integrate this phenomenon into its framework" (ibid., p. 2). The prevalent neoclassical theory does not even inquire about the status and relevance of trust. Instead, it is based on the assumption of a perfect market with rationally acting agents to whom complete and correct information and the necessary processing capacity are always available. Accordingly, the market is wholly transparent, which rules out any uncertainties in the relationship between the market participants and, thus, the very prerequisite for the necessity of trust.

An early model, which, at least implicitly, deals with trust, is Gutenberg's theory of acquisition potential (1979). It describes customers' preferences for certain products based upon their own or other people's experiences. Simon (1985, p. 15) refers to this potential as "trust capital" (*"Vertrauenskapital"*).

It is not until "New Institutional Economics" that the foundations for further – also theoretical – engagement with trust are laid. Each of the approaches associated with it – among them the theory of property rights, the transaction costs model, the principal-agent theory and the economics of information (Kaas, 1992b; Fischer, 1993) – dispenses with certain assumptions prevalent in neoclassical theory. The decisive difference, which allows the integration of trust as an issue, is New Institutional Economics' admission of informational asymmetries. For instance, the vendor of goods and services has an information advantage over the customer with regard to his own services (Kaas, 1992a, p. 886ff.). This asymmetry is the root of uncertainties that, in turn, render trust relevant as a theoretical construct. If media are regarded as "trust goods," as is done by media economics, trust becomes an important problem that demands theoretical explanation (Heinrich & Lobigs, 2003). In economic marketing studies, too, the phenomenon of trust becomes relevant and

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[5]   Cf. Rotter (1971, 1980). ITS has been applied in numerous empirical surveys in psychology (and beyond – as for example in political science).

[6]   Cf. the approaches by Kelley (1972), Eagly, Chaiken, & Wood (1978), as well as Köhnken (1990) for a summary.

gains influence, especially in connection with the concept of "reputation" (cf. e.g., Fombrun, 1996; Voswinkel, 2001).

By applying a bottom-up strategy, Plötner (1995) attempts to explain market affairs based on psychological findings (regarding interpersonal trust). Among more recent economics literature that engages explicitly and thus also theoretically with the phenomenon of trust (e.g., Dill & Kusterer, 1988; Plötner, 1995), Bittl manages to present an indeed convincing approach that draws on findings from communication studies. Based upon the trust concept and discrepancy thesis introduced by Bentele (1994), he inverts the arguments, deducing the notion of "non-discrepancy" – the lack of communicative discrepancies – as a crucial constituent of trust within markets (Bittl, 1997, p. 139ff.; Bittl, 2003). Furthermore, Ripperger (1998) attends to the phenomenon of trust in economic theory. He conceptualizes the principal-agent problem as the core of every trust relationship, namely that the trustee has an information advantage with regard to his true qualities and intentions.

3.3 Politics and Trust

Although trust is not given a major role in most theoretical conceptions of classical democracy (cf. for an overview Röhrich, 1981; von Beyme, 1991; Böhret, Jann & Kronenwatt, 1988), the debate about this phenomenon in political science has a long tradition. Already in his *Discorsi* Machiavelli[7] outlines a form of government reigned by the people and based on liberty. Its continuation is ensured only if it is led by an individual who meets with the trust of a wide section of the people. "Again, when by ill chance the populace has no confidence in anyone at all, as sometimes happens owing to its having been deceived in the past either by events or by men, it spells ruin, and necessarily so." (Machiavelli, 1970, 1979, pp. 238-239) The sociologist Max Weber, among others, draws on such a concept of the trustworthy leader[8] (Weber, 1956, p. 161). In the writings of John Locke, too, trust is given a certain amount of attention and relevance. According to Locke, the democratic community is based upon the people's trust in the mandate holder. Nevertheless, this confidence needs to be protected by governmental control and guarantees (Locke, 1966, p. 102, p. 110). This balance between trust and control still forms the formal foundation of modern democracies. Thus, the German system holds certain formal and legal procedures (e.g., asking for a "vote of confidence," passing a "vote of no confidence," cf. §§ 61 and 62 *Grundgesetz*). Almond and Verba (1965) in their civic culture approach develop a typology of political cultures built upon the two dimensions "civic participation" and "trust."

Since the 1950s in the USA and since the 1960s in Germany researchers and survey institutes have collected data on the question to what degree politicians and political organizations are met with trust by the population (for an overview of the USA cf. Lipset & Schneider, 1983; Listhaug & Miller, 1990). Certain variables attributed to leading politicians such as personality, political representation, extent of voters' agreement with the positions of the parties, as well as variables regarding the voters themselves were proven significant in a variety of empirical studies. Parker (1989) was able to demonstrate, for instance, that voters' trust was a more important influence on the outcome of the US American elections than their identification with the respective party. We have to note,

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[7]   Cf. e.g., Machiavelli, 1977.
[8]   Weber also emphasizes the democratic legitimation of such a leader.

however, that in principle, American research into politics tends distinctly towards the investigation of (public) trust in individuals, namely those who hold a political mandate.

In contrast to the American approach, German-speaking scholarship focuses on analysing trust in political institutions (cf. e.g., Franz, 1985; Döring, 1990; Gabriel, 1993; Walz, 1996). Jäckel (1990, p. 33ff.) accounts for this orientation by pointing out that political life is represented by its institutions. Nevertheless, it has to be conceded that the opinion regarding the institutions is fundamentally determined by opinions held about their representatives (cf. e.g., Schweer, 1997).

Overall, it can be shown that in Germany different political institutions enjoy different degrees of trust: while the Federal Constitutional Court and universities are met with high levels of trust, the corresponding results for political parties or labour unions are rather low. Certain political *institutions* (*Bundestag*, Federal Government) enjoy more trust than individual politicians and parties (Bentele & Seidenglanz, 2004).[9] With increasing age, trust in political institutions also increases. Party preference and political interest are crucial determinants of the attribution of trust (cf. ibid., as well as Bentele 1992).

A fundamental debate in keeping with the top-down strategy defined above concerns the question to what extent trust vs. distrust can be regarded as a constituent of modern democracies. Three different approaches can be identified here.[10] Gamson's theory of political trust orientation regards a broad basis of trust as fundamental for the functioning of a democratic state (Gamson, 1968). In contrast to that, Almond and Verba, for example, emphasize the role played by the distrust of a critical public. This distrust functions as a control mechanism and necessitates the continuous legitimation of the political system. There is a third approach (e.g., Sniderman, 1981; Wright, 1976) which advocates a blending of trust and distrust as the optimum in modern democracies. For Barber (1983, p. 93) this issue depends on the self-definition of the state. While elitist democracies cannot do without trust as a general category, in participatory, populist states distrust is an indispensable corrective.

4   "Trust" in Communication Studies: Credibility and Public Trust

4.1 Media Credibility

As a topic, trust may have been of increased interest to sociology in the 1990s: in his literature review, Kramer (1999) speaks of a drastic growth in scholarly engagement with the subject. Yet, this interest remained marginal with regard to communication studies. In the wake of the early Hovland studies, credibility, especially the credibility of sources and communicators, has been for a long time the subject of scholarly focus in communication science, particularly media effects research (Schenk, 2001; Jäckel, 2002). In the past 15 years, credibility of the media has received increased interest. Credibility, here, functions as a vital image factor and aside from public personae or institutions also refers to the media itself. The phenomenon is a complex one, not least because the "objects of credibility," thus

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[9]   The Federal Constitutional Court and the police are met with consistently high levels of trust by the German population, and while the corresponding values for the mass media and journalists are slightly above average, political parties have rather low trust values.

[10]   Cf. e.g., Schweer, 2000, p. 11.

that which the attributions refer to, are multilayered. Schweiger (1999, p. 91) systematically differentiates between six planes: presenter (e.g., TV host, announcer), originator/actor (e.g., politician), editorial units (e.g., programme, feature), media product (e.g., BBC, *The Sun*, etc.), subsystems of a media genre (public service broadcasting, tabloids) and media genre (television, daily newspapers). In credibility assessment, these planes probably overlap. While the USA has had a tradition of research into source and media credibility lasting several decades, it has only been since the 1980s that Germany, too, has investigated these matters both theoretically and empirically. Bentele (1988a, b) was able to show, for instance, that the public's attribution of credibility varies not only according to media genres (television, radio, printed media), but additionally is strongly determined within these genres according to the individual media. Tabloids, for instance, are deemed much less credible than quality papers. Vital variables influencing attributions of credibility are age, sex, education and media use. Scholarly research was able to identify various factors and dimensions that affect upon or even constitute attributions of credibility[11], which make empirical research far from easy. A more recent conference reader (Rössler & Wirth, 1999) devotes itself to the credibility of internet information and continues the tradition of German media credibility research. For Matthias Kohring, who has been intensely investigating this subject in recent years, trust basically refers to *selectivity*. Kohring starts out with the concept of an *act of trust*, elaborates it in 15 points and differentiates *readiness to trust*, *trust* or *declaration of trust* and *trustworthiness* (Kohring, 2001, p. 56ff.). Trust in journalism, hence traditionally the credibility of the media, is reconstructed as *trust in journalistic selectivity* and divided up into four types: trust in topic selectivity, trust in factual selectivity, trust in the correctness of the depiction and trust in explicit evaluations (Kohring, 2001, p. 85ff.; Kohring, 2002, p. 105; Kohring, 2004).

4.2 Loss of Trust and Credibility

The general drop in trust in recent decades is a key problem of western democracies since aside from politicians and political parties it also affects corporations, economic agents and industrial branches. These losses or crises of trust are frequently related to particular incidents (or their media representation) which, at times, can be characterized as scandals. Occasionally *losses* of trust turn into trust *crises*. Aside from a general change in values, it is presumably the heightened *attention of the media system* to scandal and – more generally speaking – attention to *discrepancies* that is in part responsible for this. The latter is, in turn, favoured by the changes in the media system (increasing competition, visualization, stronger emphasis on entertainment) and may result in the increase in trust towards politics, economy and so forth. An important aspect with regard to this is the possibility of *trust maintenance* or *trust regain* through communication, for instance, by replacing or selecting suitable leadership, adjusting organizational structures, and choosing more appealing topics and, especially, more professional PR.

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[11]   Cf. the dimensions competency or subject knowledge, trustworthiness, dynamism, objectivity, comprehensibility, attractiveness, ethics, similarity, social approval and liking cited in e.g. Navratil (1999) or Wirth (1999). It is problematic in a variety of ways that these dimensions were often determined by means of factor analysis (Wirth, 1999).

The question whether dwindling trust in political actors and institutions, as an example, coincides with a crisis in trust in the democratic system as a whole is usually answered in the negative by scholarly literature. Gabriel (1993) discerns merely a crisis of the party state; neither does Walz (1996) believe the democratic system to be in danger. These considerations can be put down to the distinction between governmental trust – trust in the current administration – and system trust. The most popular proponents of this approach are Miller[12] and Critin (1974). Moreover, Easton (1975), in his concept of diffuse political support, formulates such a distinction. Kuhlmann (2000, p. 28) substantiates this aspect theoretically and separates trust in a political system from the confidence in its actors or institutions.[13]

4.3   Theory of Public Trust as a PR Theory

On the one hand, the notion of "public trust" refers – reception-based and as an (individual) act of trust (Kohring) – to the attribution of different degrees of trust or distrust in publicly visible individuals, organizations, thus in actors and social systems. On the other hand, the possibility of observing these actors and systems is steered by actively organized communication (public relations) and is indeed only produced in the context of complex public communication processes, thus publicly. On the other hand, therefore, public trust refers to the social mechanisms of public communication, which *constitute* trust in actors and systems. Politicians, political parties, or the Office of the Federal President are actors, while the pension and health system, the pluralist party system or the system of social market economy are systems which can be met with greater or lesser degrees of trust by individuals or by the wider population. Processes of trust building or loss on the reception end depend heavily on the information conveyed by PR and media, in other words, on the rules of organized communication as well as on the processes and structures of public communication as a whole. It is the systematic depiction of this interdependence and its possible explanation that is the primary objective of a "theory of public trust" outlined in some of its essential points by Bentele (1994).

Five *elements* are distinguished as subdimensions in the process of public communication:

- *trust subjects,* i.e*.* (groups of) individuals who actively trust,
- *trust objects*, i.e. those publicly visible individuals, organisations or systems (technical systems, social systems) into which trust is put, and *trust mediators*, namely those agents communicating publicly (public relations and media),
- *facts and events* are reference objects of public communication and
- *texts and messages* play a key role in public communication.

In this, four *types of trust* are discerned: (interpersonal) basic trust*,* as well as (public) personal, institutional and system trust. This layered approach highlights the possibility of integrating (individual) psychological perspectives of sociology and allows the combination of top-down and bottom-up strategies. It is postulated that there are various *trust factors*

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12   Cf. Miller, 1974; Listhaug & Miller, 1990.
13   Accordingly a system cannot be judged by ethical standards or its integrity the way actors or institutions can.

(e.g., knowledge of subject, problem-solving competencies, adequacy of communication, communicative consistency, communicative transparency, social responsibility and ethics of responsibility) which are capable of creating high levels of trust if they appear to a very marked degree or jointly. Low-level occurrence or absence of these factors, however, generates distrust. While trust building is a dynamic process that takes a long time, loss of trust can occur very rapidly (e.g., in a crisis).

The most important cause for *loss of trust* is seen in the trust subjects' perception of *discrepancies*. Various *types of discrepancies* are distinguished as, for instance, discrepancies between information and actual fact (lies), between verbal statements and actual actions, between diverging actions within the same institution, between norms and statements or actions and so on. Discrepancies are generated intentionally or unintentionally by the communication or the actions of actors, or they have a latent existence in the (political, economic) system. In the process of public trust building, they are transported and picked out as topics by the journalistic system, which corresponds with the normatively defined (democratic theory) critical function of the media. Even so, due to the adherence of the media to the logic of news value, they are also either reinforced by the media or produced by it in the first place, which is not in line with the media's task. Journalistic news factors (Staab, 1990) such as negativism, conflict, controversy, as well as journalistic routines such as "topical instrumentalization" (Kepplinger, 1994) are capable of fostering *media construction* and the perception of discrepancies on the reception end. Particularly published conflicts are prone to transport, reinforce and generate discrepancies and, thus, to effect the public's loss of trust in agents from the economy, politics and so on. It can also be demonstrated empirically (cf. e.g., Bentele & Seeling, 1996) that the population perceives discrepancies quite consciously, for instance, between first-hand experiences and statements made by politicians or media reporting on certain groups of agents (the unemployed, East and West Germans).

4.4 "Trust" in Public Relations Practice

Trust – particularly public trust – is an important subject beyond academia as well, since from the outset it has been of outstanding significance for the practice of various professions.

No doubt, trust plays a decisive role in many *professional sectors* – as well as in social life generally. The client needs to trust that the solicitor represents his or her interests professionally; the patient puts more or less trust in the doctor; we need to trust that engineers and architects construct fully functional technical systems and buildings that do not collapse. The special status of public relations results from the fact that they are positioned in the centre of a multitude of *institutionalized trust relations*. Firstly, PR actors (such as PR agencies, PR employees or PR departments of an organization) are in a position of trust with regard to their respective employer or to their client whose interests they represent. In this capacity they, secondly, act as *trust mediators* between organizations and specific publics such as the media. Thirdly, public relations enters into a relationship of mutual trust with these *publics*. Journalists or members of action groups need to be confident that the spokesperson or the PR agency passes on the management's information correctly. This explains why *trust* counts among the most frequently used terms in disciplinary literature,

especially when the qualitative classification of the organization's relationship with its environment is concerned.

PR practitioners as far back as the 1950s and 1960s, such as Friedrich Korte (1954), Carl Hundhausen (1957), Albert Oeckl (1960) and Georg-Volkmar Graf Zedtwitz-Arnim (1961), define trust as a vital objective of public relations practice. This view, however, is largely limited to everyday theory and the profession's self-conception. "Trust" is used as an everyday concept; a reflection of the idea, which adheres to academic standards, is not found in the initial decades of the material published on PR, nor are there any empirical studies. It was only at the beginning of the 1990s that the literature received a new impetus from the considerations of Ronneberger and Rühl (1992, p. 226ff.).

Even though writings authored by practitioners stylize *trust* as a target value, they failed to dissociate it from the notion of "mechanical" fabrication of trust that, for instance, is expressed in slogans such as "winning public trust" (Hundhausen, 1951). Trust is built on trustworthy behaviour. Credibility and trust rely on the attribution of trust factors (e.g., knowledge of the subject, actually practiced transparent communication, etc.), whereas trust that presents itself with a fabricated "facade" is bound to falter eventually due to perceptible discrepancies. Compared to other forms of institutional communication such as, for example, advertisement, public relations can support this process effectively and assume a key role.

When gaining and maintaining trust through public relations is concerned, obviously more than an arbitrary series of communication techniques is necessary. Moreover, increased information activities or exclusively "accurate" information does not in itself lead to a greater degree of trust. Indeed, it is not so much the traditional elements of one-way communication, which support and sustain trust building, but primarily *dialogue*, *transparent communicational behaviour*, the *capacity to reflect oneself critically* and to *revise* one's behaviour (acknowledged as wrong). Dialogue, here, is not only to be understood as the exchange of arguments, but as the communicative engagement with other positions, which includes the possibility to adjust one's behaviour. The concepts of "symmetrical communication" (Grunig & Hunt, 1984) and of "consensus-oriented public relations" (Burkart & Probst, 1991; Burkart, 1993) have managed to provide PR practice with new impetus.

However, public relations itself is facing the task of improving its trust credentials. A study conducted by the authors in 2003 reveals that the sector is in urgent need of a boost in the public trust attributed to it.[14] Binding and generally applied codes, a high standard of education and a high degree of personal responsibility by the PR actors are professional features of the trade and provide the foundation for the development of future trust in public relations.

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[14]   Cf. Bentele & Seidenglanz (2004). Compared to other social institutions and actors, PR consultants enjoy only little trust among the German population and among journalists, as important partner in the process of trust mediation, even less.

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Part II

Advancements in Communication Management

Corporate Communication Revisited: Integrating Business Strategy and Strategic Communication

Ansgar Zerfass

Communication is omnipresent in our economic life. Every day sees significant sums invested in public relations, investor relations, and communication with employees and customers. Everywhere, integrated communication is looked on as a factor in economic success. And yet the question of how to portray, specifically from a management point of view, the need for communication and its contribution to value-creation is one which has hitherto been only marginally addressed by researchers. This chapter sketches out an interdisciplinary theory of corporate communication. It takes as point of departure the role played by the company *per se* in both market and wider society, and identifies various different approaches to the issue of value-creation. The concept of "integration," often so labile, thus acquires a new, multi-dimensional significance – as normative basis, functional process, and strategic necessity of communication.

1 Integrated Communication as an End in itself?

The connection between communication and corporate management forms, today, an object of investigation for at least three major research traditions. *Public relations research* (Botan, & Hazleton, 2006; Toth, 2006; Heath, 2001; Bentele, Fröhlich, & Szyszka, 2008) has proceeded from exploring media relations and processes of building public opinion. It has by now developed to a point where it can cast comprehensive light on the management of communicative relations between organizations and their external as well as internal stakeholders. This functional perspective looks on communication in general as something conducive to the ends and aims of both companies and wider society. It does not, however, answer the fundamental question of why communication is necessary at all within a market system which is, in principle, co-ordinated not via language but via price-relations. In *rhetorical PR theory*, on the other hand (Heath, 1994), and in *theories of organizational communication* (Jablin & Putnam, 2001; Theis-Berglmair, 2003) this fundamental problem is indeed addressed. These theories point out that it is only through the mediation of meaning that companies come into existence at all. Communication is also necessary to make organizations identifiable as social entities. This interpretative approach, however, can easily lead one to overlook entirely the powerful effects exerted by market, legal system and various hierarchies in present-day societies. Furthermore, this research approach tends to direct its attention predominantly to internal communication processes, failing to take into account the wider dynamic of our media society. A pragmatic synthesis is provided by *concepts of corporate communication and integrated (marketing) communication* (Van Riel & Fombrun, 2007; Argenti, 2007; Cornelissen 2004; Schultz & Kitchen, 2000; Bruhn, 2006). These take as their point of departure the communicative activities that can be empirically observed in business practice. Emphasis is laid here on the necessity of a connection between corporate strategy and communication strategy. Moreover, those approaches stress

the necessity of an integrative management of all communication processes with identity, reputation, brands, and trust as guiding parameters. These theories are, however, generally characterized by a merely mechanistic (stimulus-response) understanding of the nature of communication and by the lack of a sociological foundation.

Given this situation, a new beginning on an interdisciplinary basis seems necessary. The point of departure for any theory of corporate communication must be *the company itself* and the role played by this latter in society as a whole (Steinmann & Schreyögg, 2005). This inasmuch as corporate communication is in every case a commissioned communication which derives the meaning which it creates and establishes from the organization in which it is anchored. Also indispensable is a comprehensive understanding of *communicative processes* and of the functions these latter fulfil in our modern media society (Bentele, Brosius, & Jarren, 2003). However, linking-up relevant insights from economic theory and communication theory might yield to an arbitrary agglomeration of mutually incompatible language-games. So, finally, an integral and integrating *social-theoretical foundation* is required. A sociological theory which proves particularly fruitful in respect of corporate communication is the theory of structuration developed by Anthony Giddens (1984), which overcomes the limitations both of primarily agency-oriented (Max Weber, Habermas) and of primarily system-oriented (Parsons, Luhmann) approaches to the theory of society (Falkheimer, 2007; Poole & McPhee, 2005; Zerfaß, 2004, pp. 85ff.; Jarren & Röttger, 2004; Weder, 2007). Giddens points up how there exists a constant immanent interplay between will-directed agency and social structures (rules and resources), these latter mutually determining and conditioning one another. Shared structures serve actually to render the subject capable of action, inasmuch as they enable an inter-subjective orientation. A shared reference to certain concepts, symbols, values, and forms of coordination makes the actions of individual agents susceptible of being interpreted and of displaying "connectivity" with the ongoing continuity of social actions. At the same time, these structures, by being repeatedly actualised in and through individuals' pursuit of their daily lives, are not only reproduced but, wherever this is called for, transformed as well. Consequently, what we are to understand by management and communication is subject to a process of constant social transformation: influenced, indeed, in part by political-legal guidelines but initiated, first and foremost, by altered manners of proceeding within actual practice.

A *definition* in line with the current state of research would run: corporate communication embraces all communication processes which contribute to the definition of tasks, and to said tasks' realization, within profit-oriented economic organizations, and which, in particular, contribute to the internal and external coordination of actions and to the clarification of interests defining the relation between companies and their specific stakeholders. The basis and substance of these processes are symbolic actions which are initiated either by members of the organization (management, communication specialists) or by organizations commissioned with those tasks (agencies). Corporate communication is aimed in the first instance at informing and constructing meaning. Building upon this initial activity, it aims at influencing stakeholders. Corporate communication thereby serves both to support the ongoing provision of goods or services (success) and to create intangible assets (potential for future success) within companies.

2   Value-Based Management: from Shareholder-Value to Stakeholder-Value

The main task of management is nowadays considered to be the ensuring of a constant increase in the value of the company. *Value-based management* directs attention to strategic aims and goals, along with management methods and metrics derived from these goals. A key role is played here by the increase in *shareholder value,* i.e. that market value of stock held in a company which, particularly in the case of companies listed in the stock market, is easily determinable at any time. This is meant to ensure an optimal return, in terms of interest, for those proprietors of and shareholders in the enterprise who have invested capital in it (Rappaport, 1997). An indispensable condition of such an ensuring of return on investment is the steady improvement of the competitiveness and profitability of the company and of its capacity to innovate.

Already, however, from the viewpoint of entrepreneurial practice itself, it is clear that the policy of one-sided concentration on capital investors is short-sighted. This inasmuch as companies are, in fact, neither purely financial constructions nor naturally arising entities. In fact, they are organizations which exist only upon the foundation of certain legal institutions (economic system, corporate law) and whose continued existence is influenced by a large and various number of stakeholders – namely, besides investors, also customers, employees, government authorities, mass media, NGOs and many others (Freeman, 1984; Karmasin, 2007). What value-based management must direct its efforts to, then, is rather – more properly understood – the increasing of *stakeholder value.* Above and beyond raising profit for investors, the maximization of the benefits arising from the company for other of its essential stakeholders is a central issue. Moreover, a steady awareness of the socio-political dimension of actions undertaken by the company is essential. In this way, a further key point of reference for management is the issue of legitimacy, that is, "the generally-held judgement...that the actions of an organization are desirable, correct, appropriate or defensible in view of prevailing circumstances" (Steinmann & Schreyögg 2005, p. 83). In an age characterized by ever greater critical questioning of the market system, by globalization and by value-pluralism, such legitimacy must involve more than that perfunctory "generation of public acceptance" (pragmatic legitimacy) which continues to form the core of most corporate social responsibility programmes (Porter & Kramer, 2006) and more also than a mere cultural anchoring in a specific society (cognitive legitimacy). What is required is rather that the goals, strategies, structures and manners of operating of a company are – wherever necessary – susceptible of being actually normatively justified (moral legitimacy) (Palazzo & Scherer, 2006).

The tension between purely economic considerations on the one hand and considerations of legitimacy on the other has concrete effects on the formation of a *corporate strategy.* To define and to put into practice such a strategy is the central responsibility of management (Steinmann & Schreyögg, 2005). The corporate strategy defines, in the first instance, what goods or services are to be produced for whom (product-market concept) and in just what form this provision of goods or services is to be carried out. Above and beyond positioning the company within its competitive environment, however, management must also be concerned to ensure that any corporate activities on the more emphatically "social" – that is, the social-political – plane are such that the pursuit of market goals does not bring with it the infringement of legal or moral norms. Management needs to fulfil this double task under both its aspects. Otherwise, it faces, on the one hand, the threat of economic

collapse and, on the other, a (gradual) withdrawal of the "licence to operate" as a conse-
quence of legal impositions, public criticism and permanent loss of public trust.

Positioning of an enterprise in market and society thus has – as is shown in Figure 1 –
both a strategic and an operational dimension (Steinmann & Schreyögg, 2005, pp. 299ff.).
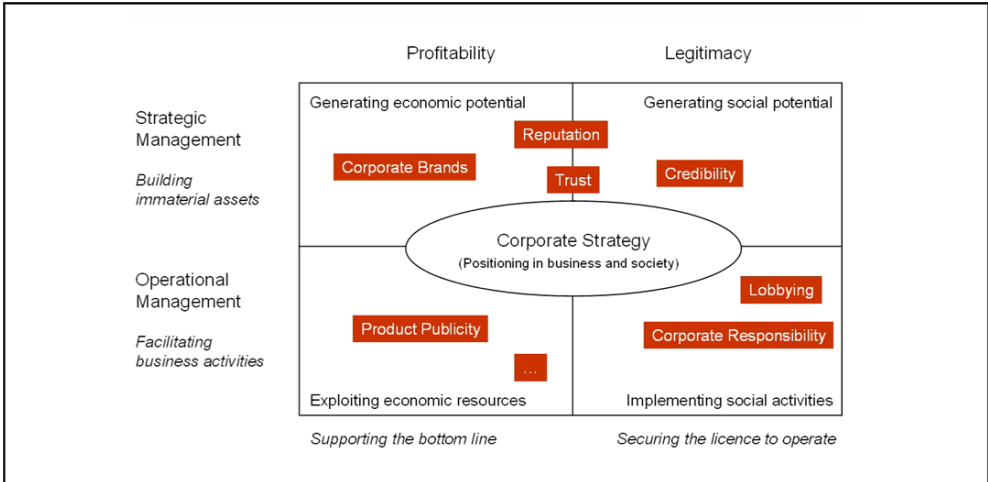
Figure 1: Corporate strategy and the countervailing demands of profitability and legitimacy

Considered in *operational terms* the issue is both how to achieve economic success and
how to give concrete form to social activities. This concerns the ability of the company to
meet, at any given time, its liabilities (liquidity). Moreover, the cost-effectiveness of its
core activities – providing goods or services – has to be ensured. This concerns the ratio of
expenses and returns as evidenced by the annual profit-and-loss account (success). Both of
these target values are measurable in monetary terms and have a determinative effect on
one another (Gälweiler, 1990, pp. 26ff.). The success already attained represents a factor
conditioning liquidity in advance, since it is only with a profitable business model that a
company can achieve a sustained level of revenue. At the same time, social activities must
not just be spoken about, but must actually be successfully put into practice. When doing
so, internal processes for implementing corporate social responsibility are often more im-
portant than campaigns aimed at achieving maximum publicity (May, 2008).

Considered in *strategic terms* the issue is how to build up and maintain various types
of potential for future success both on the economic and on the socio-political plane. Both
types of assets are prerequisites for successful business concepts. These assets can be sus-
tainable resources in terms of staff, production procedures, technologies, patents, or brands
(advantages in competitiveness). In respect of the necessary social legitimacy (licence to
operate), trust/confidence, reputation, and legal regulations are important as well. Those
potentials condition the actual success of the company. Immaterial and material assets tend
to ensure that success will not be temporary but sustained. They can facilitate a continued
rise in corporate value in the future. On the other hand, it is only companies which are

already successful on the operational level, and which enjoy good liquidity, that are in a position to invest in the development of new potentials.

The distinction between questions posed in terms of strategic options and questions posed in terms of operational ones has nothing to do with the long- or short-term nature of the decisions taken. For this reason, it can only be drawn concretely in the specific individual case. The basic principle applies always, however, that these two aspects must, in every case, supplement and support each other. Neither company can carry out its activities successfully if the economic and social potentials necessary are not exploited in the present moment, and, at the same time, are subject to further development.

The basic model of value-based management sketched out in Figure 1 shows that management today needs to orient itself in terms of legal and moral as well as economic imperatives. Latitude for economic and socio-political action must be used in the first instance in order to translate the formal goal of achieving profit successfully into specific strategies (product-market concepts). The company thereby makes a contribution to the collective satisfaction of economic needs. In modern societies the latitude for possible strategies here tends to be limited from the very start by laws, for example, those bearing on consumers' rights or the protection of the environment. These laws are intended to mitigate certain structurally generated conflicts and negative side-effects of the market system. However, systemic factors dictate that not all social conflicts can be solved in this way by measures of political and juridical order. The right of free commercial competition ensures that many such situations of conflict emerge only as a result of quite specific strategies and manners of proceeding adopted by individual companies or only by companies in a given sector. An example here would be dangers and inconveniences ensuing from specific products or production technologies. Moreover, in the era of globalization, companies are more and more often confronted with questions of inter-cultural legitimacy. Well-known examples are the practices of textile production in North Africa and Asia which have been the object of much investigation and criticism by European "watchdog" organizations and for which no regulating authority is at hand (Scherer, Palazzo, & Baumann, 2006). It is expected of companies that they solve, as far as possible, such questions of legitimacy in a decentralized manner. Only when the attempt to do this fails is it necessary to start initiatives which may change the binding rules for a whole sector, a whole state, or even internationally (Steinmann & Löhr, 1994, pp. 106 ff.). Value-based management, then, must constantly put into practice business strategies that, as well as making economic sense, are compatible with wider social considerations. At the same time, the need to strengthen the potentials for success in both dimensions has to be kept in mind.

3   Strategy and Communication: Four Types of Contribution to Value-Creation

Based on this multi-dimensional understanding of management, it is possible to determine the specific contributions made by communication to the process of value-creation. Corporate communication can

- *support the ongoing provision of goods or services* (success)
- and also *build up immaterial assets* (potentials of success)

By doing so, corporate communication may at the same time
- *create competitive advantage, cost-effectiveness and liquidity* (profitability)
- and also secure the *"licence to operate"* (legitimacy).

These types of contribution can – as Figure 1 shows – be drawn together into a matrix and linked up with typical aims and procedures of corporate communication. Of course, the distinctions made here are analytical ones. In most communication activities several of those aspects are operative at once, albeit with different degrees of emphasis and importance. Measures aimed at building up corporate culture – as, for example, a participatory process of defining visions and corporate principles – seldom produce any immediate effect on revenues. The emphasis here is rather on building-up potentials for future success. On the other hand, the practice of keeping employees informed day to day via the intranet is one which directly supports processes of value-creation in production and marketing. Positive impacts should be measurable in the short term. Similarly, open communication with customers and with "watchdog" groups can contribute both to the economic performance and to the legitimacy of a company.

From the management point of view, the necessity and rationality of communication might be described as follows:

Corporate communication supports, as an "enabling function", the *ongoing provision and commercialization of goods* (products and/or services) along with the management processes necessary to facilitate this, i.e. planning, organizing, managing human resources, performing leadership and controlling (Steinmann & Schreyögg, 2005). In the global economy and media society, the communicative aspects of these processes are acquiring an ever greater significance. For example, product publicity and consumer communication (Szyszka, 2007; Mast, Huck, & Güller, 2005) – contribute to differentiation and thus foster value-creation. Corporate communication does not, however, just create preferences at the point of sale. It can also contribute to employee motivation and – through lobbying, for example, or corporate responsibility programmes – widen the latitude for action enjoyed by the company within society. The *market-based view* of strategic management (Porter, 1985) looks, consequently, upon communication as a supporting activity which has its utility in all phases of the value chain and leads, in the end, to a higher turnover or lower costs. This will improve operating results in terms of the annual profit-and-loss-account. Along this line of thought, communication measures which recoup their own costs within the horizon of a normal business period should be dealt with by *cost accounting* (Ruud & Pfister, 2007).

Above and beyond this, corporate communication serves to build up longer-term *potentials of success,* such as reputation, company brands, public trust, and credibility in the public eye (Bentele & Seidenglanz, 2008; Fombrun, 1996), as well as corporate cultures apt to promote innovation and other intangible assets. This capital in the form of the results achieved by communication is considered by the *resource-based view* of strategic management, and by concepts of strategic management which take their cue from this latter (Prahalad & Hamel, 1990; Kaplan & Norton, 2004), as a key driver for corporate success. It will be easier, for example, for a company to increase its market share when its brand enjoys a high recognition and positive good image. If financial markets demonstrate strong trust in a company's management team and its visions, it will be easier to acquire financial resources on favourable terms. A corporate culture which accords central importance to such values

as cooperation and innovation will tend to lead to efficient internal processes and to promote the transfer of know-how within the company. Acceptance of the company's aims and goals and the ascription of moral legitimacy by external stakeholders (e.g. by NGOs and local government authorities) will help secure the room for manoeuvre that is necessary in order to implement successful business strategies. Such intangible values can be long-term resources for the company to draw on. A successful company will be able to convert those assets again and again into concrete advantages vis-à-vis its competitors. They play a decisive role in the valuation of companies in the case, for example, of mergers and acquisitions. It is necessary, then, that the process of building-up intangible assets by communication is calculated and rated in the same way as other investments. Corporate brands, databases mapping relationships with journalists and customers, or successful corporate media should be covered by *capital budgeting*. However, due to international regulations such immaterial values have not been part of financial reports until now. Nevertheless, they should be documented in Intangible Asset Reports (Brønn, 2008).

4   Integration and Coordination as Key Effects of Corporate Communication

In order to construct a comprehensive theory of corporate communication, the view "from the inside out" on the functional connection between communication and strategy must be supplemented and broadened. An additional perspective "from the outside in" will focus on those positive effects produced by corporate communication within the context of the wider interplay of all social spheres. Corporate actions are in no case undertaken in a void but are always imbedded in and connected with social relationships and contexts of interaction involving other agents (Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2006, pp. 32ff.). Many goals prove impossible to achieve in the case where the necessary support or tolerance on the part of important stakeholders is lacking, or when such agents mount active resistance. Take the example of the sale of one division of a global company. Such a sale can only succeed on condition that, firstly, a buyer can be found; secondly, the authorities appointed to guard against the formation of cartels give their approval to the transaction; and thirdly, it proves possible to prevent a long and costly protest on the part of the employees affected by it.

The interdependence of social actions means that the success of any company is dependent on the specific interests and intentions of other social agents (Zerfaß, 2004, pp. 114ff.). From the social-theoretical point of view, this interdependence is founded, on the one hand, in the fact that every social agent is, in pursuing his own interests, dependent on (scarce) material and immaterial resources. Those resources can either be provided by other agents or can become the object of competing claims. On the other hand, many individual and social goals cannot be attained except by means of a division of labour. This applies above all to the satisfaction of complex economic needs. Production, distribution, and even consumption nowadays require at the very least a division of labour at the level of national economies and will in most cases necessitate also a differentiation within individual companies. The only reason why this interdependence does not result in a total paralysis is because modern societies have at their disposal a whole range of *integration mechanisms* by recourse to which the potential conflict sketched out above can be resolved. To hold to the example given, we might think here of the shares and equity market, the procedural

stipulations of the law as bearing on cartel-formation, and, last but not least, the various methods of change communication developed to perpetuate employee commitment.

The term *integration* is used to designate the linking-up of different social actions or elements so as to form a shared context of action, one in which the conflict-potentials inherent in the division of labour and the distribution of resources among different agents are overcome (Peters, 1993, pp. 23ff., pp. 92ff.). Social integration is thereby a normative concept – integration can be successful, or fail, in different degrees. We may apply "integration" in the stricter, more emphatic sense to the drawing together of different actions and elements so as to form a unitary whole; the less emphatic forms of integration, consisting in mutual self-adjustment and the arrangement of actions in parallel, we should designate rather as *coordination*.

Modern societies and companies are characterized by the co-existence of various complexes of structures (orders based on prestige, on recognized values, on legal provisions, on market forces, or on hierarchies) which are deeply rooted in our culture. Those structures enable social integration or coordination in quite different ways. They are based on communicative action, reputation, or commonly acknowledged values; they rely on regulating procedures, or they use the power of contractual arrangements or administrative measures.

4.1 Dimensions of Social Integration

Social integration and coordination are the key positive effects achieved by corporate communication, since it is in this way that the relations between companies and their stakeholders can be formed and transformed. The need for the intersubjective adjustment of action can extend here into three spheres (Zerfaß, 2004, pp. 116f.):

- *Conflicts in respect of means, and coordination of action.* The simplest case of a company facing the necessity of achieving a (communicative) adjustment of its own actions to the actions of other social agents is that in which the means appropriate to the attaining of a certain goal are not, initially, available. Companies and executives must in such a case adjust their subjective actions to the actions and intentions of others. This might be achieved through the procurement of resources in the marketplace or through the assignment of routine tasks to employees within the hierarchy, based on the authority to delegate.
- *Conflicts in respect of ends, and integration of interests.* The problem of integrating action, however, shows itself in its sharpest form in cases where the different ends or goals set by agents for their actions prove incompatible with one another. For example, the business practices of a company can come into conflict with the system of values held by certain of its stakeholders. Such a collision of interests occurs "when there is no type or course of action available to the persons or groups who find themselves in a specific context which will permit them to pursue all their interests; and this by reason of the fact that the satisfaction of certain interests will in every case – that is, regardless of which course of action one resolves to take – mean that certain other interests will have to be left unsatisfied" (Kambartel, 1974, p. 65). In such situations there is no choice but to proceed to an intersubjective clarification of the various interests concerned, that is, to a conciliation and compromise between conflicting claims. This is something which, in post-traditional societies – especially when ethical-political

questions are involved – cannot be achieved except by way of communication (Peters, 1993).

- ▪ *Definitions of situations and interpretations of actions.* There also exists a need for intersubjective adjustment of actions in a third case. Actions may have failed to achieve their aims, but it is not yet clear whether this failure is one due to lack of appropriate means or to a conflict between the ends set by the various agents involved. The reason is often that companies and their stakeholders interpret the actions in question in different ways. For example, such ideas as "freedom of opinion" and "corruption" tend to be understood in a different way in many still-developing countries than they are in Western cultures. The creation of a common interpretative framework represents a cognitive challenge in itself. It is a task with which modern society is permanently at grips and one which cannot be handled without decisive recourse to processes of communication.

Of significance for the understanding of social integration are, besides the question of just which actions need to be intersubjectively adjusted, also the questions of how the integration is to be brought about and at what exact points in space and time it is to occur.

In respect of the "how" it is possible to identify two approaches:

> On the one hand ego may attempt to gain his end from alter by using some form of control over the situation in which alter is placed, actually or contingently to change it so as to increase the probability of alter acting in the way he wishes, or, alternatively, without attempting to change alter's situation, ego may attempt to change alter's intentions. (Parsons, 1967, p. 309)

In accordance with this insight, a distinction is made between, on the one hand, different forms of *situation-related integration* and exertion of influence on the action-situation (by coercion, economic incentives, etc.) and, on the other, *integration on the level of intention* (as, for example, by processes of argument and discussion) (Zerfaß, 2004, pp. 131ff., pp. 208ff.; Habermas, 1984, pp. 150ff.; Peters, 1991, pp. 28ff.).

In respect of the "time and space" aspect, a fundamental difference exists between, on the one hand, *integration in situations of co-presence* and on the level of direct interaction between companies and their stakeholders and, on the other hand, *integration in disembedded situations,* that is, of agents separated from one another in space, or in time, or in both these dimensions (Zerfaß, 2004, p. 122f., pp. 208ff.). In the first case, shared contexts of action and experiences permit a broad spectrum of direct, communicative clarification of values and interests. However, in large areas of modern society this clarification tends to run up against systemic limits. Interdependencies of action, conflicts of interest, and questions of interpretation all manifest themselves, in most instances, under conditions of separation in space and in time (Giddens, 1990, pp. 17ff.; Habermas, 1984, pp. 153ff.). The best example is economic relationships. The satisfaction of needs based upon the division of labour involves producers and consumers who on the one hand find themselves in different localities and on the other hand also participate in the economic process at different points in time. When interpreting a situation, those social agents who find themselves in what we have called "disembedded situations" lack knowledge supported by actual direct experience. They have to rely in large part on images of their counterparts, including their motivation, abilities, and reliability. Those images are in turn communicated to them by, for the most part, the mass media. Secondly, social agents in disembedded situations are obliged to

make use of generalized forms of integration in order to ensure that their actions continue to display potential connectivity even when the limits of context-sharing communities are overstepped. Finally, all those involved must develop trust in the accuracy of images and confidently share the assumption that the forms of integration in question do indeed fulfil the tasks that they are intended to fulfil.

4.2   Forms of Integration and Communication

The positive effects produced by corporate communication in the interplay between companies and their stakeholders become evident when one calls to mind the latitude for social integration actually existing in modern societies (see Figure 2). This frame of reference, which is elsewhere developed and expounded in all its details (Zerfaß, 2004, 208ff.), is one based on insights contained in Parsons' theory of the media of social interaction (Parsons, 1980) and the development given to this theory by Habermas (1984, pp. 180ff., pp. 256ff.).
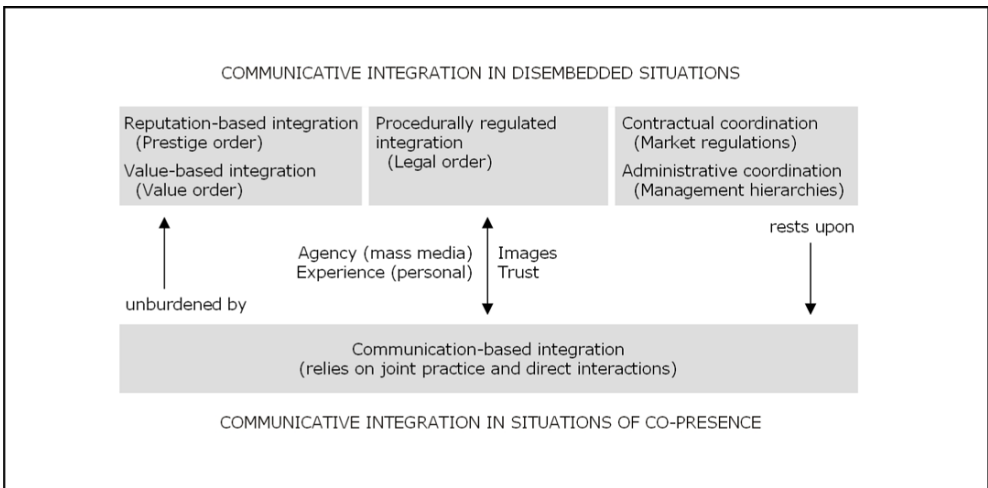
Figure 2: Communication and social integration

4.2.1   Communication-based integration

In the case of *communicative integration in situations of co-presence* it is possible to apply the whole spectrum of communicative measures. Where face-to-face discussion is a possibility, companies or their managers can, for example, engage in negotiations, find cooperative solutions to problems, give instructions or enter into ongoing arguments or debates. In all such instances the point is to get across certain meanings and significant ideas, so as to exert influence on other social agents and thereby to deal successfully with the challenges posed by the division of labour and the distribution of resources within society. Such communicative actions are successful in every case where they make implicit or explicit reference to relations – such as relations of authority within organizations – which already enjoy

a recognized legitimacy, or where, in the absence of any such pre-existing normative "backing," they take as their point of discursive purchase the actual meanings and intentions of other social agents. Of particular significance at this point is the communicative procedure which focuses on actual ideas and intentions. Processes of mutual consultation can serve not only to coordinate actions but also to bring into harmony with one another the aims and goals (inter)subjectively set for these actions. In argumentative settings it is even possible to clarify and settle contested interpretations of actions and situations. Communication becomes, in this case, the central – indeed the only possible – "source of social integration" (Habermas, 1988, p. 69). However, such communication requires a set of shared rules and resources (Giddens, 1984, 17ff.). And these rules and resources must, where necessary, be brought into existence by shared processes of learning. This latter point is of especial significance where the context of communication is an inter-cultural one. It is possible, indeed, to plan out communication strategies on a global scale. Such strategies, however, must in every case be "earthed" in the respectively relevant local contexts and cultures (Sriramesh, 2006).

4.2.2   Reputation-based and value-based integration

Since direct communication is not everywhere possible, modern societies have developed a whole series of highly effective forms of integration which take as their point of purchase the meanings and intentions of the stakeholders concerned. Here, the intersubjective adjustment to one another of different actions and interests no longer relies directly upon a procedure consisting in discussion, argument, and persuasion but rather upon the unifying force of orders or structures founded on prestige and on recognized value. These structures provide an implicit backing or "legitimacy reserve" which can be "tapped" in concrete processes of communication. These normative background structures are the condensed result of earlier processes of communication in which prestige and authority were earned and moral legitimacy was established. The connection between these structures and the process of value-creation within the company is so obvious as hardly to need pointing out. Investment in the building-up of communicative capital such as brands, corporate culture, and reputation takes place because companies believe in the power of structures grounded in prestige and commonly acknowledged values.

In the process of *reputation-based integration* certain individual persons and organizations succeed, by virtue of the respect they enjoy, in getting other persons to accept their views as they would accept the views of a teacher, and exert, in this way, an effective influence on the intentions of these persons. The reputation here in question can be founded in technical skills (expertise as an artisan), in intellectual capabilities (expert knowledge), in individual character traits (reliability, trustworthiness, dignity), or in other qualities either real or constitutive of the person's or organization's image. In every case, this means that the "concerned persons and institutions can have a kind of prestige that enables them to exert influence on the convictions of others, even on collective opinion formation, by their statements – without giving detailed reasons for demonstrating competence" (Habermas, 1984, p. 273). The readiness to accept unexamined the statements made by a company is grounded, finally, in two presuppositions. Stakeholder trust in the relevance and operability

of a specific prestige system and, at the same time, in a correct assignment of the position the company in question or its representative enjoys within this system.

In the case of *value-based integration* readiness to comply is generated by means of an appeal to shared ideas regarding what is good, what is fair, and what is true. Certain companies and executives are, by virtue of their moral authority and integrity, "[in a position] to evoke in others a willingness to accept concrete obligations by their moral appeals, without giving detailed reasons or demonstrating legitimacy" (Habermas, 1984, p. 273). Such appeals tend to be accepted due to their appearing, by virtue of their relation to deeper reasons for action, as "true choices" to which there is simply no alternative. It holds here too, of course, that this will only be the case where there exists, as implicit normative backing for such "true choices," a shared order of values, as this applies to each respective individual set of problems. Examples here would be scientific standards, which can play a role in technical controversies with government authorities and environmentalists, or established codes of ethics, which are relevant in moral disputes.

4.2.3   Procedurally regulated integration

The structures of law and democracy contribute in two ways to the integration of society. Communication in the sphere of law creates, through the process of *legislation,* formal and substantial structures which serve social integration by providing legal points of reference. This is the case when coordination mechanisms such as the market economy and certain positive rules of human co-existence are fixed and given foundation in the law (Habermas, 1996, p. 117). Law-related communicative action displays another level of social significance in cases of the *application of law,* where reference is made to already existing constitutions and legal structures. This contributes directly to the clarification and conciliation of conflicts regarding ends and means, or contested interpretations of situations (Peters, 1991, pp. 273ff.). The generation of a readiness to comply here is thereby a process which has its ultimate foundation in that peculiar mixture and co-implication of legitimacy-based normative validity and coercive positive fact on which recent sociology of law (Habermas, 1996; Peters, 1991) has thrown much light.

Procedurally regulated integration refers to the existing legal order and relieves the individual social agent of the cognitive demands which generalized forms of communication such as influence, or the binding commitment to specific values, tend to make on him. In this sense, one can understand such procedural principles as the democratic decision by majority, the formalized bringing of evidence, and the setting of time-limits to deliberation as fixed meaning- and intention-related forms which serve to enable members of internally differentiated societies – including companies and those who represent their interests – to engage in discussion and argument with one another. The theory of deliberative democracy (Habermas, 1996, 2006; Peters, 1993) contends that political decisions can be reliably considered to have been decisions legitimately taken wherever flows of communication initiated at the periphery of the formalized political system enjoy nonetheless the opportunity and capacity to flow through and permeate the procedural structures mediating democracy and the rule of law. In this way, opinions capable of winning the consent and support of a majority become transformed into decisions enjoying the protection of state power, which then in turn, in the course of legislation and the persuasive legal communication associated

with it, influence the situations in which companies and their stakeholders operate. The intermediate character of the legal system thus becomes clear: it remains firmly anchored in concrete contexts of action and experiences, receiving, as it does, its impulses from these primary processes of communication. It completes and supplements not-yet-codified orders and structures of value and prestige by "pouring" or "casting" these important structures into the forms of binding rules. It legitimates the initially situation-specific forms of coordination displayed by market and administrative power by linking them and subordinating them to the governing principle of mutual understanding and agreement arrived at via communication of meaning and intention. Finally, it itself makes available to social agents a series of positive norms which distinguish certain options in respect of ends or means, or certain interpretations of situations, as preferable or, alternatively, as not preferable or even as reprehensible, thus making a direct contribution to social integration.

4.2.4   Contractual and administrative coordination

Modern societies and organizations are also characterized by structures which enable coordination by altering the situational context for specific actions. Here, influence is exerted not upon the intentions of the social agents but rather upon the distribution of allocative and authoritative resources (Giddens, 1984, pp. 256ff.). These qualities and characteristics of a situation can be altered by means of positive incentives and negative sanctions (Parsons, 1967, p. 310). It is also quite conceivable here that the change in the situation may be the unintended consequence of an action which aspired to achieve other ends entirely. An example would be the purchase of an item designed for daily use, for instance a computer. From the point of view of the individual consumer making this purchase, the sole purpose served thereby is the satisfaction of his individual needs. In a market economy, however, this same act of purchase increases sales opportunities for a whole series of related consumer products, thus also altering the conditions determining possible actions on the part of the producers. Such concatenations "behind the backs" of social agents apply, of course, only to rational actions in pursuit of a given end or goal. No alteration can be brought about, by such a path, in the selected ends or goals themselves or in the interpretative models used to understand a situation. Moreover, they remain dependent on a functioning background structure which ensures that there will be just one shared interpretation of the essential characteristics of the situation – the knowledge, for example, must be shared by all that profits are an indicator of economic success and that rising prices are a sign of excessive demand. This single shared understanding of the nature of a situation tends to be secured above all via the steering media: money and power. In certain precisely circumscribed contexts, money and power take the place of the otherwise effective processes of communicative integration. Here, corporate communication fulfils, in principle, a merely supportive function (Habermas, 1988, p. 68). Communication is necessary to reshape the situational context of relevant stakeholders, which in turn will influence their interpretations and actions.

   Contractual coordination aims to produce its effects via material incentives, which enable companies and other social agents to create compliance on the basis of ownership and property. Such incentives alter the situation of the stakeholders concerned inasmuch as the choice of certain ends, or means to ends, is thereby linked up to a certain promise of

utility or advantage and is made to appear, to this extent, subjectively preferable. Coordination ensues here, then, in the form of a process of parametric adaptation. The social agents involved interpret each others' actions as inalterable givens, which are then included, as such, among the factors defining the situation in and from out of which the individual agent must make his decision (Peters, 1993, p. 292f.). One prototypical illustration of this process of adaptation, which is anchored in both corporate law and private law, is to be found in the economic model of perfect competition. The medium of the transfer of utility is money, which has, in the last analysis, no value in itself but rather fulfils a symbolic function (Parsons, 1967, pp. 306ff.; Habermas, 1984, p. 264). Compared, however, to the multi-layeredness of communication, the symbolic power of money displays severe limitations. It consists essentially in no more than a one-dimensional evaluation of alternative actions expressed in price-relations. Moreover, it is assumed that the ends and goals set for action remain always the same. Needs and interests not susceptible of evaluation in monetary terms must, as a matter of basic principle, be ignored by this steering medium. Despite, however, being in principle non-linguistic, the mechanism of the market remains dependent on communication. Corporate communication is especially necessary when it comes to laying the ground for negotiating, fulfilling, and supervising the fulfilment of contracts (Heinen, 1992, pp. 80ff.). Nevertheless the constructive logic of the market which we have just sketched out allows no room for argumentative discourse. Contractual coordination requires communication geared to persuasive or informative ends (Zerfaß, 2004, pp. 184ff.). This applies both to advertising and to the negotiation of contracts with new employees, as well as to the announcement of new industrial standards, which may exert influence on competitors and dealers.

Administrative coordination rests on the fact that the instructions of certain individual agents will be obeyed because they enjoy, in the circle of those concerned, a certain hierarchical status and because they have the power to impose certain sanctions. This form of coordination plays a central role within companies and other organizations. Here, the intersubjective adjustment of action occurs via administration and subordination. The operative symbolic steering medium here is power, which manifests itself in various forms, as, for example, in titles, authority to dispense instructions, and authority to sign official documents. Power is a symbolic value which is transferable only within narrow limits. It is defined by the capacity of an agent to ensure the generally binding recognition and acceptance of his or her decisions within an order of rules and dispositions already enjoying validity (Weber, 1964, pp. 157ff.). The agents involved presuppose "that the obligations are legitimised with reference to their bearing on collective goals and that in case of recalcitrance there will be enforcement by negative situational sanctions" (Parsons, 1967, p. 308). What is at issue here is distinct from the previously discussed forms of integration. Administrative coordination is about simplifying the common pursuit of a specific goal by means of processes of delegation. The relevant point of reference here is not the benefit or advantage of the individual but rather the efficient attainment of organizational goals. Power does not represent mere arbitrary coercion but rather legitimate rule. This once again presupposes that appropriate background structures supply the requisite normative "deep backing." These structures are hierarchical orders through which the various rights of disposition within companies are distributed. The term "hierarchy" should not prevent us from recognizing that modern, "flat" organizations, as well as decentralized decision-processes, are also for their part characterized by power-structures and by managerial authority (Kieser,

1994). Within administrative relations – as within the market model – communication ful-
fils an ancillary or supporting function. The asymmetrical relation between the power-
holders and those bound to follow their instructions must inevitably result in a predomi-
nance of the persuasive mode of communication. Executives need actively to communicate
in order to make full and concrete use of their authority. They can make explicit an-
nouncement of their decisions along with the means to their execution (instructions to take
action, prohibitions). Alternatively, they may structure situations in order to influence the
actual moment of action, by means of role-expectations, target-setting, or process-
organization.

Now, the key question is: how are these basic patterns or models of communicative in-
tegration actually usefully applied in day-to-day business life? It is of decisive importance
that management structures corporate communication in such a way that internal goals in
terms of value-creation are attained (see section 3 above) while, at the same time, account is
also taken of the determining structural conditions bearing generally on organizations and
markets and on the latitude for socio-political action.

5   Theory of Corporate Communication

The predominant task of management is to design, realize, and execute corporate strategies
that are likely to bring success. In order to do this a large number of divergent actions and
interests must be adjusted to one another. Communication makes a decisive contribution to
this. This concerns on the one hand the management of the production and investment
process within the organization itself (internal corporate communication) and on the other
hand the management of relationships within markets and the socio-political environment
(external corporate communication).

The interaction between members of the organization, partners in transactions (or
competitors), and other stakeholders tends to unfold in terms of different guiding patterns.
This is not a matter of chance, nor can it be influenced at will by management. It is rather a
consequence of the economic and social order and of the forms of social integration which
we sketched out in the previous section. Within the sphere of the organization itself, ac-
count must be taken of two distinct reference points: the direct communication occurring
between those persons participating in the creation of the corporate constitution and the
administrative coordination of those performing other functions. In the market, it must be
assumed that intersubjective adjustment of actions will be effected primarily by contractual
means. In the socio-political sphere, finally, integration is based on reputation, shared val-
ues, and normatively-binding procedures. This makes it clear that corporate communication
must fulfil tasks of thoroughly different natures, a fact which is reflected in the conceptual
distinction between internal communication, marketing communication, and public rela-
tions (PR) (see Figure 3).

This distinction, based at once on knowledge from management theory, communica-
tion science, and social theory, overcomes the evident aporiae of numerous theories of
practice and also of certain academic frameworks which, for example, undifferentiatingly
equate corporate communication with PR, or speak simply of "external" and "internal" PR.
But we must, of course, never lose sight of the fact that the various distinct spheres of cor-
porate communication do indeed always remain obliged to serve a single common goal:

namely, the creation, realization, and execution of concrete company strategies. For this reason, the integration of all communicative measures (Ahrens, Scherer, & Zerfaß, 1995; Bruhn, 2006; Schultz & Kitchen, 2000) is an idea built from the very start into this understanding of corporate communication. Integrated communication is no empty formula but rather a constitutive necessity.
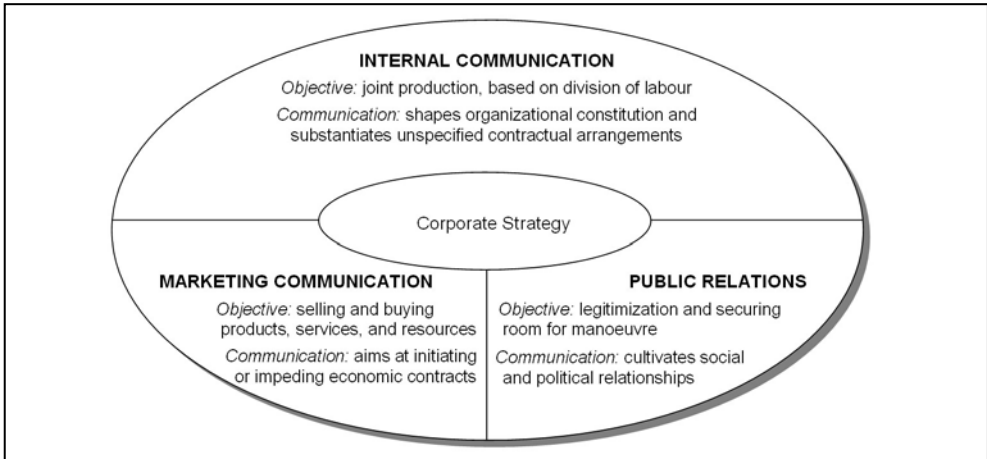
Figure 3: Corporate communication and its distinct component spheres

5.1   Internal Communication

The sphere of the organization itself comprises all those agents who, on the basis of the division of labour, contribute to the formulation and realization of concrete product-market concepts. Two groups must be distinguished here (Zerfaß, 2004, p. 252f.). Those members of the organization who participate in the creation of the corporate constitution have in principle the right, on the basis of certain legal background conditions (corporate law, law on co-determination), to determine the goals set for, and the general policy of, the company. The corporate constitution creates a codified orientation framework with which other members of the organization (employees, satellite enterprises in strategic networks) are obliged to comply. It thus becomes clear why social integration follows, here, two different guiding principles. Internal corporate communication concerns on the one hand relations between those involved in the creation of the corporate constitution, where direct communication may in principle be assumed. On the other hand, internal communication is about the ongoing structuring and steering of the business process within the framework of this constitution. This builds on administrative power, influence, and shared values.

5.1.1 Constitutional relations

The constitution of an organization has a very fundamental and foundational character. This requires the respective interests of those who are involved in the process of creating and determining it to be adjusted to one another in a highly effective way. This becomes clear as soon as one considers the process through which an organization comes into being. A company arises where different agents get together and pursue a common economic vision or strategy. This goal must be concretized in basic guidelines which make explicit the purpose of the enterprise (product-market concept), prospectively structure the choices of means (procedural guidelines), and define the rights and duties, in principle, of individual members of the organization (role-structure). In the end, it is a matter of framing a legitimate order for reaching common goals based on a division of labour. Such a constitutional basis can only be created in shared contexts of action and communication. In those settings divergent conceptions of goals and interpretations of situations can be intersubjectively adjusted to one another. Communication becomes in this case the central source of social integration.

A first task, then, for internal communication is the creation of a "general consensus as to orientation" (Schimank, 1992) among those members of an organization that are involved in the creation of the corporate constitution. The guiding principle of such a communicative integration is the principle of a direct discussion between individuals in the presence of everyone involved. This communication located in time and space can be supplemented at any time by reflective elements (argumentative discourse). This idea is reflected, for example, in the logic governing the structure of German corporate law. In private companies (*Personengesellschaften*) the creation and alteration of the corporate constitution is a duty incumbent on the owners, resolutions bearing thereon needing, in principle, to be unanimous (§ 119 HGB). This demands a process of coming to agreement which will only produce stable results if it is based on attempts mutually to convince each other or on forms of negotiation accepted by all parties. In limited liability companies or stock corporations (*Kapitalgesellschaften*) decisions taken by shareholders are taken explicitly in general meetings, that is, in the presence of the agents creating the constitution or their representatives (§ 48 *GmbHG*, § 118ff. *AktG*). In public companies, however, the clarification and conciliation of interests is not in fact a function fulfilled by the general assembly of shareholders but rather by the supervisory board and in the course of direct agreements between majority shareholders. Here again, the principles of consultation and negotiation are relevant. Shareholders try to influence each others' intentions, either by persuasion or argumentation. Contrary to the ideal conceptions of economic theory the whole process is not at all based merely on rational decisions. Many organizational goals and strategies emerge only in the tangle of the specific relations and are characterized by a high level of contingency (Ströh, 2006).

Appropriate to the communication processes discussed here are, above all, platforms and media which allow direct engagement between those involved. This includes partners' meetings, general assemblies, and meetings of the supervisory board as well as letters to the shareholders, annual reports, road shows, and other measures of investor relations via which the communicative relations between stockholders are formed.

5.1.2   Organizational relations

Every company extends as a system of action far beyond the constitutional relations. Besides the owners and stockholders the organization comprises employees, subsidiaries, and sometimes other enterprises linked to it in supplier and purchaser networks that are pursuing common visions and strategies. These strategies are designed and realized in processes based on division of labour. The core of corporate activity, then, is formed by a management process in which the diverse actions of various organizational members are adjusted to one another by reference to the common strategic goal. This process is largely communicative. In the context of planning and supervision, information is gathered and processed. Building a formal organization structure is achieved by communicating role-expectations, procedural guidelines, and ideal goals, which in turn enable integration. Personnel management concerns itself with the building-up and maintenance of human resources; this is the purpose, for instance, of assessment interviews and training sessions. Leadership, finally, has the task of activating these structural and personal potentials in a manner appropriate to specific situations. For this purpose, executives need to motivate, via communication, their employees to the completion of their daily work or to a questioning of the hitherto-accepted routines.

It is significant here that the relations between the persons fulfilling the various tasks are pre-structured by the organization's constitution. As a consequence, the problem of internal adjustment of actions is posed always against the background of a legitimated order of power and authority (Weber, 1964, p. 38). The agents concerned accept, with their entry into a company – that is, with the signing of an employment contract or company contract – generally and unconditionally the structures governing the organization (Kieser, 1994, p. 217). In many cases, the basic mode of direct communication – which is highly effective but effortful and dependent upon the co-presence of the persons concerned – thereby becomes superfluous: among members of organizations, "there is no necessity for achieving consensus by communicative means" (Habermas, 1984, p. 311). Their action stands – irrespective of whether the corporate culture is permeated by a bureaucratic or rather by a participatory spirit – always "under the premises of a legally regulated domain of action" (Habermas, 1984, p. 310). This is a point one must keep in view when thinking about the systematic reference point of internal corporate communication. Popular concepts of self-organization and evolutionary management tend to make us forget that the capacity of organizations to function rests in the last analysis on legitimated models of proper relations which have already marked and formed all further processes of (self-)regulation before these are actually set in motion (Kieser, 1994). These authoritative rules and resources (Giddens, 1984, pp. 17ff.) manifest themselves in the form of formal hierarchical structures, procedural regulations, specific orders of prestige within an organization, and corporate cultures. These structures enable social integration which – and this is most important in global corporations, holdings, and networks – overcomes the boundaries of time and space. They serve, as it were, as reservoirs of legitimacy which can be "tapped" in daily action in order to guarantee a coordinated fulfilment of tasks. At the same time it is always necessary to undertake meaningful re-configurations of those structures. That is to say, visions and values have to be altered and new models of knowledge have to be established in order to cope with new challenges in markets and societies.

It thereby becomes clear that internal communication contributes in two ways to social integration. *Structuring communication* creates systems of values, worldviews, internal orders of prestige, corporate cultures promoting innovation, etc. which all go beyond the corporate constitution. Thereby, potentials of success and communicative capital in the form of intangible assets are built up (see section 3). A classic example is the process of shaping the image of a new CEO which is intended to secure his or her influence right across the company. This communicative capital can then be drawn on in individual cases in order to adjust to one another the disparate actions of organizational members. *Coordinating communication* takes its orientation from the basic types of acquiring influence in disembedded situations. The principle point of reference is the mode of administrative co-ordination which is secured by the corporate constitution. This rests on formal authority and issues in the exertion of power. Communication is used here in order to directly announce, by symbolic means, collectively binding decisions (leadership communication between superiors and staff) or to structure contexts of action beforehand by the declaration of guidelines and specifications. This is supplemented and partially replaced by structures of prestige and value, through which many organizations try to overcome the drawbacks of bureaucratic structures. Here, communicative actions take on a persuasive form. This comprises in the first instance reputation-based integration, in which recognized experts exert communicative influence inasmuch as they instruct other employees, thus influencing their intentions. Empirical instances of this would be professional bodies of experts which take form in committees and so on, and also the informal communication networks between managers. Finally, there exists the possibility of directing, even where formal guidelines are largely renounced, divergent actions toward a common goal by an appeal to commonly-held values. We see a value-based integration of this sort when executives engage in story-telling and evoke the spirit of unity, the legends, and the visions of the specific company. A key precondition for the success of such a procedure is, besides a sufficiently stable corporate culture, also the personal integrity of the communicator who sets about "tapping" this reservoir of legitimacy.

5.2 External Corporate Communication

The immediate external environment of the company comprises the spheres of market and society, in which strategies realized via the division of labour are to be put successfully into practice. In essence, the issue here is one of "recruiting partners in a coalition" (Staehle, 1969, p. 385) in order to secure the necessary supply of transaction-partners (providing or purchasing goods and services) and other stakeholders (conceding room for manoeuvre, accepting the legitimacy of products and production processes). External corporate communication promotes the necessary processes of mutual adjusting interests and coordinating action. This covers the marketplace, in which economic relations with suppliers, customers, and competitors are formed, as well as the socio-political sphere of the company, which comprises the totality of all regulative relations in the non-economic area (see Figure 3). Both spheres are characterized by different forms of integration.

Correspondingly, we can distinguish two component spheres of external corporate communication: *Marketing communication* supports coordination of action based on contractual arrangements in the economic sphere. It comprises all communicative actions by

companies which manage relationships involving transaction and competition. *Public relations* aims at managing relationships in the socio-political environment of the company (politics, education, science, etc.). Essentially, it is a matter of making sure that corporate strategies are effectively realized, or of feeding the relevant potentialities for contradiction and social challenges into the internal decision system. This distinction between marketing communication and public relations is not an arbitrary one but is a result of different relations to the corporate strategy; it is defended on similar grounds by the Anglo-American excellence theory of public relations (Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002).

5.2.1   Marketing communication

Markets comprise all executions of actions which serve the satisfaction of needs via the production, distribution, and consumption of goods. Here, companies encounter a vast number of other organizations, especially (potential) competitors and transaction partners, commercial associations, and also individuals in their qualities as consumers and employees. The effective realization of corporate strategies in the external sphere thus especially requires a coordination of action, that is, the allocation of resources, products, and services. In modern societies, this problem is solved by market mechanisms, in the course of the operation of which social agents orient themselves by prices and quantities and thereby draw the activities of other agents as data into their own decision-processes, competing with one another (Peters, 1993, p. 291ff.). Contract-based coordination enables a mutual adjustment of actions which takes place essentially behind the backs of the social agents. Communication plays here only a supporting role. It functions as a means to the end of an exertion of influence related to the situational context, when contracts are prepared, negotiated, fulfilled, and checked via communication. For this reason, marketing communication must in principle be designed to persuade. Marketing research points out quite correctly that communicative actions in the economic context "are intended in the last analysis to produce in their addressees a certain type of behaviour" (Meffert, 1986, p. 443): the aim is not common orientations but rather simply actions susceptible of connectivity.

Here, two manners of proceeding need, in principle, to be considered. Companies can effectively realize their strategies in the market by directly exerting influence on aspects of situations which are relevant from the viewpoint of commercial transactions. This is, for example, the case where messages sent by advertising (announcements, TV and radio spots, online promotions) produce positive impulses to buy. A more indirect path is taken when efforts are made to build up, by communicative means, a positive image of a product or a company. This manner of proceeding, which is often (misleadingly) designated by classic marketing research as "public relations," is more properly designated as "image promotion" or "product publicity." This is a social-technological approach which can only develop its power to mark, form, and direct action if it is based on a legitimate order of commercial exchange. Reputation-based coordination of action becomes, here, a derivative form of market coordination. Corporate images and brands form, in the end, once again immaterial reserves. By being linked back to the non-intentional mechanism of the market, images created by persuasion are withdrawn from a latent pressure to provide reasons. In this way it is possible to create, with the knowledge of the consumer, worlds of emotional experience. These may abstract completely from the actually ascertainable qualities and

characteristics of the product being advertised while nonetheless exerting a directing influence on the actions of potential consumers. To be distinguished from this are manners of proceeding making use of reasoned argument. These become necessary wherever the accepted rules of the market, or their application in some specific case, are placed in question, so that a new, problem-specific consensus as to orientation needs to be created. Examples of such initiatives are dialogues with consumers regarding controversial aspects of a company's product or marketing policy which are not comprised in and controlled by the price system. Other examples are customer dialogues, ombudsmen, and participatory internet platforms which draw consumers into the process of product development (Zerfaß, Welker, & Schmidt, 2008).

5.2.2   Public relations

The socio-political environment of the company comprises all non-economic spheres of action as well as public spheres. These arenas of politics, science, art, etc. are defined by various different conceptions of meaning and rationality which differ quite sharply from those dominant within the organizational sphere and the sphere of the market. Here, companies encounter a whole series of highly various stakeholders – for example, government authorities, political parties, residents' groups, pressure groups, and NGOs (Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, Fair Labour Association) – whose manners of acting either influence corporate strategy or who are, conversely, themselves affected by the company. The problems of social integration arising here cannot be solved by referring to relations of authority already accepted as legitimate or by drawing upon the mechanisms of the market.

   In the socio-political environment companies try to secure room for manoeuvre and gain legitimacy for concrete strategies. This does not at all mean that certain product-market concepts must be recognized and acknowledged as good and correct by all stakeholders. It must be made certain, however, that all potential socio-political forces apt to support corporate strategy are activated; and that the strategy receives legitimation in each individual case where it appears to negatively affect some issue of social relevance. At this point the dual role of the company in modern society can be observed particularly clearly (Zerfaß, 2004, pp. 262ff.). Companies communicate with stakeholders in social spheres first and foremost with the aim of achieving their particular goals in respect of profit. This includes, for example, raising the demand for subsidies or for new corporate tax laws in the political sphere, or acquiring technological know-how in the scientific sphere. Regulative relations can also, however, be used in order to make an original contribution to public welfare. This is the case if companies initiate problem-solving processes involving all sectors of society or if they settle conflicts that have arisen with stakeholders regarding certain strategies by means of argumentative dialogues.

   The aims, in principle, of public relations can be more precisely defined when one engages with the issue of the relation between PR and social integration. But in order to do this we must draw some finer distinctions in respect of the whole complex of regulative relations. A large portion of these relations are pre-structured by laws and regulations. The best example is the interaction on numerous levels between companies and government administration, into which, in part – for example, during procedures regarding building permits – local residents and representatives of other interests are drawn. In these cases of

procedurally-regulated integration persuasive and informative PR measures are applied. In negotiations, administration-related procedures, and other forms of the application of law what is at issue, essentially, is the finding of compromise solutions that appear to be tenable in the longer term. This part of corporate communication is only seldom an explicit theme of discussion among experts in the field because it tends to be an activity performed as a matter of mere routine and in a decentralized fashion. This becomes particularly clear in the area of public disclosure. Legislation requires companies to publish financial statements and annual reports. In such cases the question of whether communication is to be conducted, and just what is to be communicated, need no longer be posed. On a certain subsidiary and supplemental level, however, there are many possibilities to raise the company image – for example by innovative means of conducting annual press conferences, or by designing annual reports in a particularly appealing way.

From the strategic point of view, the second area of regulative relations is of greater significance. It concerns those interactions with stakeholders raising non-economic claims which are not explicitly pre-structured by legal norms but nonetheless contain a latent conflict-potential. Examples are to be found in the relations between companies and local communities, "watchdog" organizations, churches, and scientists. Since other mechanisms of coordination are lacking here, communication becomes the central source of social integration. Communicative integration by means of face-to-face discussion always appears an attractive course of action in cases where – as in the case of conflicts between neighbours – (potential) problems of intersubjective adjustment of action can be localized in time and space. Practical examples of this would be stakeholder dialogues (Zerfaß, 2004, pp. 367ff.; Steinmann & Zerfaß, 1993) which may count as applications of corporate communication oriented towards dialogue (Bentele, Steinmann, & Zerfaß, 1996). At the same time, building shared models of orientation by means of argument remains the systematic point of reference for all generalized forms of integration in disembedded situations. This is the only way to solve conflicts of interest and of values.

The latent pressure to engage in direct communication can indeed be made less intense where generalized mechanisms of integration are built up and applied. Public relations contribute to this in two different ways. On the one hand, communication is necessary to build up structural reserves of legitimacy, such as orders of prestige, of values, and legal orders. Moreover, these normative structures can be "tapped" when controversial interpretations of a situation, options for ends, and choices of means are mutually adjusted to one another. The relevant modes of interaction have already been described. Of course, neither society-wide reputation nor moral integrity can be the result of instrumental coercion but must rather be earned through trust, transparency, and open discussion. This argumentative basis is the decisive difference vis-à-vis image strategies within the organization and in the market environment, where the issue is, right from the start, to relieve agents of argumentational obligations by persuasive forms of communication. In those spheres, it is possible to break off of the process of giving reasons for opinion and action by referring to the corporate constitution or employment contracts, or to the de facto selective power of the market. This is impossible in the socio-political and public sphere.

This is the deeper reason for the strategic significance of public relations: it operates in a sphere that is only weakly regulated and in which models of orientation necessary for social integration must be built up. On the one hand, this permits areas of freedom and latitude for pro-active structuring action, for example for innovative forms of interactive

communication and the positioning of entire companies. On the other hand, it is difficult to establish structures which will continue to mark and influence patterns of action over the long term. The pluralization of forms of life brings it about that public relations must deal with ever new stakeholders and ever new types of claim raised. Social integration can only succeed here if a broad spectrum of communication strategies adequate to each specific situation is applied. In this connection, procedurally-regulated integration becomes once again an issue, because Public Relations can contribute not only to the establishment of orders of prestige and value but also to the further development of the legal order. Structuring communication in the legal sphere aims at the modification of orders of disposition, for example at the further development of Corporate Governance. In this way, certain parts of socio-political relations can be made subject to legal norms (juridification) or liberated from the specifications previously governing them (deregulation). Here we can once again clearly see the fundamental interplay between agency and structure (Giddens, 1984). Public relations contribute to the transformation of the whole complex of socio-political relations, but in doing so also modify the governing and determining conditions of corporate communication itself, which is influenced in decisive measure by the existence of shared "rules of the game." Moreover, the presuppositions of marketing communication and internal communication are altered when the legal bases of those relations governed by the norms of contract and company and labour law are influenced by public relations.

The practice of public relations makes use of a broad range of different methods and instruments (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2005; Argenti, 2007; Zerfaß, 2004, pp. 358ff.). Companies create their own channels of communication when they initiate dialogues with opinion leaders, fireside chats with politicians, or open days for the local community. Other measures include publishing company magazines, websites, or corporate weblogs. In many cases, it proves good sense to make use of already existing platforms for public relations. Examples here are scientific congresses or political events at which executives can meet up with influential stakeholders. Becoming ever more significant is communication within social networks (van Dijk, 2006), for example within the framework of (regional) innovation initiatives in the areas of economy, politics, science, and culture. Also of importance is the mass media system. Journalists are approached and addressed, in order to reach by this path the real addressees in the socio-political environment: namely, readers of the press, or the TV/radio/Internet audience. The spectrum of instruments extends from the classic forms of press release and press conference, through the staging of pseudo-events aimed at attracting publicity, to the placing of paid "image advertisements" aimed at non-economic stakeholders. The symbiotic relation between journalism and public relations which arises in this way has been intensively investigated (Bentele & Nothhaft, 2008). An extension of these ideas to other gatekeepers and multipliers seems a sensible move, since the importance of classical media relations is continually diminishing in practice (Zerfass et al., 2007).

6   Integrated Communication

Many companies establish separate departments, each with their own budget and their own fixed priorities, to handle internal communication, marketing communication, and public relations. This suggests itself as a sensible idea inasmuch as these component areas of corporate communication do, as we have sketched them out, contribute in distinct ways to the

realization and effective execution of strategy. A separation of this sort is also current amongst service-providers and agencies, in professional associations, in education and further training, and, last but not least, in academic research. Hand in hand, however, with this necessary specialization goes, again and again, the danger that the view may be lost of the common reference of communication to the strategy as a whole.

For this reason, the *integration* of all corporate communication activities is a necessity: corporate communication will always be able to make an optimal contribution to social integration when its various component parts and aspects have themselves been properly mutually adjusted vis-à-vis one another. Integration does mean uniformity. Different problems demand, of course, different types of solution. A "Unique Communication Proposition" susceptible of being universally applied in a unitary and uniform manner must remain an unrealizable dream. However, it is necessary to test again and again whether the coordination of individual communication activities can contribute to corporate success. There are two approaches to solve this problem: the integration of communication activities per se, and the underlying process of communication management.

6.1 Integration of Communication Measures

Communication activities can, to expand upon a framework suggested by Bruhn (2006, pp. 66ff.), be harmonized with one another in four respects (Zerfaß, 2004, pp. 311ff., p. 413):

- *Content integration* relates to the mutual adjustment of communication activities via lines of thematic association – for example, via the use of common motifs, slogans, key messages, and key images. An example is the key concept "BASF – The Chemical Company," which has been the point of orientation for this global corporation's corporate communication for several years now. This motif stands for a multi-faceted business philosophy, articulated into a specific vision, basic values, and guiding policies, moreover comprising, for example, a recognized obligation to responsible action in the sense of Sustainable Development. Naturally, marketing communication, public relations and internal communication will emphasise these aspects in quite different ways. Nevertheless, the common idea that should be transported through any means of communication is that of a company striving for global leadership in innovation and market share in the chemical sector.

- *Formal integration* plays a supporting role here by defining principles of design, sound, and architecture for all communication activities. This applies especially to colours, typefaces, and logos which shape a company's visual appearance (for example, the website and brochures of BASF). The immediate recognition effect aimed at here is intended to ensure that stakeholders associate positive experiences or images from various spheres of action (e. g. science and the economy) with one another. This form of integration has been intensively discussed in public relations theory and practice since the 1980s under the catchphrases "Corporate Identity" and "Corporate Design". Today, its demands are largely taken into account in large companies, while small and medium-sized firms tend still to lag behind in this respect.

- More difficult to effect is the *temporal integration* of communication activities. Messages delivered by a company will only appear trustworthy where a certain temporal continuity of information is ensured. That is to say, "one swallow does not make a

summer" when it comes to declarations of commitment to social responsibility or leadership in the technical field. Such messages, to be effective, cannot just appear once in a short-term campaign but must rather be communicated repeatedly over the long term and in as many arenas as possible. Above all, however, such crude mistakes as the simultaneous announcement of job-losses and increases in directors' salaries must be avoided. Even when two such issues have in fact, causally, nothing to do with one another and concern in fact different stakeholders, they will inevitably be linked in the public mind and can in this way cause permanent damage to company reputation.

▪ *Dramaturgical integration* concerns the mutual adjustment to one another of all communication activities with a view to their total effect within the emerging and dynamic context of campaigns. Communication campaigns start with a clear conception of the positioning of the company that is aspired, but in fact take form and constantly evolve only in the process of their practical realization (Zerfaß, 2004, p. 413). Campaigns are, in distinction from classical communication programmes, non-linear, cross-media, limited in time, thematically narrowly focussed, and, above all, dramaturgically designed (Röttger, 2007). Examples here are successful communication campaigns by Greenpeace (Brent Spar) or political campaigns. The strategic moves of opponents as well as actions taken by the mass media, recipients, political decision-makers, and most especially opinion-leaders have to be accounted for when planning a campaign. Dramaturgical integration presupposes above all a consistent process of cross-media organization (Mast, 2003, pp. 27ff.). The starting-point here is formed, in the spirit of a comprehensive issues management, not by the communication channels themselves but by those themes and contents which are judged to be relevant. Companies can establish integrated newsrooms for corporate communication modelled on similar units used by newspaper publishers nowadays. By means of a single, digital content pool and regular coordination routines communication professionals may efficiently steer all communication channels, cross-link one to another, and, above all, react quickly at any time to external challenges.

6.2 Integrated Communication Management and Communication Controlling

The integration goals we have mentioned can only be achieved if the company has a management system that supports the mutual adjustment and coordination of all communication measures. This means freeing oneself from the false idea that the problem of the complexity of corporate communication can be mastered and solved provided only that one draws up plans that are ever more precise in content and then puts these into practice as quickly and efficiently as possible. This is an idea which is still found in many concepts of Integrated (Marketing) Communication (Schultz & Kitchen, 2000; Bruhn, 2006). But such a paradigm of control is, in today's media society, utopian. What is required today is rather a self-reflective concept of communication management and communication controlling. This framework has to be capable of dealing with even unexpectedly emerging demands and of initiating continuous improvement.

The process of planning, organizing, and evaluating corporate communication is designated as *communication management.* The typical phases – and thereby also the typical stages in the value-creation process – of communication management are: situation analysis

(stakeholders, issues, images, own potential); building on this, the development and putting into practice of communication strategies, programmes, campaigns, and individual measures, as well as the evaluation of the overall results. Besides this, provision should be made for an ongoing supervision of the whole process, in order to maintain a view of milestones crucial in respect of progress and to catch and deal with any unforeseen changes (Bentele & Nothhaft, 2007).

Communication controlling guides and supports communication management by creating transparency in respect of strategy, process, results, and finance and by providing appropriate methods, structures, and metrics for planning, realizing, and evaluating corporate communication.

The preconditions, therefore, for corporate communication which will actually contribute to value-creation need to be created not just on one but on several levels (see Figure 4). Management must, with the help of communication controlling, establish the methods, structures, and metrics necessary to facilitate and support a professional process of communication management. It is then the duty of communication management to develop, put into practice, and supervise specific strategies, programmes, and campaigns of corporate communication. Chances for differentiation and raising the profile arise on all levels. However, any company striving for competitive advantage should direct its efforts in the first instance toward the implementation of intelligent controlling and management systems. This is an important insight inasmuch as many practitioners and branch associations tend to focus on new trends in communication tools and campaign strategies. The know-how involved in such tools and strategies is, however, not specific to a company or strategy and can, where required, be easily copied.
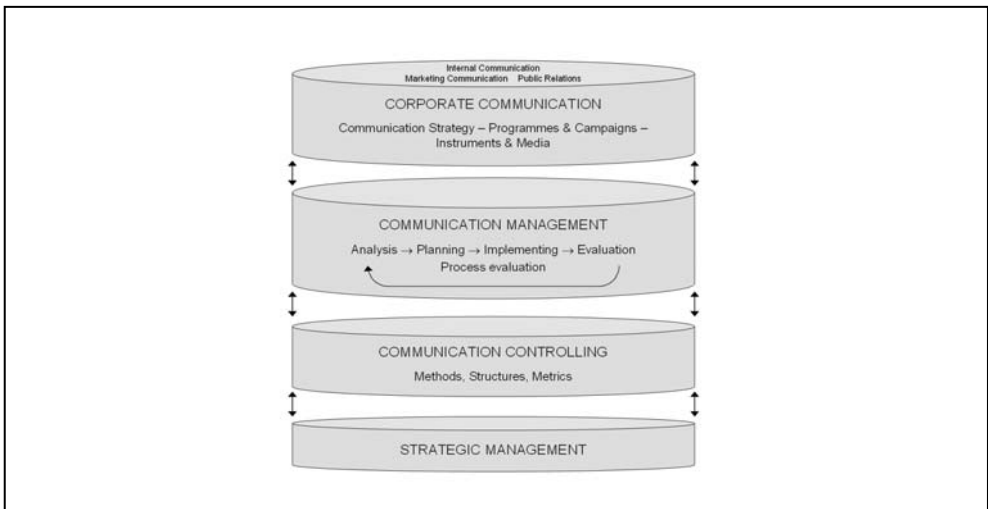
Figure 4: Steering and supervision of corporate communication

Another precondition of successful corporate communication is that top management recognize the relevance of communication for long-term success. The commitment to an integration of the company into both market and society, and to engage itself in professional

communication with all relevant stakeholders, should be manifested early on in visions and strategies. This is a quite rational position because, in our media society, in the long run nothing can be realized and put into practice which cannot be communicated (and legitimated). At the same time, top management must create the preconditions for a professional communication management and communication controlling in terms of personnel, organizational structures, and budgets. Research shows that a direct path of reporting for the Head of the Corporate Communication to the CEO is indispensable (Argenti, 2007; Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2006, pp. 38ff.). Attention must also be paid to sensitize communication professionals for the ethical dimension of their activities (Bentele, 2008). This is of decisive importance because communication processes can be at once an expression of states of affairs undesirable from the moral viewpoint (i.e. surreptitious advertising) and a means to overcoming such states of affairs (i.e. corporate social responsibility campaigns). Regardless of the potentials that are established in communication, excellent corporate communication comes into being in many individual actions. Therefore it is crucially important that executives make it part of their leadership function to motivate any member of the organization to accomplish professional, integrated communication.

The precise form given to the communication function must, in the end, take its orientation from the specific corporate strategy being pursued. In practice, numerous organizational arrangements including outsourcing some tasks to agencies or service-providers have been proven and tested. At the same time, the relevance of marketing communication, public relations, and internal communication varies in each company. In smaller organizations it is conceivable that the (planned) corporate communication might be confided to and handled, in large part, by a single employee, so that questions of integration management would simply not arise. In a global corporation, however, internal communication becomes a central problem, inasmuch as procedural guidelines and values need to be firmly anchored within the field of tension obtaining between common strategies and cultural diversity. In the consumer industry, it is almost inevitable that marketing communication takes on a dominant role. The necessity to manage a large number of relationships in the area of competition and commercial transaction puts brand management and advertising in the centre of the communication function. A company, however, which primarily targets business-to-business markets and operates thereby in a socio-politically sensitive area (e.g. the chemical or energy industry), will have to pay particular attention to public relations.

The necessity for a systematic *communication controlling* has only recently become an object of intense discussion (Pfannenberg & Zerfaß, 2005; Piwinger & Porák, 2005). Care must be taken here not to reduce the concept "controlling" to the level of mere evaluation. Communication controlling is rather a supporting function which makes it its business to create and ensure transparency in respect of strategy, process, result, and finance issues and moreover to provide appropriate methods, structures, and metrics for the process of communication management, with its characteristic division of labour (Zerfaß, 2005, pp. 201ff.). This is a task incumbent on the head of corporate communication in his or her leadership function. Consequently, communication controlling has to be organized above all inhouse, but may be partially supported by consultants or researchers, who draw up and implement individual management methods (i.e. scorecards) and indices.

Communication controlling comprises a broad portfolio of methods (Zerfaß, 2005, p. 205) which can be used to answer a wide variety of questions. Basically, we can distinguish four aspects:

- A first area of communication controlling concerns the creation of transparency and the provision of methods for *communication management.* Here, the focus is on the processes by means of which corporate communication is steered and supervised. By means of analyses such as integration audits (Bruhn, 2005, pp. 190ff.), it is possible to evaluate and to optimise communication departments and also their competencies, responsibilities, internal workflow, and points of interface with providers and suppliers. By use of these methods, top management can ensure that the necessary potential is to hand for the realization of effective communication programmes that will contribute to value-creation.

- Secondly, communication controlling supports the steering and evaluation of the *communication strategy.* Here the issue is that dovetailing of corporate strategy and communication strategy which is so often discussed but so seldom consistently realized in practice (Steyn, 2006; Argenti, 2007; Zerfaß, 2005; Bentele & Nothhaft, 2007) and the creation of value through communication (Pfannenberg & Zerfaß, 2005). It is about the contribution made by communication to the attaining of the strategic goals of the organization as a whole. Central here are methods which validate intangible assets generated by communication (for example, brand equity and corporate reputation), as well as methods that picture value links between communication activities and business goals (i.e. scorecards). According to current research, a corporate communication scorecard seems to be first choice when looking for a method to make communication strategies both manageable and measurable (Zerfaß, 2008).

- A third aspect of communication controlling concerns *communication programmes and campaigns.* In the case of designing information campaigns, etc., it must, for example, be ensured that these are constructed in a way that is stringent and free of internal contradictions and that financial resources are distributed in the most efficient possible manner. Relatively simple methods like programme analyses and checklists will enable communication professionals to supervise these aspects.

- The fourth area is communication controlling on the level of *communication measures.* Here, the issue is transparency, and methods for the steering and supervision of individual activities, for example distributing press releases, publishing corporate media, staging events, or running websites. This is the realm for the application of empirical research methods in corporate communication (Watson & Noble, 2007; Mast, 2006, pp. 153ff.). Here, the question that must be posed from the viewpoint of communication professionals is: what effects are these measures achieving – or will they achieve with time – in respect of the relevant stakeholders? For measurement of results – which can always only be performed subsequently – there is a whole series of tried and tested methods available, running from questionnaires through media resonance analyses to image measurement, for example by means of the well-established Reputation Quotient (Van Riel & Fombrun, 2007, pp. 248ff.).

7 Summary and Outlook

This chapter has shown how a theory of corporate communication can be developed based at once on knowledge from management theory, communication science and social theory. The key issue must be to arrive at an understanding of how communication contributes to value-based management (a view "from the inside out") as well as to the coordination of actions, the integration of interests, and the interpretation of situations vis-à-vis relevant stakeholders (view "from the outside in"), and to develop, from this starting-point, a tenable concept of corporate communication. This concept can then be more exactly formulated and implemented in a manner specifically appropriate to a given company within the framework of communication management and communication controlling.

Set against this background, the debate on Integrated Communication acquires a new significance. From the management point of view, internal communication, marketing communication, and public relations are different and distinct domains of corporate communication which serve different goals but often make use of the same means or methods. Their common task is to support corporate strategy. For this reason, the *integration of communication activities* is a necessity. It should be ensured that these activities are mutually adjusted to, and coordinated with, one another in the dimensions of content, formal design, temporal flow, and dramaturgy. At the same time, *social integration* – that is, the creation of shared contexts of action in the face of scarce resources and a developed social division of labour – must count as a central task of communication. Finally, a basic element of the theory outlined here is an understanding of management which looks on the *integration of the company into both market and wider society* and thus acknowledges the tensions and complementary relations between economic effectiveness and legitimacy as a constitutive element of modern societies. The concept of "integration," then – often so labile and elusive – hereby proves indeed to serve as a key element of public relations research.

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Organization and Communication: An Integrative Approach to Public Relations and Communication Management

Peter Szyszka

The following contribution outlines an approach to public relations in terms of the theory of organizations, placing at the centre of its argument the idea of organizations considered as social systems (the "meso-perspective"). Reputation and image, as qualities of public relations, constitute the social capital of an organization. This social capital finds expression in the degree of social trust, which an organization enjoys within its environment. Public relations operations serve, accordingly, to secure and to increase this "capital in the form of trust," which goes in its turn to support the creation of real capital for the organization. On the communicative level, they do this by creating functional transparency. If we are to give an accurate picture of these inter-related circumstances, we must conduct our investigations in this area in a manner, which differentiates between three aspects or levels of public relations, namely (1) public relations as a network composed of the relations between an organization and its social environment, (2) public relations management as an organizational management function, and (3) public relations operations as specific activities having as their goals certain functional effects. Proceeding in this manner, we see emerge an integrated theoretical approach displaying a quality of connectivity vis-à-vis a large part of the existing theoretical approaches to public relations.

1 Background: Organizations as Parts of Society

From the point of view of systems theory, organizations constitute subsystems of society. Systems theory contends, firstly, that society is composed of a multitude of different subsystems and, secondly, that it is impossible to conceive of any organization without its integration into society and its involvement in the evolution of the latter. Systems theory's approach to the consideration of systems is characterized by a differentiation between several levels: Besides society as a macro-system, systems theory also recognizes *organizations as systems on the meso-level* and interaction as systems on the micro-level. As social systems, the systems recognizable at all three of these levels are founded on a common characteristic: namely, meaning as the characteristic basis of all their operations. In this context, organizations constitute a special kind of system. They differ from the other types of social systems in being the only social systems able to produce and reproduce themselves by their own operations. The organization systems' central operation is *decision making*. It is through decision-making that meaning, here, comes to expression. It is only organization systems which, basing themselves on their own decision-making processes, "convert uncertainty into risk" (Luhmann, 2000, p. 9). Both other types of social systems – society and interaction – are the results of organizational decision-making. Because only organization systems are able to make decisions, they all together constitute and form

societal reality by an adequate behaviour founded in decision-making. Therefore, particularly the sociology of organizations considers modern society to be essentially an organizational society (e.g. Perrow, 1996; Schimank, 2005).

To split up the macro-system society into organizations alone, however, would be too simple. First of all, society is differentiated into *functional subsystems* such as politics, economics, the sciences etc. However, functional subsystems are not only parts of society; each of them also follows its own specific code to realize its function. On the level of organizations, functional subsystems operationalise their mission or, in other words, organizations are the *operators of functional missions*. This means, in short, that the decision making of organizations is determined by a double codification:

- The *code of its functional subsystem,* inasmuch as it is an operator of this subsystem
- Its own *organizational code,* inasmuch as it tends to achieve the maximum good in terms of its own organizational existence
  Above and beyond this, organizations are also bound by the values and rules of society.

In organizations' decisions and behaviour, organizational mindsets and meaning-dispositions find their expression. Given, then, that decisions and meaning are *strategic values of organizational management,* particular meaning is an implicit message of mindsets and intentions. The problem: because meaning is an only *implicit* message, it has to be reconstructed in the environment of an organization. That is to say, it is not the factual, but rather the supposed meaning formed by assumptions and interpretations outside an organization, which configures images of an organization in society. These assumptions and interpretations are not only based on the observation of organizational behaviour; they are also based on the observers' expectations and wishes. Thus, from an external perspective, organizational mindsets and behaviour produce meaning only in the *observers' imagination,* and it is improbable that the reconstruction of meaning offers the same meaning-disposition as an organizational decision.

In a pluralistic society, organizations pursue interests in order to realize their main objective for a promising future. In this way, they compete against the interests of other organizations, which are members of the same or other functional subsystems. The *competition of interests* generates conflicts which are, partly at least, fought out in acts of public communication and thereby influence the processes by which public opinion is formed. In analogy to the double codification of organizational interests mentioned above, these conflicts are, in the first instance, results of competition on two levels:

- Competition between *actors belonging to different functional subsystems* as a competition between the different objectives and values characteristic of these different subsystems
- Competition between *actors belonging to the same functional subsystems* as a competition for a better position in a market et al, that is, to realize their own organizational existence in a manner better than their rivals

Largely conflicts exist as the result of different expectations in different parts of society and different interpretations of the rules and values in society.

Conflicts are part of the daily business of organizations. They live with these conflicts but inasmuch as such conflicts constitute objects and issues of public communication, they

also form special problems for organizational existence. They awaken public attention and turn it into an issue of public communication. *Public communication* turns issues into objects of public interpretation and public opinion formation. Furthermore, public attention tries to find the underlying cause of an issue, asks for more detailed and exact information, for sense and reasons etc. In this way, public attention and public communication are risks for an organization, with the consequence that the options for decision-making are reflexive. They are reflexive because the expectations in the public sphere become more concrete, and the control of organizational mindsets, objectives and behaviour more intense. Furthermore and what is even more challenging: conflicts take up human and other resources. In this way, organizations must have an interest in *limiting problematical mindsets, objectives and behaviour*, because they are a risk for organizational existence and a problem in terms of the useful handling of organizational resources.

However, organizations *need public attention and publicity,* to a certain extent, in order to realize their objectives. To this extent, public presence is an opportunity. Not only its anchorage in society, and in society's reactions to organizational existence, necessitate for the organization an arrangement with parts of its environment; so too does the expectation of more and better options for an prosperous organizational development. To sum up, this means that organizations need a special management function in order to manage their problems in the context of public communication. In general, we call this function *communication management,* with the central duties

▪ to *recognize* risks and chances of behaviour as real or potential issues in conjunction with public communication,
▪ to *consult with management* for decision making concerning organizational behaviour and public interpretation, and
▪ to *manage the fading in and fading out* of issues of organizational interests in public attention for organizational benefit.

2   Approach: Public Relations and Communication Management

Since the definition of public relations as "the management of communication between an organization and its publics" by Grunig and Hunt (1984, p. 6) the term "public relations" has been used to designate the organizational subsystem and its function. For example, Long and Hazleton describe public relations as "a communication function of management through which organizations adapt to, alter, or maintain their environment for the purpose of achieving organizational goals" (1987, p. 12ff.; cf. also Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 1994, p. 2). Already here a first problem appears, because a survey of the relevant literature shows that the use of this *term is ambiguous*. On one hand, the term refers to a management function and its characteristic activities; sometimes it also refers to public relations activities. On the other hand, the term denotes the relational field between an organization and a social environment (publics, reference groups, stakeholders, target groups). It was Harlow (1957, p. xi) who first proposed that the term should be used primarily in the second sense. The following approach follows Harlow's proposal. It operates by differentiating between

▪ *public relations* as the description of organizational relation fields,
▪ *public relations management* as an organizational management function and a special type of communication management and

▪   *public relations operations* as its specific activities.

This differentiation into three linked terms enables us to explore "public relations" in a sophisticated way, perceiving three different objects in the context of public relations as a theoretical problem.

2.1 Public Relations and Social Trust

In light of such a differentiated understanding, *public relations* can be defined as *the relation field and network of relationships between an organization and its environment*. Relationships are a meso/macro-interface between organization and environment. They exist as one-sided or mutual interests, experiences and expectations in factual, temporal and social dimensions. They are founded in more or less distinct processes of perception, interpretation, estimation and opinion formation. Opinions prevalent in the organization's environment reflect back on organizational mindsets, objectives and behaviour and in this way, they can restrict the freedom of organizational actions. As a type of communication, public relations always describes a relation between two different sides (first-order relation). Acceptance and non-acceptance, with their risks and chances, are results of these relations. Relationships are always more or less asymmetrical because interests and power are never in balance. They become *public* relations if differences between an organization and reference groups are reflected in public communication. The term *public* means that *parts* of an organization can, in *principle,* be *permanently* a *potential* object of *perception processes* (public accessibility as the principle of six "p's").

All those reference groups which go together to make up an organizational environment build an imaginary network. This network has two characteristics: the same reference object but different reference points of perception and opinion formation due to the different interests of these groups. Thus, public relations is a network of partly very different relationships. Inside this network, in many cases, *mass media* play a central role. Only mass media in their role as observer, reporter and commentator are able to create publicity for an issue or a problem in public communication. As the central system of public communication, they are a multiplier, sounding board and opinion leader. In this way, they can influence an organizational environment and an organization itself.

The component parts of an organizational environment are often termed *publics* (Grunig & Hunt). However, to describe an organizational environment in this simple way is too inexplicit. It only asserts the existence of relationships and suggests a more or less equal significance of all parts in the context of organizational existence and development. In fact, there are different reference points needed to mark the different relationships as parts of an environment. Therefore, in the first instance, we use the term *reference groups* to characterize the different relationships to the different groups composing the organizational environment. The different relations in their entirety go to form the relationship network *public relations*. This network exists in factual, temporal and social structures. In most instances, it extends only to a part of society. In this context, it is not the existence of reference groups but the quality of relationships, which is responsible for public relations problems.

In a second step, it must be stated that the significance of different *reference groups* again depends on two characteristics: the organizational interests of a reference group on

the one hand and, on the other hand, the interest of a reference group in exerting in, and said reference group's capacity to exert, types of influence which are likely to have consequences for organizational existence and development. Inasmuch as acceptance – as a precondition of organizational existence and development – and attention – as a precondition of desired and undesired influences – are organizational resources. We may use the economic term "stakeholders" to characterize a special type within these groups. *Stakeholders* are a type of reference group which enjoy a lesser or greater degree of importance for organizational existence but which are in every case in some measure important for this existence. This attribute makes the difference between stakeholders and reference groups. The stakeholder approach recognizes two types of stakeholders: (1) primary stakeholders, who are directly involved in the processes concerning the goods and services of an organization and (2) secondary stakeholders, who are indirectly involved because they can influence this process in a positive or negative way by the manner of expressing their opinion in public communication (Karmasin, 2007, p. 74; Post et al., 2002, p. 17ff.). In public relations, processes of both types are relevant, both of them being potential objects of strategic processes.

Brands, images and reputation are the values, which influence the mindsets, decisions and behaviour of stakeholders. They are indicators of the quality of relationships. Relationship quality is in turn reflected in the constitution of the *social trust* which an organization enjoys vis-à-vis a stakeholder or another reference group. The term "trust" is one often used in public relations discourses. Trust can be defined as an experience based on expected continuity (just as social trust is based on the continuity of mindsets, decisions and behaviour of a social reference object: person, group, organization). Trust reduces social complexity by aiming to transform processes of decision making into routine processes. As a risk strategy, trust is based on a double contingency: to sustain or support trust an object of trust cannot act in any other way than is expected by a subject of trust (Luhmann, 1984, p. 179ff.). This has two consequences, which can be considered as a possible win-win-situation in public relations processes:

▪ On the side of a *subject of trust*, it boosts the range of action options, because an adequate behaviour can be expected to sustain the trust.
▪ On the side of an *object of trust,* this has the consequence that attention and involvement wane considerably; thus, the concreteness of expectation as well as the frequency with which the mindsets and objectives of a trust subject are checked decrease. The effect: the options of action on the end of the object of trust increase.

In this context, *public trust* is a general form of social trust. Public trust exists if the social trust an organization enjoys vis-à-vis its different reference groups has a similar form in public opinion (Bentele, 1994; Bentele & Seidenglanz, 2008). We can assume that public trust supports and influences social trust in the network of public relations because it can serve as an orientation guide in the processes of mindset formation by reference groups. Thus, not only stakeholders but in several cases also other reference groups gain significance in public relations processes.

2.2 Public Relations Management and Opinion Markets

Social trust is the communicative quality of organizational relations to those primary and secondary stakeholders whose attitudes have consequences for organizational existence and for development chances. Social trust is the *social capital and resource* of an organization. The availability of this resource is a key condition determining the *generation of real capital*. The values of reputation, images and brands are condensed expressions of opinions. They exist on the side of stakeholders as a continued expectation of organizational mindsets, decisions and behaviour and significantly influence their mindsets, decisions and behaviour vis-à-vis an organization. In that way, they constitute the relational quality of trust. Therefore, organizations must have an interest in influencing processes of social trust. They need the help of a specific management function for its handling. The well-known public relations definition of Cutlip et al. pointed in this direction because it defined (the function of) public relations as "a management function that establishes and maintains a mutually beneficial relationship between an organization and the stakeholders on whom its success or failure depends" (1994, p. 6).

Public relations, social trust and social capital are based on communication. Therefore, the central problem of communication (Luhmann, 1984, p. 191ff.) is also the same problem in public relations processes: namely, the improbability of a mutual understanding of – in this case – the organizational decisions. It is a well-known problem that there are always differences between the organizational meaning disposition (including the explicitly or implicitly distributed messages about it) and the meaning disposition of a reference group generated by selected information and its subjective interpretation. As there is always a difference in valuation of the relation between an organization and a reference group, a relation is carrier of a discrepancy in meaning disposition with regard to the same reference object. From an organizational perspective, this problem gets more difficult as more reference groups are involved and more discrepancies can arise.

In this context, first of all the function of public relations management can be defined as follows: Public relations management is a specific organizational management function aimed at influencing the quality of public relations between an organization and selected reference groups to achieve objectives and to generate social capital for organizational benefit. Public relations management acts in a typical management circuit: It analyses relevant ambivalences in public relations processes, develops strategies to handle and to solve those problems, brings problems and solving strategies to general management processes, manages the operations of public relations activities and evaluates the effects to detect the added value for organizational social capital. As a type of communication management, public relations management operates in terms of three cognitive systems (Szyszka, 2008, p. 49ff.):

- *The system of analysis* identifies and tries to understand relevant communication problems and to classify communication objectives with the aim of realizing organizational interests.
- *The system of strategic planning* searches for the best way to achieve communication objectives with available resources.
- *The system of operational planning and realization* selects specific instruments and actions to influence important relations in a given way in order to achieve the objectives.

Grunig and Hunt, in particular, equate, in their definition, public relations (management) and communication management. This equation is problematical and contentious. Therefore, quite aside from ideological positions in practice, we must strive to achieve a classification of public relations management on the purely theoretical level. To achieve this goal, the perspective has to be changed. "Publics" in the understanding of Grunig & Hunt means groups which are "loosely structured systems whose members detect the same problem or issue, interact either face to face or through mediated channels, and behave as though they were one body" (1984, p. 144). Structures in *public communication* are based on common problems and issues. Problems and issues are information and, by this token, are also objects of public and non-public discussion and objects of processes of opinion formation. As attention is a scarce resource, there will in many cases be competition between different sets of information about an issue for attention, assumption and acceptance. In this way, *public communication* can be understood as a *system of different opinion markets*. We can talk about markets because we find here typical market elements:

- Opinion markets are based on the principle of *supply and demand*.
- In the context of supply and demand, we find *changing situations and positions of power and influence* at different times.
- In particular, the phenomena we see here are based on the *principle of exchange transaction*: the interest in exchanging information for attention.

For example, among the typical "market" characteristics displayed by the "opinion market" is the fact that, in the "opinion market" *attention* constitutes, on the one hand, a scarce market resource On the other hand, in many cases, the *supply of information* is considerably higher than the demand. That means that the actors in the market can only perceive and assimilate a small part of information, because their attention is a bottleneck. In German PR discourse, we refer to the first problem as that of the economics of attention and the second as that of information overload (Fengler & Russ-Mohl, 2005). In another market-situation, we find high demand but no, or only little, supply of information, because an organization does not want more publicity about an issue (e.g. in crises).

In order to define different opinion markets we can use an established approach familiar from public relations discourse. In this approach, the environment of an organization – e.g. a company – is differentiated into typical fields of communication activities based on their different stakeholders (Figure 1). In *terms of this approach to opinion markets*,

- *human relations* are the opinion market of staff relationships,
- *financial relations* are the opinion market of financial relationships,
- *product publicity* and *corporate branding* are the opinion market of sales market relationships,
- *public affairs* are the opinion market of political relationships and
- *public relations* and *corporate identity* are the general public opinion market.
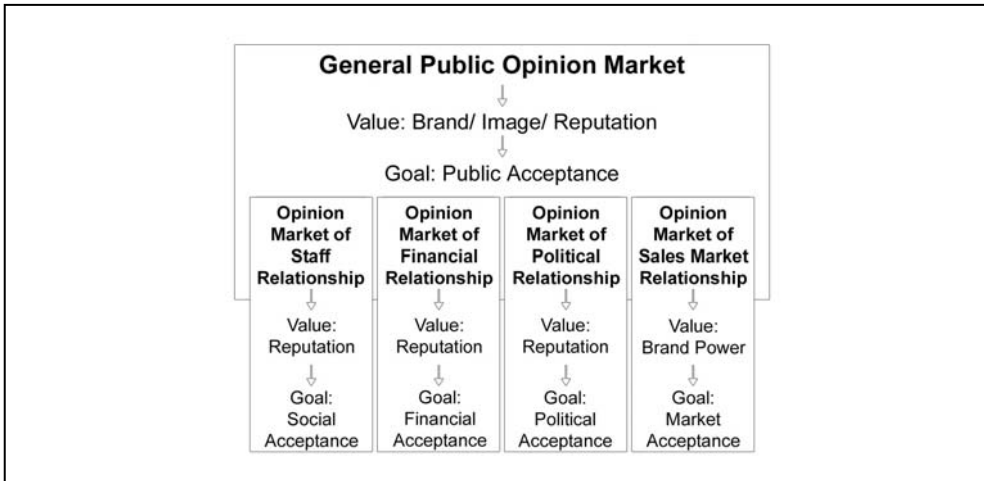
Figure 1: System of opinion markets

Another typical market of opinion can be found in community relations. The *special aspect displayed by this model* is the fact that the markets – excepting the general public opinion market itself – remain parts of the general public opinion market. On the one hand, this means that issues typical of all these markets can also be reflected in the general public opinion market. On the other hand, actors in these markets not only find stimulation and information in their own markets but also in the general public opinion market. If they hit upon information, which seems to be interesting in the context of their favourite issues, they use this information in a simple way.

In this context, communication management between an organization and its opinion markets is, in the first place, a management problem, because management has to communicate with each of the different opinion markets in its special way about special issues, different sense dispositions and discrepancies in valuation. This gives rise to the problem of acceptance: firstly, in the form of the problem of placing the information or issue in the desired processes of public communication (acceptance of communication subjects) and secondly in the form of the problem of gaining agreement for the meaning conception (acceptance of allocated meaning). The concept of legitimation, which is often used in PR literature to describe the central function of public relations management, can in this context be understood as the explicit explanation of an organization concerning an issue. In this way, public relations management can place an organization in the different opinion markets and is thus able to affect the organization by agreement, disapproval or adequate activities. As each opinion market has its own rules, here arises the next problem: as all communication activities have to conduce to organizational objectives or business goals, and as all opinion markets are parts of the general public opinion market, the management of communication has to integrate them. In practice here, the term "one-voice policy" is used.

At this point, it is possible to examine again the usual equation of public relations management with communication management. At first, we find arguments for a necessary differentiation between the both terms and issues. Because every opinion market has its own characteristics as regards reference groups, interests, issues and benchmarks of

valuation, every opinion market ideally needs a specific organizational communication function. In different markets of opinion, there are different market actors with different subjects of interest, which means that each opinion market disposes of its own market structures and market conditions. In practice, we can find it in investor relations, public affairs, market communication as opinion markets. In this way, public relations management can only be a type of communication management. Alternatively, in a contrary perspective: the term *communication management* describes the general communication function of organizational management as a generic term (in practice: integrated communication and corporate communication).

Public relations management as a type of communication management is concerned with the general public opinion market. In this way, we can define public relations management more exactly as *a specific management function to influence the quality of public relations between an organization and selected reference groups in the general public opinion market to achieve objectives and to generate social capital for organizational benefit*. Nevertheless, there is a problem here: opinion markets are embedded in the general public opinion market. This problem has two consequences (see Figure 1). On the one hand, the objects of special opinion markets are partly also objects and issues of public interest reflected in the general public opinion market. On the other hand issues and information of the general public opinion market – such as basic information, general trends – also influence the specific opinion markets. This means that, in an integrated approach to communication management, public relations management must have two fields of competence:

- competence to handle the problems of *the general public opinion market* and
- competence to handle the problems of *the interfaces with other functions of communication management*, which operates in its own special opinion markets.

2.3   Public Relations Operations and Functional Transparency

Public relations operations follow a *triple codification*: (1) the code of that functional subsystem of society, which a specific organization represents, (2) the organizational code, and (3) the code of public relations management as a specific functional code. Like every other organizational function, public relations management has the aim of optimizing the scope of action of the organization and thereby of improving the efficiency of organizational processes. In the case of public relations management, the objective is to secure social trust in the general public opinion market as a continuous expectation (Szyszka, 2004, p. 155). At this point, the room for manoeuvre of public relations operations is linked with the concrete organization activities. That means: the decisions and behaviour of an organization are determinant with respect to the opportunities of public relations management. Therefore, the systematic observation and analysis of opinion markets constitutes an indispensable prerequisite for the flourishing of an organization. If an organization receives social trust it will be less closely analysed and observed under the conditions of the economics of attention. The consequence is an expansion of the organization's scope of action. The objective of all public relations operations is not – as is often suggested in the literature – transparency as such, but rather the differentiated creation of *functional transparency* (ibid, p. 156).

That means that communication activities must always be undertaken in just the required breadth and depth, and for the purpose of benefiting the organization.

In order to achieve functional transparency in just this desired manner, public relations operations need to set themselves *five goals of action*:

- Above and beyond the competitive conditions of opinion markets in terms of a dealing with attention as such, the first goal of action must be to create functional transparency, and *to effectively "fade in" or "fade out"* organizational issues (about an organization and its services) targeted in public communication.
- Because the economics of attention also means that issues are treated only in a selective way, and because information that is gained in this way is weighed and evaluated, the second goal of action must consist in *achieving – in the service of the organization's interests – an ideally uniquely positively evaluated positioning* of the organization and its services in the consciousness of appropriate stakeholders.
- It is only based on clearly defined reputation that it is possible to *infiltrate knowledge* about facts and disposition of meaning successfully into the processes of public communication, since it is only then that a simple coupling, in public, of information with the sending organization is possible. Therefore, the transmission of information is an aim that is dependent on attention and positioning.
- However, the deeper aim of the transmission of information is not only to infiltrate knowledge but also to bring out *common understanding* of the object of information or conflict. It means that both sides understand and accept the other positions, a consensus on the opinion in question not being needed.
- Only when there emerges reliability in this way, as a fifth aim, can *acceptance, positive opinions and desired behaviour* by the relevant stakeholders be expected.

The primary goal pursued by public relations operations is that of acquiring formative influence over certain individual relations within the general field of public relations: namely, relations classified as relevant inasmuch as they are relations to specific reference groups (meso/macro-interface). What is at issue, in the first instance, here is not the acquiring of influence over a relation as such but rather *the strategically planned-out handling of a specific problem* considered as part of this relation. Since, primarily, influence can only be acquired over a selected part of a first-order relation, there arises in factual, temporal and social dimensions, a second-order functional relation (meso/micro-interface). This second-order functional relation makes a reference group into a target audience for goal-directed public relations activities. The selected sections of a relation, and the type and extent of action, which this demands from the organization, are the factors determining the purpose for which functional transparency is being created and the measure thereof required. Changes in a second-order relation tend to exert a reflexive influence back upon the first-order relation. In the case where processes of influence acquisition and of change find expression also in processes of public communication, these influences may also have their effect on the whole network of relationships enjoyed by an organization.

2.4   The General Public Relations Model

These theoretical considerations can be drawn together into a general public relations model (see Figure 2). From the organizational perspective, public relations (meso/macro-interface) describes the network of all the communicational links and connections between an organization and its social environment. Just as reference groups within this social environment, with all their stances, attitudes and opinions, can acquire and exert influence on the conditions of existence of, and possibilities for action enjoyed by an organization, the same applies in reverse to this latter. Public relations arises in the social environment of an organization whenever reference groups show themselves ready to assume that said organization is capable of exerting an influence on their, the reference groups', possibilities for action. Accordingly, the public relations of an organization is *a product of the possibility in principle* that an organization be perceived and evaluated by its social environment, and *of the actual use which is made of this* in the social environment in question. On the quantitative level, this means: the greater the degree of influence and effectiveness an organization is assumed to enjoy in and by its social environment, the larger and more developed its public relations network will be.
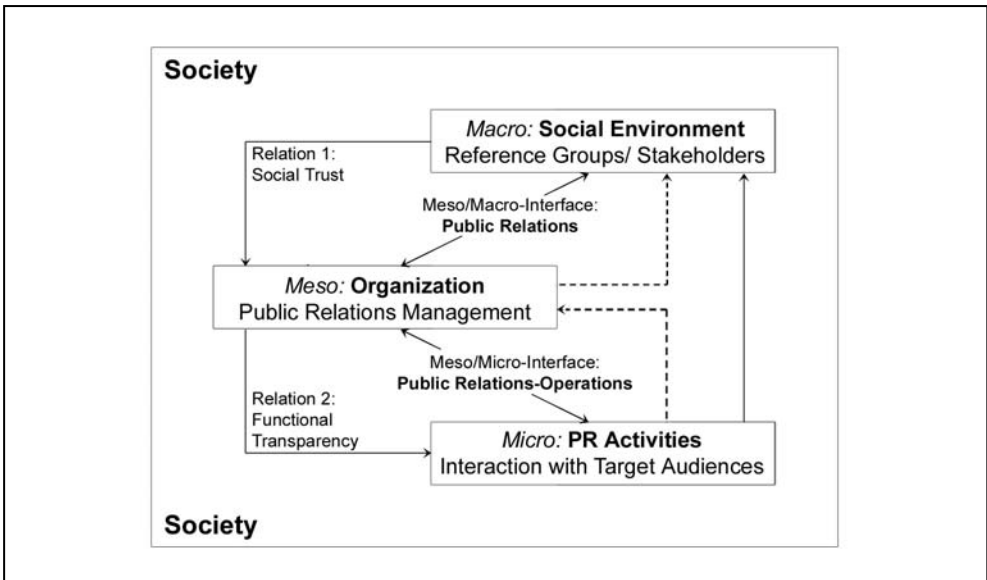
Figure 2: General public relations model

It is less the actual physical extent of this network than the quality of the relations composing it that enjoys special significance for an organization. If the organization enjoys – as described above – social trust, this is a sign of peaceful co-existence. The organization is in a position to exploit to the limit all its possibilities for action, provided only that these do not overstep the boundaries of the trust-inspired expectations of its social environment. Summed up, this means that the extent of an organization's need for a public relations man-

agement will be decided and determined by the following factors: the evaluative position enjoyed by the organization in its social environment; the quality of the relations to said environment that result from this position; and the magnitude, here, of potential for conflict. *The need for action on the part of an organization is thereby dependent upon the quantity and quality of an organization's public relations.* The fact of dependence on these parameters brings it about that organizations will, in practice, set up in some cases very large, but in other cases only very small organizational units to deal with public relations management; in the case where an organization perceives no need for action in this regard, then the management function in question is only implicitly anchored, or is entirely lacking. Quantity and quality of public relations represent dynamic magnitudes that constantly undergo changes and are thereby able to acquire and exert influence, both in a positive and in a negative manner, on organizations' capacity to take action. If the development of an organization's public relations is not to become a matter of random and arbitrary decision, there is, in principle, a necessity for *three kinds of public relations operations*:

- *Operations of observation and analysis,* aimed at discovering and identifying changes which might in some way involve risks or opportunities for the development of the organization,
- *Operations designed to integrate* public relations problems into those of the organization's management processes which are going to be affected by them (in particular the decision-making process) and
- *Operations aimed at the strategic planning and the putting into practice* of public relations activities, with the help of which influence can be exerted, in a targeted manner and for the benefit of the organization, over the concrete form and substance of selected relations.

In engaging in public relations activities, what public relations management is attempting to do is to participate, by acquiring and exerting influence over second-order relations, in the forming and controlling of the quantity and the quality of first-order relations. Since public relations activities are always contingent, the influence exerted by them is not just one on a single or even on several different reference groups alone. Public relations decisions, which precede public relations operations, serve to bind an organization, via the functional transparency thereby created, to a specific form or style of behaviour, and thereby exert influence over the organization's subsequent capacities and possibilities for action, including the possibilities open to public relations management itself.

3   Consequences: Communication Management and Added Value

Within the wider framework of the general communication management of an organization, it is the specific aim and function of public relations management to deal and engage with public relations as a component part of the processes of public communication, and to acquire and exert that kind and degree of influence on the quantity and quality of these relations which has been classified as relevant in terms of the general policy of the organization in question. (Szyszka, 2005). Merten has defined this process as one of "intentional and contingent construction of desiderated realities by means of the creation, and firm anchoring, of images in the public world" (1992, p. 44). Public relations management can, from

this perspective, be classified as management aimed at dealing with any discrepancies between the situation actually existing as regards these relevant relations and the situation which the organization would like to see exist in this regard. The aim here is to secure or increase social capital and thereby to exert a positive influence on the development of real capital within the organization represented. Public relations management thereby exerts, as a secondary function, an indirect influence also on the actual value-creation process of the organization represented.

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Organizational Communication and Public Relations:
A Conceptual Framework for a Common Ground

Anna Maria Theis-Berglmair

The possibility of communication that realises goals is an illusion especially persistent and prevalent in organizations. At the same time, there is a special urgency in the area of organizations to abandon this illusion in favour of a more ingenious understanding of communication. (Dirk Baecker, 1999, p. 52, transl. ATB)

In the academic sphere, public relations and organizational communication live lives of their own in spite of the fact that in communication agencies these two areas are meanwhile growing together. This chapter documents possible reasons for the separation of these two research areas, presents a theoretical approach, which perceives decisions as the characteristic form of organizational communication and discusses both the unique paradox connected with this mode of communication as well as the different strategies of de-paradoxification. The proposed contingency model allows for a discussion of public relations and organizational communication on a common theoretical basis, offers new insights into communication management as a management of contingency, leaves room for analysing the challenges of new communication media and allows public relations to be regarded not as being apart from, but as being a part of organizational communication.

1 Introduction

Organizational communication and public relations traditionally represent distinct research areas: scholars of organizational communication tend to focus their research interest on communication processes "inside" organizations, whereas public relations researchers generally are interested in communication directed towards the public. Organizational communication and public relations fall back upon different scientific roots and traditions (Taylor, 2003; Signitzer, 1997); the theories in use vary greatly, as does the literature. This separation of research areas is mirrored on the institutional level. Whereas organizational communication normally is anchored in departments of speech communication, public relations researchers often find themselves located in departments of mass communication and journalism. Also in the respective divisions of the International Communication Association (ICA), "Organizational Communication" and "Public Relations" seem to exist parallel to each other with hardly any contact between the members. The aforementioned reasons seem to reduce the chances for developing a common theoretical basis for activities within the realm of organizational communication.

There are several factors that may play an important role in overcoming this gap: in public relations, the dialogical character of communication has been emphasized for some time (Burkart & Probst, 1991), a trend that is increased by the use of various sophisticated electronic communication technologies. Wikis and Weblogs, for example, are characterized

by a much higher interactive potential than some of the traditional organizational media are. Apart from these factors, remarkable contributions can be expected from recent theoretical developments in organizational communication where we can observe a change in the root metaphor concerning the communication-organization relationship. First, I would like to describe this change briefly before confronting it with a theoretical concept developed by the sociologist Niklas Luhmann (1984). His concept of organizations as social systems offers a new and a somewhat unfamiliar way of studying organisational communication. Furthermore, it may assume a key role for the development of a general theoretical framework for analysing public relations and other organizational communication as well.

2   Theoretical Developments in Organizational Communication: Communication as the Core Element of Organizations

Finding a common ground for organizational communication and public relations seems to be a risky endeavour, especially since organizational communication itself sometimes is regarded as *"an amalgam of disparate research traditions, each with its own core constructs, epistemological assumptions, and methodological commitments"* (Conrad & Haynes, 2001, p. 47). Starting the endeavour from the perspective of public relations does not make things any better. In their attempt to provide an overview of public relation research, scholars often distinguish between the societal level, the organizational level, and the practical level (Signitzer, 1997; Bentele, 2003, p. 61ff.). However, what we derive from the "organizational level" depends heavily on how we conceive an organization. This important point is seldom discussed in public relations research.

In their evaluation of reviews of organizational communication Tompkins & Wanca-Thibault come to the conclusion *"that the field is now focussing more on* communicational theorizing *about organizing that in the recent past"* (Tompkins & Wanca-Thibault, 2001: p. xxix, emphasis by ATB). Especially noteworthy is James R. Taylor's (2003; 2006) attempt to construct a communication-based model of organizations with the help of speech act theory. For Taylor, discourse is organizing (Taylor, 1993) and organizations are "*interrelated networks of communication*" (Taylor, 2003, p. 12). During the past years, other scholars in the field of organizational communication have also begun to consider communication as the core element of organizations. There is a growing body of literature which stresses the idea of an isomorphic relationship between organization and communication (e.g. Fairhurst & Putnam, 1999; Taylor & van Every, 2000). This shift towards a view of organizations as communicational in "nature" helps to narrow the gap between public relations and organizational communication because it subordinates past priorities in organizational communication (such as attitudes and productivity, superior-subordinate relationship) strictly to the process and networks of communication that *"…might be viewed as texts in that they represent relatively structured patterns of interaction that 'transcend' immediate conversations"* (Tompkins & Wanca-Thibault, 2001, p. xxix). In comparison, theories of public relations have always placed "pure" communication in the centre of their interest; in most cases, this has been public communication.

The recent tendency to regard communication or conversation as the subject matter of organizations prepares the ground for the reception of another theoretical tradition, which was developed years ago by the sociologist Niklas Luhmann (1927-1998). Luhmann's

primary concern during his scientific lifetime was to develop a theoretical framework applicable to all social phenomena including organizations. Since only some of his work has been translated into English to date[1], his ideas have only just begun to cross the borders of the German-speaking scientific community.

Luhmann identifies organizations as just one type of social systems besides societies and interactions. Common to all social systems is the fact that they are characterized by communication as their core and constitutive element. Besides social systems, evolution has brought forward also other types of (autopoietic) systems such as organic (living) systems, mental systems and social systems.
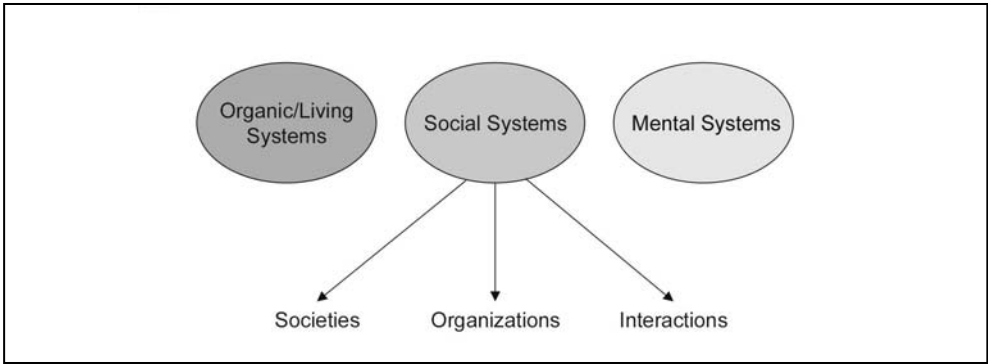
Figure 1: Types of systems and social systems

Though all the systems listed above do operate in an autopoietic manner, they differ in their elements. Organic systems operate based on cells (which reproduce themselves) whereas mental systems operate by means of a permanent reproduction of thoughts (one thought follows the other). Social systems are characterized by one communication following the other. They are produced and re-produced via communication, an element that vanishes in the very moment of its coming into existence.

The elements of one kind of system cannot be transferred to another system: Thoughts never can leave mental systems and communication does not flow into the brain of a person, but can just stimulate ideas and thoughts in that brain. Merely through their integration into a system, elements are elements; outside a system, an element does and cannot exist. Mental systems contribute to social systems; they are a (necessary) environment for them. Nevertheless, we have to do with two different autopoietic systems which are constituted via different elements and which must therefore be treated separately. The separation of distinct systems, which come into being through co-evolution, is not only a precondition for studying the relationship between them. It provides evidence for Luhmann's resolution of an autonomous sphere of the social. Probably Taylor has something comparable in mind when speaking of patterns of interaction which *"transcend"* immediate conversation" (Taylor, 1993). In this point, Luhmann comes to more far-reaching conclusions. He abandons *"the notion of an independent subject as the origin of social phenomena"* (Becker, 2005, p.

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[1]   His book on "Social Systems", published in 1984 in German, was translated into English in 1995. Some of his ideas on organizations as social systems were published in Seidl (2005).

231) in favour of a parallel existence of a social system and a mental sphere (mental system). Both have their own structures; that is to say: the structure appears twice. Social phenomena cannot leave the social system as (immaterial) thoughts can never leave the mind. This separation of the mental and the social system leads to a de-centring of the subject, a fact that is often bemoaned by scholars of social science, though Foucault (1973), who conceives the subject as an effect of discourse, has expressed similar ideas[2].

Luhmann refutes the idea that actors "communicate" or that actors are regarded as elements of social systems. Speaking of a person communicating, as we do in our everyday language, is instead a result of attribution processes.

> Persons arise through people participating in communication. They [the persons, ATB] result out of the needs of an observer to insinuate a consistency of attitudes, goal-oriented behaviour, a self-interest, which goes along with some kind of predictability, etc. Persons do not live, they do not think, they are constructions of communication…. (Luhmann, 2000, p. 90f., translation ATB)

In other words: Persons are "… addresses for communications … They are images or 'fictions' that 'condense' during a communicative process and are used by the social system as points of reference for communications" (Becker, 2005, p. 235). To declare persons to be a result of attribution processes can be a solution for what Taylor (2006, p. 139) regards as a circular or paradoxical logic: "How can an organization be both a network … and a unitary actor …?" "Motives" and "intentions" are explained in a similar way. They are "assignments of reasons for special acts made either explicitly or implicitly" (Luhmann, 2000, p. 95, transl. ATB).

Luhmann's attempt at a de-ontologisation of the social sphere goes along with an unfamiliar definition of communication. He perceives communication as a synthesis of three selections: information (a selection from a repertoire of possible themes), utterance (a selection from a repertoire of expression modes or intentional acts) and understanding (the observation of a distinction between information and utterance). "Understanding" does not mean understanding in a semantic sense; it just refers to recognizing the difference between information and utterance. "Understanding" in Luhmann's definition therefore is an essential component and not the telos or the aim of communication. It

> …neither requires an accurate reconstruction of the "true" intention behind alter's behavior nor excludes the possibility of misunderstanding…What matters is solely the fact that the third selection…provokes a response and thus permits the continuation of the system's autopoiesis. (Knodt, 1995, p. xxix)

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[2]   However, Luhmann would not confirm the conviction of Foucault (1973) and Bourdieu (1977) that the social is "inscribed" in the body. He insists that social phenomena cannot leave the social sphere as thoughts cannot leave the mind.

3 Decisions as the Characteristic Form of Organizational Communication

If all social systems are built up via communication, the question soon arises regarding the extent to which organizational communication differs from other forms of communication. While this question is still under discussion for some scholars of organizational communication (see the summary in Schoeneborn, 2006), for Luhmann the answer is clear: organizations as social systems are characterized by the fact that they are produced and re-produced through decisions:

> Organised social systems can be understood as systems made up of decisions, and capable of completing the decisions that make them up, through the decisions that make them up. Decision is not understood as a psychological mechanism, but as a matter of communication, not as a psychological event in the form of an internally conscious definition of the self, but as a social event. That makes it impossible to state that decisions already taken still have to be communicated. Decisions are communications; something that clearly does not preclude that one can communicate about decisions. (Luhmann, 2003, p. 32)

The idea of organizations as decision-producing systems is not a new one at all. In comparison to March & Simon (1958), who stress the same idea but do connect decisions to individuals and their inherent capacity to discover, select, and evaluate information ("bounded rationality"), the Luhmannian version characterizes a decision as an observable communicative episode. This definition opposes the popular opinion that somebody first makes a decision and then communicates this decision. "*Whatever a decision may 'be', with respect to organizations it will not appear in any other form than as communication.*" (Luhmann, 2000, p. 141; transl. ATB) With respect to the time dimension, a decision creates a difference between a no longer changeable, non-contingent past and an open, contingent future:

> A decision constructs another relationship between past and future.…It establishes a past which is relevant [for the decision, ATB]; therefore it needs a memory which enables problems, alternatives and resources to be conceived as aspects of its present. (Luhmann, 2000, p. 140; transl. ATB)

In comparison to other forms of communication, decisions are "compact communications," that is to say, they have to communicate their own contingency (that the decision was possible otherwise, too). With this definition in mind, we can observe this kind of communication in everyday life as well. On the other hand, even in organizations, other forms of communication are also observable. Since larger contexts cannot be tied together by single communications any more, organizations constitute themselves through decisions. To ensure their autopoiesis, decisions have to be tied together in a recursive, self-referential manner. This is the decisive fact that distinguishes organizations from other forms of social systems.

Since decisions always point to other possibilities, they contain a kind of "self-critique" (Knudsen, 2005, p. 110) or a tendency towards deconstruction (Luhmann, 2000, pp. 144-145). Decision communications therefore are inherently paradoxical communications:

…the more they communicate that there are *real* alternatives to the one that has been selected, the less the selected alternative will appear as justified and thus the less the decision will be accepted as "decided". Equally the more the selected alternative is being justified as the right selection, the less the other options will appear as alternatives and thus the less the decision will appear as "decision". (Seidl, 2005, pp. 39-40)

Furthermore, decisions are characterized by their undecidability, as Heinz von Foerster (1992, p. 14) states: "Only those questions that are in principle undecidable, we can decide," and gives the following reason:

…– because the decidable questions are already decided by the choice of framework in which we are asked, and by the choice of rules of how to connect what we call "the question" with what we may take for an "answer". (ibid.)

Where we can derive consequences out of calculation, logical deduction or argumentation from a given frame, there is no decision. As Nassehi (2005, p. 186) succinctly states: "*To have the choice means* not to know what to do.*"*

In spite of this problematic character of decisions, organizations have to find solutions for interconnecting decisions to each other in a recursive, autopoietic manner. They have to overcome the central paradox of decisions; that is to say, the necessity of contingency being visible (to a certain extent) and decisions (which are in effect undecidable) being made to look decidable and therefore possible (contingency closed). The tendency towards closing contingency goes along with rationality as an ex-post account (Weick, 1969) or as "*a retrospective scheme of observation, dealing with the contingency and the paradox of decision-making processes*" (Nassehi, 2005, p. 186).

4   Strategies of De-Paradoxification

To ensure the process of autopoiesis and to fade out the central paradox of decisions, organizations use strategies of de-paradoxification. One possibility is to consider *people as the ontological place of decisions* being made. By attributing decisions to a person, decisions become more or less arbitrary ("Why does he/she act in this way?"). As decisions become more important, they are located on a higher hierarchical level and vice versa: what is decided at the top must be taken seriously and "sometimes is of such importance that you have to camouflage ignorance" (Luhmann, 2000, p. 138; transl. ATB). Attribution processes work especially well in organizations since these social systems design positions equipped with special decision rights. Sometimes decisions have to be subscribed to by more than one person. If this is the case, there is a tendency for deals and arrangements, which make the decision more complex so that even insiders do not know to whom they should attribute the decision[3].

A second strategy is *rational reasoning*: decisions are presented as serving the long-term interests of an organization and therefore as objective and rational.

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[3]   Also the director's and officer's liability insurance (D&O) can be analysed with reference to the decision paradox and the attribution processes. In all events covered by insurance, the decisions have to look decidable and must be attributable to a person, regardless of the complexity of the decision process.

Sometimes special *conditions in the surroundings* are seen as evidence for a decision. However, in most cases, the paradox is *transferred to other levels* such as decision programs or hierarchical positions. Also the strategy of *personalization,* which we know from mass media (there it constitutes one of several "news factors"), serves in favour of de-paradoxification. Sometimes the solution is *postponed to the future* ("The time is not yet ripe for the decision"). The undecidability of decisions can also be disguised by the *framing of problems and interests*. Whereas the analysis of a problem as a starting point in argumentation goes along with a kind of objectivity and rationality (within the frame given), the definition of the situation with regard to interest is often coupled with the argument that this interest or solution meets the general interest – not to mention the fact that interest and problem definition are often closely tied. All strategies of de-paradoxification help to transfer the central paradox of decision-making to less troublesome places.

A look into the literature reveals that the "strategies of de-paradoxification" mentioned above are frequently used as a starting point for analysing organizational communication. Grounded in the transfer metaphor, which defines communication as the transfer of information from a sender to a receiver, organizational communication is expected to fulfil the specific goal of an organization, to increase efficiency, to help people to perform better at work, to control the environment, etc. A possible explanation why many practitioners (and scholars) of organizational communication adhere to the control paradigm of communication (see the overview in Theis-Berglmair, 2003) probably lies in the fact that organizations are able to construct the context of communication and thereby influence the repertoire of possible themes (aspect of information) or of expression modes (utterance) through rules, regulations and existing communication practices, such as decision programs. Once communication – the recognition of the difference between information and utterance – has taken place, it can be followed by another communicative act, which refers to the level of information or utterance, independently of whether the selection made is accepted or refused. With respect to its results, communication is an open, contingent process. The supposed effectiveness of communication, which often goes hand in hand with the idea of a sender's intent being realised, is not inherent in communication itself, but has to be regarded as a result of the coupling of information and utterance to a specific context. The adherence to the mere possibility of realizing goal-oriented communication may therefore be interpreted as another strategy of rationalizing.

This holds true for public relation activities, too. Public relations is often said to function as a means of legitimacy for an organization: "Organizations want their interests not only to be accepted by groups of different claims but want to see their interests connected to a general interest" (Röttger, 2005, p. 369; transl. ATB). Here, it is not difficult to discover one of the aforementioned strategies of de-paradoxification. With the help of the theory of social systems, we cannot only interpret the coupling of organizational interests to the common interest as a means of de-paradoxification. We can extend our analysis, for example, to the question of which way public relations contributes to other strategies of de-paradoxification as well. In both organizational communication and public relations, theories too often are developed based on organizational self-descriptions. With the help of social systems theory, we can look behind these descriptions and identify them as assignments of organizations, assignments that help an organization to appear to be a coherent entity for an observer. The mutual interplay of mental and social systems that Luhmann puts in place of the idea of the subject as the origin of social phenomena allows for new

research questions: how do organizations construct "decision makers," how do they attribute decisions to whom and with what effect, etc.? Social systems theory cannot only deliver some fruitful theoretical insights into the area of organizational communication and foster empirical research in this area, but can help us to overcome the gap between public relations and other forms of organizational communication.

5   Organizational Communication between Consistency and Contingency: a Conceptual Framework

If we adhere to the Luhmannian idea of organizations as social systems, we conclude that management of organizational communication is a *management of contingency*. With this idea in mind, we can analyse organizational communication with respect to the general paradox of decision communication. Communication and the technical media involved can therefore be arranged on a continuum according to the degree of contingency that is more or less visible.
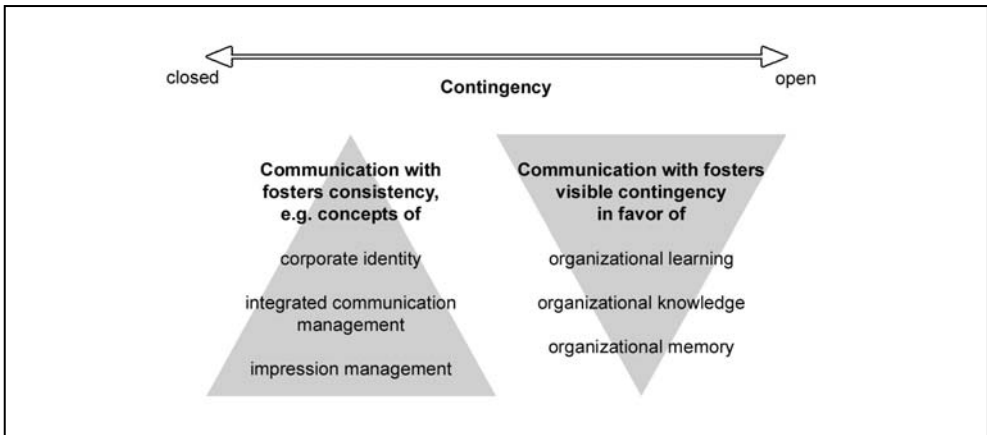
Figure 2: Contingency model of organizational communication

In recent years, communication concepts, which are directed towards closing contingency and building a consistent image of an organization at its front stage, have prevailed. The concepts of corporate identity and integrated communication are two examples for this orientation. This focus is partly due to the disciplinary roots of the researchers involved. Since many communication scholars (at least in Germany) have a primary interest in public communication, their view is directed towards self-presentation (closed contingency) which often serves as an input for mass communication.

Recently, new, sophisticated communication media such as wikis and weblogs have developed, which not only show a more interactive character but which bear at least the potential to visualize the contingency of decisions. A very good example for these new media is Wikipedia, the encyclopaedia that is open to everyone, be it as a writer or as a reader. In comparison to a printed encyclopaedia, the architecture of the Wikipedia software allows for visualizing the contingency of the articles, their history or the discussion on

certain aspects of a subject. Of course, the user's attention is concentrated on the surface only, that is to say, on the *result* of the collaborative process, on the article as it is presented on the first site (the front page). Nonetheless, hypertext structure makes it possible to visualize contingency to anyone, whereas, in the case of a printed encyclopaedia, the contingency is generally not visible besides those who are regarded (or regard themselves) as "experts" or "professionals." They may know about possible alternatives, but do not communicate them in public. Professions are "invented" for communicating knowledge without communicating doubts and contingencies at the same time.

> The fact that professionals such as doctors, lawyers and engineers no longer succeed in hiding doubts can be regarded as proof that society has found other ways of communicating knowledge, ways which allows doubts to be possible as well as excluded. Probably knowledge is no longer bound to positions and roles or factual reasons but to temporal conditions. Knowledge is accepted because one knows that it can be changed instantly. (Baecker, 1999, p. 87; transl. ATB)

Whether organizations, which are able to compensate for the loss of authority[4] in society (Luhmann, 1994), do adapt to the design of wikis and weblogs comparable to the public counterparts is very questionable indeed. Our fragmentary experience[5] shows that the architecture of these new media is designed in very different ways in organizations, depending on already existent communication modes, media and perceived necessities or other factors as well.

It is important to note that different technical media of communication have no fixed place on the continuum of contingency. Face-to-face communication can be used as a medium of impression management as well as for visualizing contingency. The same holds true for other types of communication, though there might be a tendency for linear communication media (one-to-many-media) to be used as *communicative packaging* for the inherent paradox of decisions. In societies with an independent media system, organizations always run the risk of this packaging being unwrapped by the press or other critical observers. As Web 2.0 is going to change the general "culture of publishing," this change may strike organizations as well. Weblogs, for example, may augment the probability that somebody is interested (and able!) to unwrap the communication package which in the past sometimes poured too easily into the mass media (Baerns, 1985; Scheid, 2007).

However, weblogs and wikis do not only change the – perceived – communicative surroundings of organizations. At the same time, they offer possibilities for coping with these challenges. Organizational weblogs can be used as a communication medium for visualizing contingency and at the same time for giving reasons for the decisions taken. Nonetheless, organizations cannot free themselves from the circle of visible contingency and legitimacy: more visible contingency gives room for opposing arguments. Seen from this point of view, the often-mentioned expectation toward public relation – that it should make organizational action more transparent – has to be reconsidered: it is not action but decision,

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[4]   Authority refers to the possibility to decide without giving reasons for the decision and refuting any questions arising with reference to this authority. Luhmann (2000) points to the fact that organizations often "hide" this authority by referring to conditions in the surroundings of an organization as a reason for decisions.

[5]   The author is responsible for a research project on wikis in organizations funded by the German National Science Foundation.

which can appear to be more or less contingent. To make decisions transparent means to make their contingency more visible. If this happens, organizations have to deliver "good reasons" for the decisions taken; alternatively they can refer to other strategies of de-paradoxification to make contingency invisible (see point 4). Seen from the observer's standpoint, these self-descriptions appear as "actions" an organization has taken, and sometimes organizations are forced to experience that other observers offer other descriptions, too, descriptions that not only are made, but also are made public and, in this way, are made visible to theoretically everyone.

6   Challenges for Communication Management

It can be assumed that visible contingency also plays an important role for the credibility of organizations, with respect to both organizational members and other target groups. As far as organizational members are concerned, members often know about the contingency of decisions and therefore do identify high-gloss brochures for what they are, as pure front-stage communication, not really credible – for those who look behind the stage. With respect to other, "external" target groups, the dialogue-orientated public relation concepts (Burkart & Probst, 1991) probably can be regarded not only as a possibility for opening contingency but as a way to specify or to alter a "marked space." This has to do with the character of *decisions as observations*. Decisions occur by making differences, called "alternatives." Though every alternative has two (describable) sides, only one can be named at the same time. The question as to which alternatives are possible at all depends on the space, which is marked against an unmarked space. Let us imagine an organization that wants to establish a new building. This decision creates its own "surroundings." It can be seen with corporate identity as a background or with respect to the landscape. Both backgrounds represent different marked spaces with different alternatives being possible. Alternatives are not a fact just "given" but depend on the selected background. The background is the "marked space," as it may be termed, which is distinct from the unmarked (and unnamed) space. Economic organizations often find themselves criticized not only for a single, selected alternative but also for the background of the decision. The argument often used in these cases "Due to the special condition of the (global) surroundings we didn't have another choice" reveals both the strategy of de-paradoxification and the space, the organization marked itself for this decision. Since this space first has to be constructed by the observer, the answer is a contradiction in itself.

> In a world without transparency, organizations have to transform insecurity into security. Through this transformation, an organization ties itself down to a world constructed by the organization, a world in which it believes because it is a result of its own decision history. (Luhmann, 2000, p. 216, transl. ATB)

Whereas consistency-driven communication has dominated public relations and – to some extent – organizational communication for a long time, such practices – though they are not at all unimportant – may become problematic with respect to other organizational aspects such as learning, memory or knowledge management. Organizational learning requires decision contingency to remain visible when needed. Traditionally, organizations make use of document systems such as minutes, for example. Especially frequently, they "outsource"

their memory to the mental system (brain) of their members. When members leave the organization, a part of the memory becomes lost for the organization. Depending on how important the memory function is in comparison to forgetting – which is also an important function of the brain, as Luhmann (2000) emphasises – organizations which rely for the most part on the brain of their members suffer more from changing memberships. This is probably the reason why "knowledge intensive organizations," as they are known, try to find solutions for ensuring organizational learning processes. While organizational learning is often equated with the learning of organizational members (Kranz, 2000), the contingency model of organizational communication (see Figure 2) delivers a fresh attempt at analysing learning processes with respect to organizations as social systems: Organizations which are dependent on learning processes have to foster communication and document systems which makes the contingency of decisions visible.

Depending on the architecture of the software, new communication media such as wikis and weblogs offer new possibilities for filing decisions away and, at the same time, preserving the contingency of the decisions taken. Whether these possibilities are realized is still an open, empirical question. Since organizations are "similarity machines" with respect to the outside and "inequality machines" with respect to the inside (Nassehi, 2005), the media of organizational communication can be remodelled by organizational members. This is the case when communication media, originally designed for purposes of presentation, de facto are used for documentation purposes as well, but without any contingency being visible, as Schoeneborn (2006) proved in an empirical study on the use of Power-Point in project organizations. In an inversion of the argument, media first designed for documentation reasons can be used primarily for the self-presentation of organizational members. It can be supposed that remodelling occurs when communication management is not explicitly tied to hiding or visualizing contingency. Additionally, organizations often do not give their members enough time for decision documentation, and sometimes management is not interested in visualizing decision processes.

In times in which technology has brought new possibilities of closing and of visualising decision contingency, communication management is not only busy with managing contingency with respect to the time, social and factual dimensions: when should learning prevail, when should contingency be closed? Who should be included in the learning process? What is the subject of learning (which decisions are under discussion)? The real challenge for communication management lies in the adoption of a more sophisticated definition of communication as a core element of organizations, the realization of the basic paradox of decisions as the characteristic form of organizational communication and the construction of contexts, which support the central task of communication management as a management of contingency. As a side effect of this new orientation, public relations can be regarded no longer *apart* from organizational communication but as *a part* of it.

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The True, the Good and the Beautiful: Reputation Management in the Media Society

Mark Eisenegger & Kurt Imhof

This chapter develops a general theory of reputation that is applicable to any type of organisation. Reputation is defined as a three-dimensional construct comprising the types of functional, social and expressive reputation. It is argued that public relations is essentially oriented to controlling the parameter of reputation and can thus be construed as reputation management. Key regularities of media reputation constitution that must consider the reputation management of economic organisations are described based on empirical research.

1 Introduction

In recent years, the concept of reputation has embarked upon a remarkable career both in practice and in the domain of communications. However, the expert discourse about this phenomenon is not free of certain defects and blind spots. Thus the topics covered by the PR discourse in particular have so far referred much too exclusively to private business and the debate on reputation pursued in professional circles consequently suffers from a *corporate* bias. The narrowing of this topic to the business sector is essentially due to the lack, up to the present, of a theory-led definition of reputation that would allow diverse types of organisation – including those outside the business sector – to be analysed from this angle.

This paper sets out from this weak point by deriving the concept of reputation theoretically in a form applicable to all kinds of persons, organisations and institutions. It will therefore initially be presented as an evolutionary product of the process of modernisation. This leads us to making a distinction between three basic types of reputation against which the agents and organisations active in any domain (business, politics, science etc.) are assessed. We will then show that reputation assumes fundamental functions in our society in general and for persons, organisations and institutions in particular. Reputation can then consequently be introduced as a central parameter for monitoring organisational activity and public relations. Finally, we will discuss the central role played by media-broadcast communications in the process of forming reputation so that we can build on it and identify the key regularities of this process to which reputation management must adapt under the conditions of contemporary media societies.

2   Literature Overview: The Concept of Reputation in Professional Discourse

In the professional discourse, a continuous increase in scientific papers on the topic of reputation may be noted since 1981 (Barnett, Jermier, & Lafferty, 2006, p. 27). However, the concept still lacks a theoretical basis and definition with interdisciplinary recognition (Bromley, 2002, p. 35). An overview of this discourse shows immediately that the existing definitions of reputation are either very general or else have a highly specific formulation, i.e. are applicable only to business organisations. What is missing in particular is a theoretically sound embedding in action, social and communication theory.

Contributors with a sociological background tend to devise broad-based definitions. From this perspective, reputation is understood as a communicated form of recognition or disdain with which a person, organisation or institution is treated over the long term and on a supra-individual basis by relevant reference groups (Rao, 1994, p. 29f.; Shrum & Wuthnow, 1988, p. 882f.). Such broadly conceived definitions have the disadvantage of not allowing easy transfer to subcategories capable of being operationalised, i.e. they give no answer to the question of the appraisal criteria to which the reputation of an organisation, person or institution may be *concretely* attached.

The definitions from the sector of PR and marketing research are more concrete and thus easier to operationalise (Eberl & Schwaiger, 2005; Fombrun, 1996; Fombrun & Gardberg, 2000; Fombrun, Gardberg, & Server, 2000; Fombrun & Riel, 2003; Schwaiger, 2004). The approach to reputation taken by Charles Fombrun and his colleagues at the Reputation Institute has evoked particular interest (Fombrun, 1996; Fombrun et al., 2000; Fombrun & Riel, 2003). The overwhelming majority of the available studies on reputation operate with the approach to reputation developed by this school of thought or are at least strongly influenced by this model (Gotsi & Wilson, 2001). Fombrun et al. define reputation as the "overall estimation of a firm by its stakeholders, which is expressed by the net affective reactions of customers, investors, employees, and the general public" (Fombrun, 1996, pp. 78-79). The concept of reputation is then broken down further into six dimensions, namely: 1. Products and Services; 2. Financial Performance; 3. Vision and Leadership; 4. Workplace Environment; 5. Social Responsibility; 6. Emotional Appeal (Fombrun & Riel, 2003, p. 243f.). This six-dimensional reputation concept brings out with particular clarity the bias of the available approaches to reputation mentioned at the outset, as it refers exclusively to business organisations. Its transferability to non-economic organisations or agents is as a consequence greatly limited.

Schwaiger has presented an interesting further development of the concept of reputation (Eberl & Schwaiger, 2005; Schwaiger, 2004). It is based on a theory-led definition that makes a distinction between cognitive and affective dimensions of reputation. The cognitive dimension refers to the perceived *competence*, whereas the affective dimension covers the *sympathy* with which the company is regarded. Reputation is thus treated here as a two-dimensional construct. In addition, various driving variables are distinguished on the independent side that influence these cognitive or affective dimensions. Schwaiger et al. showed empirically that the formative variables of "quality of products and services" and "economic performance" refer mainly to the cognitive dimension of competence, whereas the formative variables of "corporate social responsibility" and "attractiveness" primarily influence the affective dimension of reputation of the companies examined (Schwaiger, 2004, p. 63ff.). This reputation concept was also refined with reference to business

organisations as its object. The approach is nevertheless interesting because the two-dimensional reputation construct can in principle also be transferred to non-economic reputation bearers. However, in contrast to the reputation approach presented here, the *normative* dimension of reputation – in addition to the cognitive and affective ones – is not included directly in the reputation construct but is only considered as an independent variable that *influences* reputation. We develop in this paper a *three*-dimensional concept of reputation that comprises a cognitive, affective *and* normative dimension.

3   Three Dimensions of Reputation: Functional, Social and Expressive

We understand reputation as a phenomenon whose characteristic features can be observed exclusively in modern achievement-oriented societies. This social-evolutionary view allows modern reputation to be developed as a parameter that is attributed or withheld in all the function systems of differentiated modern societies based on the same fundamental logic (Eisenegger, 2004, 2005).

Our approach is based on the observation that rationalization of modern thinking has led to a differentiation into three worlds in which all actors have to prove themselves: these are the *objective*, the *social* and the *subjective worlds* (Habermas, 1988, p. 114ff.; Imhof, 2006, p. 185ff.). Each of these three worldviews is characterised by a specific rationality of action and appraisal that determines the logic of reputation constitution. In the objective world, the agents are judged on whether they serve the purposes and tasks they have been set in a way capable of cognitive verification. In the social world, ethical correctness is the criterion of judgement. In the subjective world, finally, interest focuses on the kind of emotional impact made by the individual character of the agents. Accordingly, these three worlds follow the validity claims of truth, of (normative) rightness and of "beauty"/ attractiveness. In the modern world, what is to be regarded as objectively true, as normatively good and as subjectively attractive is the object of a continuous process of secular negotiation that is affected significantly by specialised experts and institutions with a cognitive, ethical-normative or aesthetic approach to the world.[1] All agents operating in modern societies must succeed in no more and no less than precisely these *three* worlds if they wish to acquire a reputation, quite independently of the action context – such as politics – in which they operate (see Figure 1). We use this three-world concept derived by Jürgen Habermas from Max Weber (Habermas, 1988, pp. 114-151) in order to transfer it to the object of modern reputation constitution. We develop a three-dimensional theory of reputation from it which claims universal validity and can be transferred to any agents and thus also to any type of person, institution and organisation (Eisenegger, 2004, 2005).

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[1]   In contrast to modern societies, the pre-modern period is characterised by the fact that the cognitively true (objective world), the normatively good (social world) and the aesthetically beautiful (subjective world) could still be derived inseparably from a divine principle. In the modern process of secularisation, the true, the good and the beautiful become more fragile, because these world views become objects of public justification and controversy (Imhof, 2006, p. 160ff.).

3.1   The Objective World of the "True": Functional Reputation

Agents operating in modern societies must firstly prove themselves in the world of the true, i.e. they must observe cause-effect relationships that can be logically verified in a specific context. The verifying criterion in the objective world is *instrumental rationality* (Weber, 1980, p. 13). The agents are judged on their success in achieving particular aims or on using appropriate means to do so. The objective world thus primarily encompasses *purpose-oriented and decision-making systems* (Habermas, 1988, p. 132), i.e. in this world the action of a reputation bearer is measured based on the *performance targets* set by the function systems of politics, business, science etc. To the extent that the performance targets of these *function* systems become the criterion for appraising agents, we talk about *functional reputation*. It is an indicator of subsystem-specific *success* and technical *competence* and is linked to how well a particular person fulfils the performance role assigned to him or how well an organisation or institution serves the purpose for which it was established. In the process of reputation constitution, the objective world follows a rigorously cognitive logic: functional success or failure is linked to *key figures* that permit empirically testable true/false statements to be made. Thus political parties acquire functional reputation by measurably increasing voter shares. Journalists appear worthy of recognition when they boost viewer ratings or circulation figures. Finally, managers and companies enhance their functional reputation when they increase their profits or share values. In the objective world, agents with a strongly cognitive world reference appear as *reputation intermediaries*: scientists, experts, analysts etc. are the driving authorities who judge and decide upon the functional reputation of those who act as reputation bearers.

3.2   The Normative World of the "Good": Social Reputation

Secondly, agents must prove themselves in a world of social standards and values. The appraisal criterion in the social world is the *rationality of value* (Weber, 1980, p. 12), i.e. this world is constituted by a normative context that defines how far the action of reputation bearers appears to be legitimate. In this normative world, *social reputation* rules. This type of reputation does not observe the logic of the various function systems but makes a claim to apply to *society as a whole*. In the social dimension, reputation acts as an indicator of ethical *legitimacy* and *integrity* and is linked to how far codified and non-codified social norms are observed. Accordingly, an agent's social reputation remains intact as long as his efforts to achieve functional success observe social norms and values. That is why we expect politicians to shun dishonest methods and managers to include social and ecological standards in their calculations. A strongly normative world reference prevails in the social world. Accordingly, agents are distinguished based on the criterion of *ethical correctness/incorrectness*. In addition, reputation losses in the social world are more serious across the board than those in the objective world: competence that is questioned may be corrected as long as the functional successes are resumed. However, it is much more difficult to re-establish a reputation that suffers from the defect of serious ethical incorrectness. Perceived

ethical deficits always adhere longer to agents and can usually be repaired only by applying radical measures – such as public admissions of guilt.[2]

All members of modern society have extensive practice in participating in ethical discourses pertaining to questions of "good" and "evil." Unlike the objective world, therefore, the social world comprises a much broader range of agents who can act as reputation intermediaries. Religious groups, intellectuals, ethical entrepreneurs, politicians as well as members of the civil society, NGOs and the media can equally decide to what extent reputation bearers prove to be "good" or "bad citizens" of the social world.

3.3   The Subjective World of the "Beautiful": Expressive Reputation

The objective and social worlds confront reputation bearers as *outer worlds* with expectations of cognitive-functional performance or ethical-normative demands. In the subjective dimension, the *inner world* of the agent himself is the criterion for attributing reputation. The central question concerns the *emotional attractiveness* that emanates from an agent's characteristic nature and identity. Whereas a cognitive rationality of appraisal prevails in the objective world and a normative one in the social world, an *emotional* logic of appraisal dominates in the subjective world. It constitutes *expressive reputation*: in the subjective world, the reputation bearer expresses certain personal characteristics in order to evoke a positive emotional response in a third party, i.e. to appear in an attractive light. Conversely, external third parties judge the reputation bearer based on the emotionally attractive or repellent emanations of his character. Expressive reputation thus manifests in a positively or negatively charged emotionality vis-à-vis the reputation bearer and may be read off from indicators of granted or withheld *sympathy, fascination, attractiveness* and *uniqueness*. If expressive reputation is attributed to a particular person in strongly excessive form, it becomes transformed into *charismatic reputation* based on a belief in his exceptional and inspirational gifts (Weber, 1980, p.124).

However, an agent's expressive reputation does not develop in isolation from the objective and social worlds. It depends on the specific and unmistakeable way in which the agent proves himself in the cognitive world of purposeful systems and in the normative world of social standards. Thus, a company may appeal to our feelings because it proves to be a particularly innovative force with fascinating products in the functional dimension. Alternatively, an enterprise may gain our sympathy because it acts ethically from conviction, i.e. places ethical principles above its own profit interests if necessary. In our perception, therefore, expressive reputation reflected in the degree of legitimate emotional attractiveness can be influenced both functionally (innovativeness, fascination force) and socially (force of ethical conviction).

In the subjective world, agents with an aesthetic world reference play the role of reputation intermediaries. This includes all those who specialize in questions of individualised impact on third parties, i.e. communications, PR and fashion advisers, marketing specialists, designers, artists etc. However, because expressive reputation also reveals what an agent integrates into his identity from the objective and social outer worlds, the subjective world also includes reputation intermediaries from both these worlds: experts, analysts and

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[2]   Everyday language proves this law with respect to the violation of the norm prohibiting lying with statements of the following kind: "Someone who lies once loses all credibility thereafter."

scientists no less than ethical entrepreneurs, members of civil society, politicians and the media can all attest to the emotional attractiveness or repulsion of a reputation bearer. Reputation intermediaries with a cognitive world reference (e.g. experts and analysts) will then concentrate on highlighting the bearer's functional attractiveness. In contrast, those with a normative world reference (e.g. ethical entrepreneurs) will base their emotional judgments more on the force of the bearer's ethical convictions. In the subjective world, however, the reputation bearers will inevitably be judged on whether what they reveal of their subjective inner world appears to be *authentic* or is merely feigned/staged with a strategic intent (Goffman, 1986; Habermas, 1988, p. 156).

The following overview summarises our approach to the three dimensions of reputation constitution (see Figure 1):

	Functional Reputation	Social reputation	Expressive reputation
Reputation reference (Reference world)	*Objective outer world* Performance-based function systems; World of cognitively describable cause-effect relationships	*Social outer world* Ethical and normative standards	*Subjective inner world* Individual character and identity
Reputation indicators	Competence, success	Integrity, social responsibility, legitimacy	Attractiveness, uniqueness, sympathy, authenticity
Appraisal style	Cognitive-rational (key figures)	Normative-moralising	Emotional
Reputation intermediaries	Agents with a cognitive world reference: Experts, scientists, analysts	Agents with a normative world reference: Ethical entrepreneurs, intellectuals, political agents, religious groups, civil-society agents, the media	Agents with an aesthetic world reference: Communications, marketing and style advisors, artists, designers, spin doctors, the media

Figure 1: Functional, social and expressive reputation

Further aspects of reputation relevant to a definition may be gleaned in the form of its implications to action theory by linking this concept to its complement – namely *trust*. Even a brief glance at the semantics of the discourse relating to reputation bearers reveals the interdependence between reputation and trust: thus, a reputation bearer appears to be "trustworthy," he "merits our trust" or even possesses "trust capital." Everyday language thus confirms a social law: the reputation of the recipient corresponds to the trust of the giver. In other words: reputation and trust are two sides of the same coin or process of recognition. Reputation may thus be called the recognition of *trustworthiness*.

However, how can trust, which is so fundamental to the formation of reputation, be gained? The answer is: by agents reliably fulfilling the *expectations* of key reference groups (Bentele, 1994, p. 131f.). Trustworthiness is based on the experience of action in compliance with expectations with simultaneous expectation of continued action of the same kind. If we trust a reputation bearer today, we assume that he will also fulfil our expectations tomorrow. That is why trustworthy agents are preceded in the literal sense by their good reputations. The social capital of reputation is therefore characterised by the fact that it thrives and grows particularly where it is already present.

Fulfilled expectations generate trust, and trust generates reputation. At this point, the concept of reputation can be linked to action theory: when institutions, organisations or persons possess a reputation in the perception of outsiders, then its recognition by reputation-endowing individuals is based on expectable actions in a *functional* and *social* respect. In a functional respect, reputation bearers are expected to fulfil their performance mandate and in a social respect, it is assumed that they observe the norms and values of the society as a whole.

However, this only reveals half the secret of good reputation. It does not suffice merely to *adapt* to the expectations of the social and functional outer worlds. Whoever merely fulfils expectations blindly is soon threatened by the stigma of being labelled a conformist or even an opportunist. For this reason, *delimitation* is obligatory in the *expressive* dimension of reputation. Anyone who hopes to build up and maintain a reputation must distinguish himself sharply from his competitors and nurture an unmistakeable and emotionally attractive identity. This stressing of *distinctiveness* is the indispensable precondition for relevant reference groups to respond emotionally just to him and to no other reputation bearer. Accordingly, successful nurturing of reputation is based on the delicate balancing act between functional/social adaptation and expressive delimitation, between expectation and identity management (see Figure 2).

Functional reputation:	Fulfilling functional performance expectations	
Social reputation:	Fulfilling socio-ethical expectations	Adaptation
Expressive reputation:	Nurturing an emotional attractive identity	Delimitation

The secret of positive reputation is based on the delicate balance between adaptation (expectation management) and delimitation (identity management).

Figure 2: Reputation management in the field of tension between adaptation and delimitation

In terms of Habermas' speech-act theory therefore, we can summarize the preconditions for good reputation as follows: in a cognitive respect, reputation presumes the competent fulfilment of functional performance requirements. In a normative respect, the pursuing of social-moral demands becomes an obligation. In addition, in an expressive respect, finally, a positive reputation is based on nurturing an emotionally attractive and unique identity.

Exemplary *reputation management* then means fulfilling the functional and social expectations of key stakeholders without betraying one's own identity – and to do so better than one's direct competitors (Eisenegger, 2005, p. 32).

4   The Emperor Augustus – Or Why Reputation Pays

We have seen that reputation creates trust in ethically correct action in accordance with specific functions and enhances the expressive prominence and uniqueness of its bearers. This refers to the *functions* attributed to the parameter of reputation. There is strong empirical evidence in favour of the commercial benefit of reputation for business organisations. Thus an intact reputation strengthens customer trust, facilitates the recruitment and loyalty of capable employees, improves access to the capital market, reduces the costs of procuring capital, ensures low purchasing prices and reduces the pressure by the authorities to exercise control and regulation. Overall, by building up a high reputation, companies set up a barrier that prevents customer migration and deters market intruders (Eberl & Schwaiger, 2005; Schwaiger, 2004). However, these economic functions, that are undoubtedly essential, by no means exhaustively describe the significance of reputation. This is because reputation exercises fundamental control functions on society as a whole.

An elementary function of reputation across the whole of society consists in legitimising differences in power. However, this role is by no means an invention of modern societies, but can be traced far back to the time of the Roman Emperor *Augustus* (64 BC to 14 AD). The history books see him as someone who held hitherto unequalled power in his own name: thus, Augustus eliminated the Roman aristocratic democracy and had himself nominated sole ruler (*Princeps*). He assumed supreme command of the Roman armed forces and had himself elected *Pontifex maximus*, an office that gave him the power of decision in all religious questions and thus an additional instrument of power. The emperor then faced the problem to having to legitimise this overwhelming power. He found the solution in a formula that still holds well today. In his "record of achievements" (*res gestae*), written shortly before his death, the Imperator noted that his power or *potestas* was justified because he also possessed the corresponding respect of the people, namely *auctoritas*. Whereas power (*potestas*) had been conferred upon him "from above," i.e. from the Roman senate, the Roman people accorded respect (auctoritas) to him "from below." This was for the reason that he had secured the Roman Empire an enduring period of internal peace, stability, security and affluence.

What can we derive from this historical digression? Nothing less than the rule, which continues to apply today, that power conferred "from above," must be recognised "from below" in order to appear legitimate. Power that cannot be secured by means of violence and repression must be earned by an adequate reputation. Reputation thus simultaneously brings about a social miracle: it justifies social inequality. The fact that some people possess a great deal of power and influence while others have little will be accepted in a society for as long as the wielders of power possess an intact reputation.[3] That is why reputation allows the maintenance of hierarchies and power differentials with a minimum of social

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[3]   Whether the power-wielders use their power diligently for the well-being of their subordinates, i.e. serve the general good, is crucial for the intactness of their reputation.

friction. Conditions of social recognition based on reputation characterise a symbolic world that anchors and justifies social hierarchies in the everyday world.

The *legitimising function* of reputation for social supremacy has the greatest conceivable consequences. Thus, every career starts by a growth of reputation, which is the entry ticket to the executive floors where power is exercised. Conversely, positions of power become fragile as soon as a reputation is seriously dented. It is no accident that we are contemporary witnesses to high-ranking politicians or CEOs having to resign because their tattered reputations no longer allow them to hold high office. In addition, because the modern mass media are highly successful in critically scrutinising the reputation of high-ranking status bearers and even in spreading the slightest hint of scandal around them, they increasingly co-determine which bigwigs can stay and which ones must go.

However, reputation plays additional basic roles in society as a whole. This is because striving for reputation is the most important *mechanism of social integration*. Only those who observe the targets and values set by society can acquire a reputation. That is why Hegel designated the "struggle for recognition" as the "motive force" that pushes the "process of socialisation through all its stages" (Honneth, 1994, p. 104). Widespread striving for reputation thus secures the basic values of a civilised society.

Further functions of reputation can be summarized under the aspect of *complexity reduction* in at least a threefold respect:

Firstly, reputation allows the *simple selection* of those organisations, institutions or persons with whose aid we want to realise our plans of action. An intact reputation enhances the prominence and uniqueness of its bearers and links up to target-oriented and efficient interactions. Thus, a particular company's good reputation allows people to select it or its products with a minimum of knowledge purely based on their good feeling. We follow agents with an intact reputation more readily because we have learnt to trust almost blindly in their performance, competence and integrity.

Secondly, an intact reputation minimises social control. A good reputation relieves its bearer from the need for his actions to be continuously scrutinised. Intact reputation consequently *extends the scope for freedom and action*. In contrast, the less trust there is in the reputation of institutions, organisations and leadership elites, the more must formalised regulations replace this reputation vacuum and the more must state bodies assume the functions of control and supervision with their implicit power of sanction.

Thirdly, reputation gives its bearers the *power of definition and conviction*. Reputation is linked to the power to shape social reality and work in a creative way. Only those who possess an intact reputation and the corresponding trust capital will evoke conviction even if their actions do not immediately fulfil the expectations of outsiders.

Reputation is thus a commodity of inestimable value: it focuses trustworthy and sustained action on its bearers, reduces the complexity associated with their selection, liberates them from control and lends legitimacy to any positions of power. Of course, the converse also applies: a loss of reputation destabilises action by a collapse of trust, increases its complexity and delegitimises hierarchical structures.

5 Reputation as a Core Concept in Public Relations

The interdependence between reputation and trust outlined above already points to the central importance of reputation for the theory and practice of public relations (PR). Thus, the function of PR is prominently linked in the discussions within communications science to planning and implementing suitable communications measures aiming to strengthen the trust of the public and/or specific reference groups or to prevent the emergence of mistrust (Bentele & Seeling, 1996, p. 155ff.; Ronneberger & Rühl, 1992, p. 252f.; Szyszka, 1992, p. 104ff.). Reputation assumes precisely this function of securing trust. It acts as social capital and allows the maintenance and accumulation of additional trust. However, the centring of PR on the nurturing of reputation is also indicated by the fact that the function of PR work elsewhere in the professional PR discussion is linked to the construction of images (Faulstich, 1992, p. 72f.; Merten, 1992, p. 43f.; Merten & Westerbarkey, 1994, p. 188f.). Nevertheless, the relationship between the terms image and reputation remains unclear, i.e. to what extent does the nurturing of image and reputation represent different concepts for the same phenomenon or imply different levels of significance? In the definition of terms presented here, the relationship between reputation and image initially results from the fact that in processes of social recognition the various images of an agent are mutually weighed up and balanced out to create an (overall) reputation. Whereas the significance of an image additionally has a neutral connotation and leaves open whether it is associated with neutral, positive or negative evaluation patterns, reputation always involves a ranking between evaluated agents and implies higher or lower estimation, greater or lesser acceptance. Bromley stresses this: "The main difference is that reputation usually implies an evaluation, whereas public image is a fairly neutral term. In general, reputation is highly valued. Its main function, however, is to maintain social order" (Bromley, 1993, p. 6).

In view of this *evaluative function*, reputation assumes an outstanding position in organisational communications. This is because if a particular organisation is to survive in the long term, it must necessarily advertise its special value vis-à-vis other organisations. Accordingly, PR aims to rank an organisation and its achievements in its respective field of action as well as in the social domain as positively as possible. This is exactly the function assumed by reputation. It is an integral constituent of the social process of assigning agents' rank and position in society. It is the result of the stress on the differential performance of an organisation in realising collectively shared aims and values in its respective field of action. For this reason, PR is equivalent to *reputation management*.

6 Reputation and Medialised Communications

Without public communications, but especially without media reporting set out over the long term, we would be unable to develop any kind of awareness of society. The media arena is the most important portal of access to society: by gazing into this arena, we build up a picture of our society, organisations and institutions, economy and various companies. This fact alone explains why the media plays a central role in the process of reputation constitution. Naturally, this does not mean that reputation is not also formed in personal networks via face-to-face communications. Yet it is uncontested that nothing determines and guides communications in personal networks as much as the information broadcast by

the media.[4] However, the differentiation of the commercialised media systems in all the core Western nations has now resulted in a further massive boost of the significance of media-broadcast communications in the process of reputation constitution, quite irrespective of the action contexts from which the reputation bearers come. The principal reasons for the *medialisation* of reputation constitution are the following (Eisenegger, 2004, p. 58ff.; Imhof, 2005, p. 203ff.; Schranz, 2007, p. 121ff.):

Firstly, the agents of various function systems are adapting increasingly to the logic of reputation constitution by the media. This is because, as the media become increasingly utilised and influential, their reference and target groups perceive them in an increasingly exclusive way via media-broadcast communications with all the serious consequences that this implies. At the same time, the stakeholders try ever more frequently to affect organisational reputations directly via the media.

Secondly, as the media systems become increasingly differentiated on the basis of their own logic, we are seeing a growing domination of their communications by experts who increasingly use the media to act as reputation authorities with defining power to broadcast their reputation-defining ratings. In the first instance, this growing power of experts is a consequence of the topical delimitation of modern journalism in competition for the favour of diverse target publics. This makes the work of journalists more complex, so that they must increasingly call in experts to deal with it. Nevertheless, experts are also being used ever more frequently in media reporting by the media providers in order to consolidate their reputation and credibility.

Thirdly, the virulent muckraking practiced by the differentiated media system has markedly increased the risks to which the reputations of agents from politics, business and other function systems are exposed (Imhof, 2002c, 73ff.; Kepplinger et al., 2002, 11ff.). Because reputations damaged by the media cannot be corrected outside the media, this increased risk of being the object of scandal has led to the agents themselves having to influence the build-up of their reputations in the media or else to concentrate their external communications on the mass media. In other words, to the degree that the media scrutinise existing reputations and render them fragile ever more frequently and successfully, their significance grows as the primary target of measures aiming to maintain and create reputation. In this way, the media arena is transformed into the principal reputation arena.

However, media-broadcast communications are also of elementary significance for reputation constitution due to the following factors:

Getting noticed: Anyone who strives to acquire a reputation must initially be noticed. Only those who are known can be recognized, and only those who come to public notice can be esteemed. Reputation is consequently linked to public celebrity. It can be formed only when unknown third parties can picture a particular prestige bearer. Moreover, the media are the unrivalled creators of precisely this kind of celebrity. Irrespective of whether the presence of an agent in the media discourse is intended or not, in either case the person concerned cannot avoid the processes and logic of reputation constitution by the media. The public sphere of the media produces reputation (both good and bad) irrespective of whether the objects of its observation do anything towards it, against it or nothing at all.

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[4]   The following relationship applies across the board: The greater the intrinsic reputation of the media, and the more coherent, i.e. generally held, their estimation of a company, the greater is their impact on the individual stakeholders and their expectations (Eisenegger, 2005, pp. 72-74).

Issue-setting function: The issue-setting function of the public sphere created by the media is of elementary significance for the process of reputation constitution. By placing those issues in which the society's reputation bearers must prove themselves at the focus of interest for society as a whole, they decisively co-determine this process. It is graphically illustrated by the dying forests debate of the 1980s: at that time, the European media created a bleak future scenario that led to numerous environmental protection laws, to the expansion of public transport and to corporate ecological balances. Also the America's Sarbanes-Oxley Act – a law that obliges all companies listed on US stock exchanges to practice good corporate governance under penalty of legal sanction – can't be explained without the influence of the international media in the context of the great scandals concerning corporate accounting fraud.

Overall, media-broadcast communications have the key function of transforming the particular reputations of agents restricted to the domains of the various function systems into reputations that apply to society as a whole. In the process of constituting reputations in modern societies, the public sphere created by the media forms the dominant, over-arching reputation arena. It over-arches the internal reputation arenas of the various function systems and evaluates reputation bearers in terms of functional, social and expressive criteria in the spotlight of broad public visibility. The media arena is the only one with the power to transform an agent's reputation so that it is perceived across the whole of society and extends beyond the limited domains of applicability of particular social subcultures or sub-systems. The public arena created by the media forms the central sphere for reputation constitution in modern societies, and does so irrespective of the type of organisation (political, economic etc.) concerned.

7   Logic of Reputation Constitution in the Media Society

Next, we must ask what logic of reputation constitution prevails in the media society to which the reputation management of diverse organisations must adapt. We will now pursue this question by presenting the results of an empirical study of the logic of reputation creation by the media. For the study period 2004-2006, articles in the media on eight major corporations will be evaluated and their basic reputation patterns summarized.[5]

In a first step, we will briefly examine the underlying process of reputation analysis by the media (7.1). The empirically consolidated regularities will then be presented and their consequences for organisational reputation management discussed (7.2).

7.1 Method – The Media Reputation Index (RI)

The reputation analysis presented here uses a measuring procedure that operationalises the medialised reputation of essentially any agents based on *evaluations*.[6] In the data acquisi-

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[5]   The following companies are examined: Novartis, Roche (pharmaceuticals); UBS, Credit Suisse (banks); Swisscom, Cablecom (telecoms); Zurich Financial Services, Winterthur (insurance companies). The media sample covered up to 65 leading media in the Swiss media arena, depending on the evaluation.

[6]   For a detailed presentation of the method used to measure media reputation, cf. Eisenegger, 2005, p. 94ff.; Schranz, 2007, p. 151ff.

tion process, it is asked whether the media in a rather positive, negative, controversial or neutral light present a reputation object (such as an organisation or person). The evaluation units used for the analysis are not individual statements but entire media articles. The method is based on the premise that the impression of reputation bearers generated by the media and underlying the evaluation does not unfold in additively combined text passages but emerges only in the totality of an entire media article due to configuring features of a formal and contextual kind.

The *evaluation variable* then allows a reputation index (RI) to be calculated. This in turn permits a standardised comparison to be made between the medialised reputations of any reputation objects (companies, company types, industries, persons, political organisations, countries etc.). It measures the credibility of a reputation bearer based on all media articles evaluated in a specific time and can assume values within the range from -100 to +100. Here, a (hypothetical) value of +100 means that a reputation object has been subject exclusively to positive evaluations. In contrast, a value of -100 means that the object was exclusively given negative evaluations.

The reputation index can then be divided up further into the basic types of functional, social and expressive reputation. Where a company was evaluated with respect to subsystem-specific competence or success criteria (sales and balance figures, share prices, management questions etc.), the functional reputation type was assigned. If, in contrast, the company's social integrity or legitimacy was the object of the evaluation (employer-employee relationships, ethical or legal violations etc.), the variant of social reputation was encoded. If the functional or social evaluations had a strongly emotional component, the relevant articles were additionally assigned the variant of expressive reputation. The process of recording the three basic types of reputation thus followed a methodical logic that allowed emotional-expressive reputations to be attributions in both functional and social/social-ethical contexts. Accordingly, for instance, an innovation that was praised in strongly emotional terms was assigned both functional and the expressive reputations. The latter was thus evaluated as a functional or social type with a strongly emotional content.

The key regularities of medialised reputation constitution referred to the basic types of functional, social and expressive reputation will now be presented.

7.2   Regularities of Medialised Reputation Constitution

7.2.1   Regularity 1: The minefield of social reputation

Figure 3 shows the values of the social and functional reputation of the major corporations examined during the period 2005-2006. The graph shows that these companies are evaluated much more strongly in functional contexts, i.e. with respect to economic criteria. Despite a massive increase in the social reporting with an ethically scrutinizing view in recent years, the companies are still much more strongly evaluated based on economic-functional competence and success criteria. However, to the extent that they are evaluated in social contexts, the reputation values show a strongly negative trend. Social reputation is thus for the major corporations a veritable minefield with clearly dominant reputation risks.
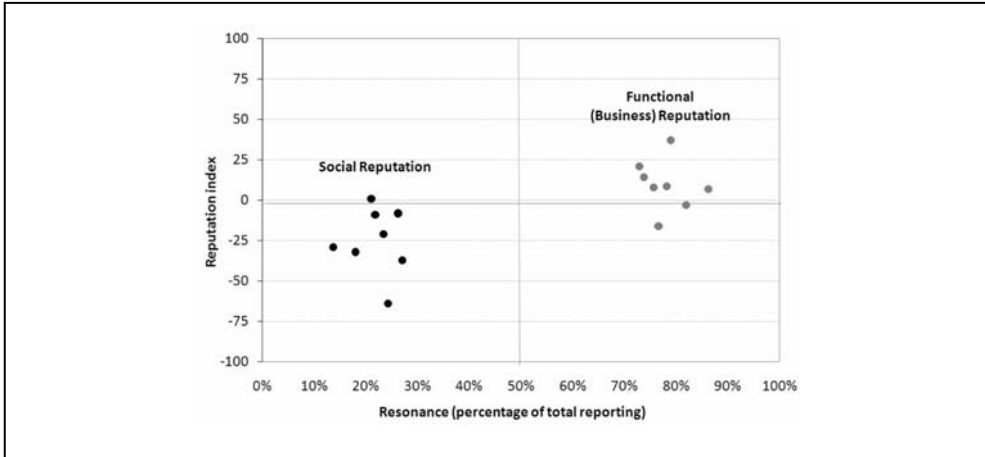
Figure 3: Social and functional reputation of eight major corporations (2005-2006)

Explanation: The data points symbolise the eight examined companies with respect to their social and functional reputations during the period 2005-2006. The horizontal axis plots the weight of functional and social topic-setting as a percentage of overall reporting. The vertical axis indicates reputation values along a continuum from +100 (highly positive) to -100 (highly negative).

What does this mean for the reputation management? Running counter to the current trend for corporate social responsibility or good corporate citizenship, the positive overall reputation of a company is based primarily on a strong functional business reputation and a low profile in the domain of its social reputation. At least as regards the big players of the business world, the rule is: they should concentrate on their functional business reputation while ensuring not to fall victim to scandal-mongering by the media in the domain of their social reputation. Accordingly, multinationals can achieve positive reputation effects largely based on their functional reputation. In contrast, they have extremely limited scope for positive control of their social reputation. The main thing here is to avoid sustaining damage simply by observing the social standards without making too much of a fuss about their social commitment. Companies that spell out their ethical stance too strongly in their communications to the outside world provoke mistrust and stimulate the media to immediately blow up even minor infringements of ethics and public decency into scandals. A telling example in this sense is the ethical campaign run by Swiss Coop Bank in 2003 (see Figure 4). To show itself in such a goody-goody light in this way is an open invitation for every journalist to look for skeletons in its cupboards, i.e. to set it an ethical trap.

Figure 4: Ethical campaign of Swiss Coop Bank

Explanation: Coop Bank's posters show the heads of various dictators (Marcos, Abacha, Mobutu etc.) to illustrate its slogan "We are proud of the fact that not everyone has an account with us."

7.2.2   Regularity 2: Positive emotional response with a primarily functional motive

Figure 5 shows the expressive reputation of the examined companies. It was operationalised based on evaluations made by the media in *strongly emotionalised form*. The study focused especially on the question of the context – functional or social – in which the companies were presented in an emotionalised way.

In the first instance, we see a remarkable finding: in the domain of expressive reputation, the attributions with a positive emotional content dominate. In contrast to the general perception that the media tend to show a negative picture, we see a dominance of positively nuanced emotionality concerning the companies. This positive emotional slant is unequivocally driven by functional factors, i.e. it is found significantly more frequently in economic than in social contexts. If, however, the expressive reputation shows a negative tendency, this is usually due to ethical misdemeanours.
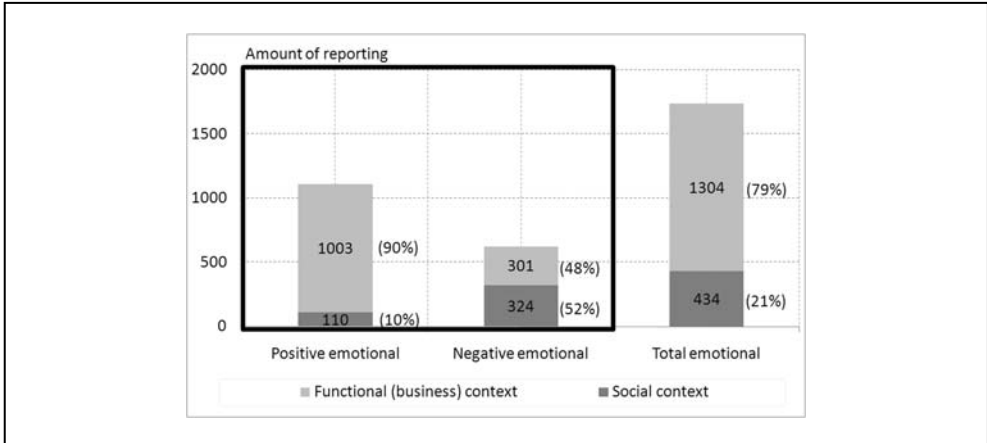
Figure 5: Expressive reputation in functional and social contexts (eight major corporations; 2005-2006)

Explanation: The graph shows expressive reputation divided into emotional-positive and emotional-negative evaluations as well as differentiated by functional and social motivations. Thus an article was given a positive-emotional coding in the functional context when a company's business competence and performance was praised in a strongly emotional way (e.g. via an innovation or a new product). In contrast, it was given a negative-emotional coding in the social context where a social lapse was attacked in a strongly emotional way.

The following regularity can be derived from this observation: companies with a global scope of operations can achieve positively nuanced expressive reputation largely by outstanding economic performance, whereas a negative expressive reputation usually has socio-ethical causes. A more detailed breakdown shows empirically that the perception patterns of *innovativeness, fascination power of the products* as well as general *future potential* are the key drivers of a positive expressive reputation.

7.2.3 Regularity 3: David-Goliath effects

The acquisition of resonance in the domain of social reporting is associated with risks for companies (cf. chapter 6.2.1 and 6.2.2). However, this finding must be differentiated. For it transpires that this regularity applies especially to large companies but less to the small and medium-sized businesses in the world economy. Figure 6 illustrates the social reputation values of large and small bank groups in Switzerland in the examined period 2004-2005. It can be seen that the large banks with a global scope of operations attract great media interest while simultaneously attaining low values of social reputation. In contrast, the small regional banks suffer from comparatively low media interest but gain commensurately higher values of social reputation. This illustrates a *David-Goliath effect*: because small companies are more closely associated with society, they have a competitive advantage in

the domain of social reputation. Conversely, the large ones suffer in the social world from a credibility deficit. This regularity can be explained in sociological terms. In our perception, power tends to be associated with ruthlessness. The powerful global companies arouse the suspicion that they abuse their power by favouring particular interests to their own benefit. This makes it correspondingly difficult for companies with a global scope of operations to score points in the domain of social reputation. The strength of this David-Goliath effect in the social world is directly proportional to the degree of market dominance of the company concerned: thus, McDonald's and not Burger King is the preferred target of attack by the anti-globalisation movement; Microsoft and not Apple is the preferred target of software hackers.

As regards functional reputation, however, empirical studies also show a converse relationship: because (market) power is equivalent in our perception to assertive strength, larger companies find it easier than small ones to acquire recognition for business performance. This is because size and power are associated in our everyday understanding with functional success.
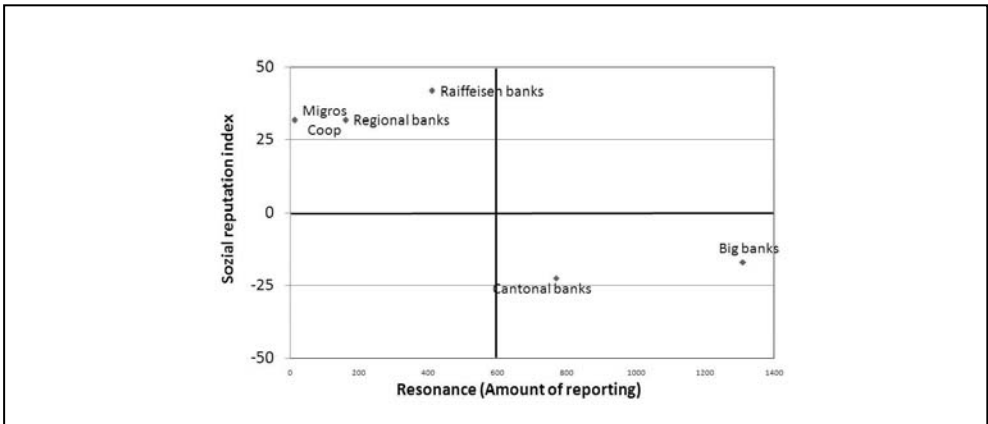
Figure 6: Social reputation values of large and small Swiss banks (2004-2005)

Explanation: The graph shows the social reputation values of small and large Swiss bank groups in the examined period 2004-2005. The horizontal axis indicates the media interest (measured in number of articles). The vertical axis records the social reputation values.

7.2.4 Regularity 4: Excessive focus on personalities is damaging

What effects does the medialisation of reputation with a personality focus have on reputation constitution? This question can be conclusively answered by resolving the overall reputation into personality-focused and organisational components (see Figure 7). Two regularities are then apparent:

In the first place, it can be seen that a strong focus on personalities in the media is associated with a markedly *volatile* development of reputation. The more strongly that a company's reputation is reduced to the CEO or other bigwigs, therefore, the more strongly

does its reputation curve fluctuate. Conversely, the development of the organisational reputation, which attaches to the company as a whole, is characterised by greater stability and predictability. Praise and censure thus appear to attach more closely to individuals than to organisations as a whole. For reputation management, this means that a high focus on personalities hinders a coherent and predictable build-up of reputation and leads to its unstable development.

Secondly: a high degree of personality focus is an indicator of crisis (cf. the key dates Q3.2004 and Q1.2006 on the chart). Whenever reputation deficits are perceived, the CEO and other high-ranking company representatives appear regularly in the public eye and the media coverage of personalities' shoots up. This can also be easily explained: it is very difficult to assign responsibility for a company's misconduct to an abstract entity. In contrast, a well-known personality can be severely criticised in a striking way.

The risks involved in focusing on personalities were greatly underestimated by companies in the past. Such a focus leads to a volatile development of reputation and makes it easy for crises to be blown up into scandals. Overall, however, excessive focusing on personalities also hinders long-term reputation management for another reason: if companies are perceived too strongly via their senior executives, the company's reputation must be re-established every time there is a change in leadership – every four to five years in Europe! If a company gives in to a short-term star cult, its long-term build-up of reputation is damaged. Yet a marked tendency to focus on personalities is not only the outcome of specific media logic, in recent years it has been massively stoked up by the communications management of the organisations themselves.
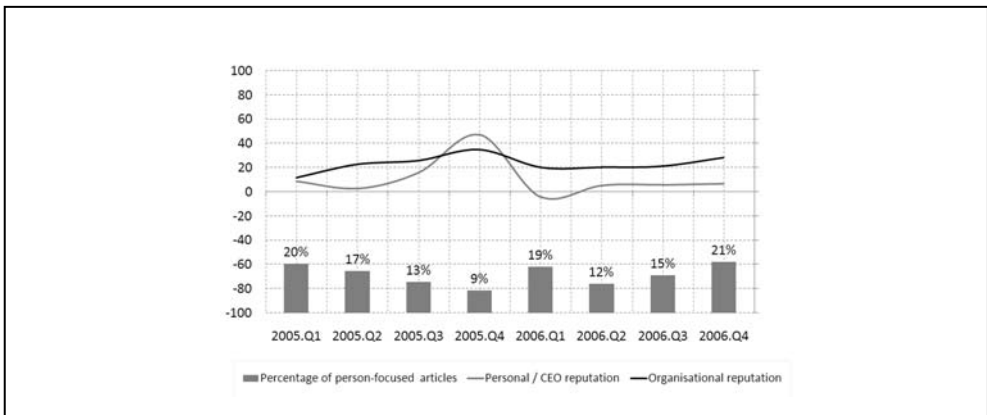
Figure 7: Person-focused and organisational reputation in the pharmaceutical industry (2005-2006)

Explanation: The graph shows the development of personality-focused and organisational reputations of the pharmaceutical industry in the period 2005-2006. The personality-focused reputation curve covers all media articles whose reporting centred on senior executives (CEOs). The organisational reputation curve refers to all articles in which the analysed companies as a whole were at the focus of media interest.

8 Conclusion

This article took its start from the observation that the concept of reputation in communications science in general and in the professional PR debate in particular suffers from an excessively narrow focus. All available mainstream definitions have hitherto been developed exclusively by examining business organisations. There has so far been a lack of a comprehensive and theory-led definition that would allow the concept of reputation to be applied in principle to any types of agents – companies, public authorities, political parties, universities, media groups, and countries etc. – both at the level of communities (organisations, institutions) and of individuals (persons). We see this conceptual reductionism as a serious deficit. For as long as reputation is conceived exclusively as a phenomenon of the economic world, PR research will continue to focus only on business organisations. This simultaneously inhibits more fruitful comparative research that analyses the reputation dynamics of various types of organisation and thus gains deeper insights into the logic of modern reputation constitution.

Against the background of this lack of a relevant debate in professional circles, this article has developed an approach to reputation that may be applied to any agents. A critical examination of the three-worlds theory of Jürgen Habermas led to the development of a three-dimensional construct of reputation that is invariably made up of a *functional*, a *social* and an *expressive reputation type*, irrespective of the action context (politics, business, science etc.) from which its bearers come. To the extent that PR is essentially seen as being reputation management – as proposed in this article – it invariably involves managing all three types of reputation. From the perspective of the relevant organisation, the aim is to appear as a competent and successful agent in the corresponding function system (functional reputation), to observe general social norms and values (social reputation) and to preserve an unmistakeable identity that evokes a positive emotional response in third parties (expressive reputation).

This article further describes modern reputation constitution as a process that is increasingly controlled by the media. It argues that medialised communications are developing to become the dominant mechanism of reputation constitution in modern societies: commercialised media systems are the principal controllers of which agents become objects of social processes of recognition and of the pattern that these reputation dynamics must follow. If we take this finding seriously, empirical research on reputation must focus on acquiring a clearer picture of the logic of reputation constitution by the media.

As regards the media logic of reputation constitution for business organisations, our own research revealed the following regularities. For the major corporations examined, it transpired that opportunities for reputation are found principally in the domain of functional business reputation, whereas the domain of social reputation is strongly associated with reputation risks. In agreement with this finding, it was shown with a view to expressive reputation that a positive emotional charge is almost always associated with these companies on the basis of functional-economic factors, with attributed innovativeness and fascination (of the products) most frequently highlighted as positive. Conversely, a negative emotional charge is usually observed in social contexts, where violations of ethics and public decency give rise to emotional storms of indignation. Moreover, a highly interesting David-Goliath regularity was noted: it may be described by the formula that small and medium-sized companies are advantaged especially in managing their social reputation, whereas the

large multinationals find it easier to gain reputation in the functional domain of business. Finally, the negative effects of a marked personality focus were verified. It thus transpired that an intensive focus on the CEO in media communications leads to the volatile development of reputation and makes it easier to turn a crisis into a scandal.

All these findings are of the highest relevance for reputation management by companies. They mean that in the domain of social reputation large companies are well advised to take a preventative approach that centres on diffusing risks. In addition, external company communications should minimise their focus on personalities. Overall, it is evident that successful reputation management invariably presumes exact knowledge of such regularities of public reputation constitution and thus requires in-depth research.

9   Discussion

The three-dimensional approach to reputation developed in this article allows various phenomena that have always been of interest to PR research to be handled in a more precise way. Thus, the concept of a communications crisis may be characterised in more detail. A fundamental crisis – for instance of a company – may then be characterised by the fact that the perception of crass incompetence or spectacular failure prevails in the functional dimension of reputation, serious violations of ethics and public decency are pilloried in the social dimension and the identity of the company is completely reduced to the crisis in the expressive dimension, i.e. an emotional impact is produced purely by the perception of the crisis. This kind of body-blow to the corporate reputation was observed in the two historical crises of Enron and Worldcom.

The reputation triad developed here also helps to better classify various approaches, tactics and instruments of communication management. Thus, for example, we may ask whether a specific advertising campaign aims at manipulating the company's functional, social or expressive reputation. In this connection, it will certainly become evident that many advertising campaigns aim to promote a diffuse, positive emotional charge with respect to the organisation and thus not infrequently resort to delimiting themselves from their fellow competitors. The advertising slogan of Apple Macintosh "Think different!" is a veritable paradigm for this form of expressive nurturing of reputation.

However, probably the most important feature of the threefold concept of reputation is that it refers the discipline of PR to comparative research that looks out over the edge of the business world and also includes other types of organisations – e.g. from the domain of politics – in its purview. We see this as not only an exciting project, but also an extremely worthwhile one in view of scarce research funding.

The approach to reputation presented here opens up a wealth of additional lucrative research opportunities. In addition to the comparative research projects that include the various types of organisation already mentioned, there has so far been a lack of in-depth studies into the effect of medialised reputation constitution for relevant stakeholders. This requires multi-method research designs that combine survey-based and media-based enquiries into reputation. Nevertheless, a few studies have recently appeared that have done the first valuable pioneering work in this field (Carroll & Combs, 2003; Einwiller & Korn, 2004; Ingenhoff, 2007; Meijer & Kleinnijenhuis, 2006).

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Internal Communication and Leadership

Claudia Mast & Simone Huck

The aim of this chapter is to draw attention to the field of leadership communication research. Relying on the transformational leadership approach it describes leadership as a "management of meaning." The chapter outlines the emerging concept of leadership communication, develops a first model, discusses its implications for organizational and internal communication research and gives hints for the practice of internal communication.

1   Introduction

Communication between management and staff is the vital basis of organizational communication. At the same time, it can be seen as the nucleus of internal information and communication processes. Employee surveys show that the immediate supervisor is the primary source of information for employees and their most important partner in communication (Schick, 2007, p. 139). Management research, dealing with work-related interaction between management and staff, has barely addressed communication problems so far. Although some communicative aspects are discussed by various leadership theories, they hardly have been analyzed in a systematic way. Likewise, in the framework of organizational and internal communication the issue of leadership communication has not been addressed very often. Although sporadic articles on the topic have been published, it cannot be called a field of research yet.

The possible linkages between leadership communication and internal communication are manifold, though: They are ranging from personal communication to the integration of leadership communication into the whole internal communication system to the potential support of central points of reference in organizational communication like corporate culture and corporate identity. Questions of leadership communication open up a broad field for both organizational and public relations research. During the past couple of years transformative leadership as a management philosophy stressing the crucial role of communication for leadership in times of change has been successfully introduced in the Anglophone research context. This approach seems to be perfectly suited for an adoption in the framework of leadership communication. Few efforts have already been made. However, they did not manage to overcome a cursory stage.

This article aims at structuring the field of leadership communication from the perspective of organizational communication science. Additionally, it theoretically links leadership communication to internal communication and indicates implications for managerial practice. For that purpose, the second chapter characterizes the research gap that presently exists in the areas of organizational communication and internal communication concerning leadership communication. Subsequently the approach of transformative leadership will be depicted. Heralding a new era in management research, it differs from transactional management and leadership theories by highlighting the importance, role and implementation of

communication. With the basic principles of transformative leadership in mind, a first model of leadership communication is going to be developed. The third chapter depicts links between transformative leadership communication and internal communication. Possibilities of integrating leadership communication into internal communication will be discussed, as well as the question of how internal communication can support managers in mastering their communicative tasks. Chapter four finally shows how research on organizational communication can be extended to the area of leadership communication. Besides, it tackles questions relevant to the PR practice.

This article is a first systematic literature review on leadership communication. It wants to provide a frame of reference for theory building in the fields of organizational and internal communication. At the same time it aims at offering valuable advice for practitioners in public relations on how to integrate leadership communication into internal communication on a meso-level and, thus, on how to take advantage of its high potential.

2   Leadership Communication – Outline of an Emerging Concept

In the 1960s, a groundbreaking study by Henry Mintzberg empirically quantified the amount of communication in management for the first time (Mintzberg, 1973, 1975): Managers roughly spend two thirds of their working hours on communicating – mainly face-to-face with their inferiors, superiors and colleagues. Mintzberg's research has been reproduced repeatedly throughout the past decades. The design has been adapted to the respective circumstances, consistently affirming the high percentage of communication (see for instance Stewart, 1976; Sproull, 1984; McCall & Kaplan, 1985). Up to today, the influences of Mintzberg's research can be traced back when regarding workplace communication research in the German "Bürokommunikationsforschung," a research field of management science. It describes how much time managers spent on communication, which media they choose and what competencies they show in using certain channels. However, does communication science deal with leadership communication, too? Are there any theoretical approaches to personal leadership communication? Is there theorizing about leadership communication in an internal communication framework?

To answer these questions the subsequent paragraphs will outline the present state of communication research on leadership communication. The focus will be on organizational communication and internal communication. It will become obvious that presently only few hints exist for communication between management and staff. Although many references to transformative leadership can be found in English publications especially in an organizational communication context, the approach has not been fully implemented by communication science yet. Thus, chapter 2.2 will develop a basic model of leadership communication, based on transformative leadership as a communication-centred philosophy.

2.1 Identifying the Research Gap

German publications on organizational and internal communication scarcely contain remarks on leadership communication. It is astonishing that scientific books or book chapters in these areas do not or only hardly mention the significance of managers as actors in an

organizational communication framework or as target audience from a public relations view. In theory building, the role of managers as information transmitters as well as active communicators has basically been ignored; empirical studies on internal communication mainly focus on communication management, evaluation and instruments (see, for example, Winterstein, 2000; Hoffmann & Lang, 2006; Huck, 2005). Sill, even in this context the aspect of leadership communication was mostly left aside.

When managers are mentioned in communication contexts, it is mainly in regard to their role in informational cascades (Meier, 2002, pp. 42-46), in the context of network communications (Hellweg, 1997) or in exceptional situations like times of transition (Deekeling, 1999, pp. 20-22). However, the role of managers as communicators is explicitly discussed in the framework of CEO-communication – an area that only has little in common with communication between management and staff, though, and hence shall not be discussed in this text in detail. In the field of organizational communication some hints can be found in Anglophone publications, still leadership communication is not discussed comprehensively there. These papers are dealing with questions of structure and the underlying system of leadership communication, with personal traits of managers and behavioural aspects (Jablin, 1989, p. 1203).

In Germany, hints to leadership communication and its integration into the internal communication system primarily can be found in books written for practitioners (e.g. Schick, 2007; Kalmus, 1998; Klöfer, 1999). Goals and functions of communication between management and staff are described, and fields of application are identified. Management PR is mentioned in this context, too (Deg, 2005). However, there are only few systematic analyses, classifications or depictions contributing to the formation of a theory. Schick (2007, p. 136) for instance overcomes this pattern by systematically approaching the topic, still from a practitioner's point of view, but classifying leadership communication according to the number of hierarchical levels spanned between communicator and recipient. Furthermore, Klein, Ringlstetter and Oelert (2001) develop a classification by distinguishing between "management communication" and "further communication." This differentiation is not widely accepted, but the basic idea of interpersonal communication as a follow-up for content communicated by print or digital media is an important aspect of leadership communication.

When skimming through Anglophone publications on leadership communication it becomes clear that a new field of study is emerging. However, at this point it still lacks clear shape: There are many guidebooks to "management communication" and "leadership communication" suggesting pragmatic how-to-approaches to manage and persuade employees (Barrett, 2007; Caroselli, 2000; Ivey, 2000; Hargie, Dickson, & Tourish, 1999; Hattersley & McJannet, 1997; O'Connor, 1997, p. 134ff.). A wider and more scientific approach is exhibited in numerous compendia and textbooks in the fields of organizational communication and public relations. However, most of these publications simply contain a few sentences or paragraphs on general aspects of leadership communication (e.g. Yeomans, 2006, p. 345; Gaut & Perrigo, 1998; Stohl, 1995). Others, though, dedicate a whole chapter to the topic. They present basic leadership theories, relate to selected aspects of management communication or focus on transformative leadership (see for instance Shockley-Zalabak, 1999; Byers, 1997; Daniels, Spiker, & Papa, 1997; Eisenberg & Goodall, 1997; Goldhaber, 1993). Yet the bigger part of these books only contains short references to leadership communication.

The broadest and most intensive analysis can be found in those few books and articles that introduce the basic principles of leadership communication from a theoretical point of view. These publications try to display first links to organizational and internal communication (e.g. Witherspoon, 1997; Hackman & Johnson, 2004; Cheney et al., 2004). They are based upon the transformative leadership approach, which is the first approach in the history of management research identifying communication as a parameter fundamental to leadership. Thus, transformative leadership can be seen as a communication-based approach to describing and analysing the relationship and interaction between management and staff. That is why it perfectly makes sense to transfer it to and use it in the context of leadership communication.

2.2   Transformative Leadership as a Communication Approach to Leading

Transformative leadership approaches have been dominating the research on leadership since the 1980s. In the past years, their significance has increased (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. 1; Lowe & Gardner, 2001) due to their ability to describe, analyze and proactively shape change processes (Clampitt, 2005, p. 205). As "management of meaning" transformative leadership can foster transformation, i.e. the development of subordinates. Thus, transformative approaches trigger a change of perspective in leadership research: They abandon the instrumental perspective of classical leadership approaches in favour of an interactive perspective. This interactive perspective is based on the recipients' situation and allows for a bilateral management of relationships. In addition, transformational approaches have the potential to become the new frame of reference for the analysis and interpretation of leadership communication.

Basic principles of transformative leadership: Managers are actively shaping and controlling transformation processes inside the organization (Alvesson, 2002, p. 105; Bennis & Nanus, 1985). Thus, particularly the present situation of many enterprises, which is influenced by change and transition, seems to call for concepts focussing on managers as determining actors (Cushman & King, 1995, p. 36). According to Bennis and Nanus (1985, p. 3) "the new [transformative, authors' note] leader (…) is one who commits people to action, who converts followers into leaders, and who may convert leaders into agents of change." The crucial features of this approach are the development and illustration of a vision, the constitution and preservation of a truthful and open work-related relation to the staff, a participatory management style and the empowerment of employees to fulfil their tasks. Additionally, a frame of meaning and reference shall be defined that allows for an individual and individually accomplishable contribution to the achievement of corporate goals. (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Lowe & Gardner, 2001; Tichy & DeVanna, 1986; Bennis & Nanus, 1985).

Based on interviews with managers, Kouzes and Posner (2007) identified five behavioural patterns for transformative leadership (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). Transformative leaders challenge the process, inspire a shared vision, enable others to act, model the way, and encourage the heart.

Employees following the vision of a leader are convinced that they are having a share in achieving a "better future" for their company and that they personally are able to make an important contribution (Cheney et al., 2004, p. 197). Inferiors are becoming "followers"

who want to be "one of the builders of this better future" (ibid.), because they convincingly have been addressed by a leader on a cognitive, affective and conative level. A basic pre-condition for such a process is that the necessity of change widely has been recognized and accepted. Transformative, charismatic leadership – that is one of the central postulates – is supposed to transform people and their attitudes by highlighting and fostering their intrinsic satisfaction in a way that their identification with the organization grows, their commitment prospers and their will to reach the corporate goals increases (Shamir, House & Arthur, 1993).

Communication as constitutive element of leadership: The extraordinary significance of communication is getting obvious when examining these central characteristics. Trans-formative leadership as a "management of meaning" mostly consists of communicating. It is based on a relationship between leader and follower. The management of meaning offers a new relational quality to this interaction, which is both formed and expressed through communication. Witherspoon (1997, p. 19) interprets leadership as a process "that relies on communication" (ibid.) and „through which leaders frame and shape the context of a situation using actions and utterances" (ibid., p. 6, according to Smircich & Morgan, 1982). The transformative leadership approach, thus, is based on a fundamentally new comprehension of communication. Instruction-oriented one way-communication, which is the communica-tion paradigm referred to by numerous leadership approaches, is replaced by a two way-communication philosophy. Instead of instrumentally persuading subordinates, transforma-tive leaders convey frames of perception and interpretation serving as frames of reference to their followers.

„A transformational leader is a good communicator and/or understands the importance of communication within an organization" (Tichy & Devanna, 1986, pp. 279-280). In this context, the communicative dissemination of a vision as the core of transformative leader-ship is playing a crucial role. At the same time, this predication implicitly stresses that managers are required to communicate work-related content, but also context-related in-formation ensuring the connection to issues of importance to the whole organization. The management task of providing information on the context is stressed in various publications on change communications, too (Deekeling, 1999, p. 20). With this in mind, a link to inter-nal and organizational communication becomes obvious and calls for a broader interpreta-tion of the term of leadership communication. In the context of transformative leadership, leadership communication can be defined as communication between managers and single or multiple subordinates conveying meaning as well as creating frames of perception and interpretation.

2.3 Basic Principles of Leadership Communication

Leadership communication is an essential part of the leadership function. According to McCarthy (1978), communication is „the tool by which a manager manages." Leadership communication can be seen as the medium of transformative leadership. First, three func-tional aspects can be attributed to leadership communication: Instruction, information, and motivation. Publications in the field of business management mainly discuss the instruc-tional and motivational function whereas the informational function is examined from an organizational communication point of view most of the time. However, there are some

more functions of social integration like the promotion of the staff's identification, integration, performance and the commitment to their individual tasks and to the enterprise as an entity.
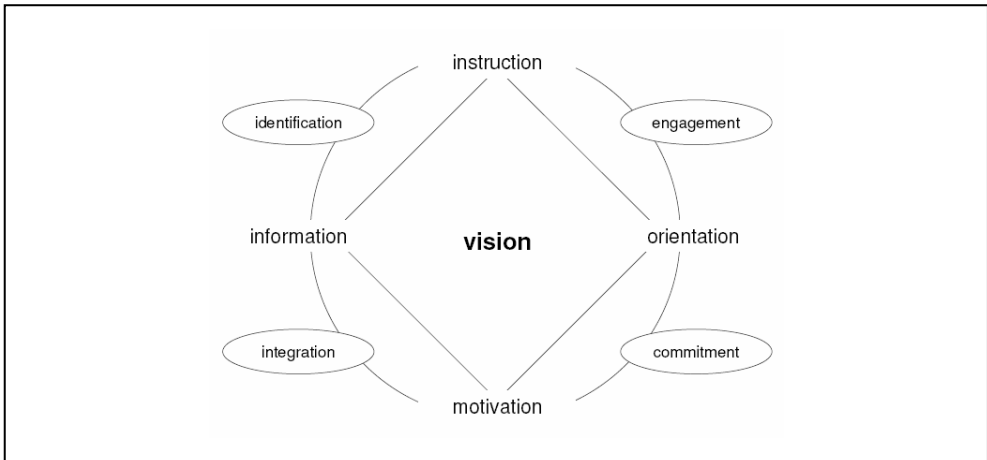
Figure 1: A basic model of leadership communication in the context of function-related
           points of reference

Figure 1 merges these fundamental functions into a basic model of leadership communication. At the same time, it extends it by including central elements from the framework of transformative management. The inner box depicts the immediate communicative tasks of the management. The classical tasks of information, instruction and motivation are supplemented by adding orientation as suggested by Mast (2007b, p. 31); the outer circle comprises the four most important goals of leadership communication on a social, emotional, and behavioural level. They are examples for a multitude of further variables. Finally, at the centre of the figure there is the vision – the gist of transformative communication.

The dissemination of information is the basis of leadership communication. Furthermore, in the present context "interactive, dialogical forms of communication and the advancement of relationship management" are of great importance (Mast, 2007a, p. 761). Transformative leadership communication seems to be predestined for both: Due to the immediate contact with the staff and the focus on dialogical exchange, the basic requirements of relationship management are met. The introduction of a dimension of communication aiming at orienting employees accounts for this fact.

The orientational model for internal communication (Huck & Spachmann, 2008) asserts references to the factual and to the social context to be crucial for an internal communication that provides orientation. The model is based on an approach that stresses the significance of a perspective considering the employees' predispositions in opposition to the merely instrumental implementation of internal public relations. It aims at an utmost degree of employee-orientation by adding adequate information on current events or any other selected information. Therefore, it transmits the factual and social context with the information itself. The model can be transferred to leadership communication without alteration: The context that has to be delivered with the actual information is related to the individual

task and to the whole organization at the same time. Thus, it makes sense to distinguish between work-related context (topics on the micro-level) and organisation-related context (topics on a meso-level adapted to the micro-level). The combination of an immediate and work-related level and a level regarding the whole organisation is, in addition to the multiple dimensions of communication (cognitive, affective, and conative), the most important feature of leadership communication. It illustrates its idiosyncrasy compared to other branches of the internal communication system.

By means of delivering context and, thus, of fulfilling the orientation function of communication it is possible to support "frames of reference." These frames can be essential for a cognitive classification of transformation, novel pieces of information or surprising events. Such a reaction is aspired in the framework of transformative leadership. In addition to the quality and quantity of the contextualising communication, it is important to select the contents providing orientation. As regards the factual context, topics can be selected that are of interest for all employees. Still, how to cope with the social context? One option is to use so-called "value links" (Mast, 2006b) that lead to orientation tags like internal values, organizational culture or affective goals and these domains are identical with the aforementioned goals of leadership communication (see Figure 1).

3 Leadership Communication and Internal Communication

Which linkages do exist between leadership and internal communication? To answer these questions it is necessary to change our point of view: Up to now, this article treated leadership communication primarily as a kind of by-product of management approaches. The previous chapter added another dimension to it – communication leading to orientation tags – in order to extend leadership communication from the micro- to the meso-level.

Which findings of transformative leadership research can be taken as impulses for organizational communication? Which are the concrete lines connecting leadership communication and internal communication? Focussing on information, as well as on adequate factual and social contexts, questions of how to integrate leadership communication into the existing internal communication system are emerging. Furthermore, the problem of adequately addressing the management in the framework of internal communication has to be solved.

3.1 Functional Perspective: Leadership Communication in the Context of Change

When examining the concept of transformative leadership and its derivation, leadership communication, some linkages to the field of internal communication are obvious at first sight: In the new frame of transformative leadership, leadership communication is a mean of actively developing domains like culture and identity, which serve as corporate orientation tags. It has the ability to initiate, support and regulate transformation processes by communicating a sustainable long-term vision thereby introducing change as a value with positive associations. Due to its potential for change communication, transformative leadership communication is a promising starting point for further theoretical specifications as well as for mastering upcoming challenges in communication practice.

The *shaping of change* can be seen as the constitutive element of transformative leadership.

> Those responsible for leading organizations must be responsible for leading change....Such leadership requires seeing the organization not as it is, but as it should be by creating and communicating a "vision" of its future. (Witherspoon, 1997, p. 126)

Change communication fulfils a crucial function in the framework of leadership communication. In a broad interpretation, leadership communication itself can be seen as a *change agent* and, thus, can be equated with change communication, if managers are playing the part of "communication promoters" during a period of innovation or organizational transformation (Zerfass & Huck, 2007).

DAX-KOM, a biennial survey among corporate communications managers of all enterprises listed in the German stock index (DAX), shows that internal communication in the context of large and medium-sized companies is increasingly equivalent to change communication. Coping with change is a goal that was steadily getting more important during the past years: Almost half of the 32 respondents to DAX-KOM 2006, all of them heads of communication of a DAX-listed enterprise, said that coping with processes of transition and supporting them currently was the most important challenge of their work[1]. Compared to the results of DAX-KOM 2004[2] this number has more than doubled (Mast, 2005).

In the framework of change communication, internal communication aims at making the necessity of change intelligible, at explaining background and reasons and at activating employees in order to turn them into convinced and committed agents of change (Mast, 2006c). „The more people enjoy the process of change, the better the results" – this is the premise of the so-called Grass Roots Leadership approach, which brought forward the abstract idea of a transformative leadership (Buzan, Dottino, & Israel, 2007). In the framework of leadership communication a number of principles for change communication have been formulated, mainly from a public relations perspective and approaching the topic on a meso-level. However, ideally this meso-perspective will walk hand-in-hand with the micro-perspective on individual leadership. Framing can be an important mean of creating a frame of reference justifying change and as a way of re-framing present situations, contexts and goals (Witherspoon, 1997, p. 137). For the consistent implementation of such a (re-) framing approach a strict formal and content-based link-up to other sources and media of the internal communication system is indispensable.

With the "change agent" function of leadership communication in mind, the orientation of employees gains importance. The transformative leadership approach ascribes a special role to leadership namely *forming corporate culture and organizational identity*. As an expression of shared values, norms, convictions and behavioural patterns, these domains are central reservoirs for social integration purposes. In this context, Mast (2007a, p. 763) is calling them systems of orientation, which have to be developed via communication. This perspective is based on an interpretation of organizations as cultural systems that are constituted and changed by the behaviour of their members and by communication processes. Culture provides rules for the processes of work and life within an organization. It

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[1]   Unpublished results from a survey among enterprises listed in DAX-30, MDAX and TecDAX enterprises with structured and unstructured questions (response rate 29%, among DAX-30 enterprises 53%).

[2]   n = 47

leads to the emergence of shared meaning and shared cognitive frames among the organizational members (Schein, 1992, pp. 8-10). It creates identification and affiliation, supports the perception and classification of information and reduces complexity – to make a long story short: It creates stability by establishing mental frameworks (Smircich, 1983, p. 346). Through their behaviour, managers can become *role models* exemplifying culture and identity. At the same time, they have the potential to shape organizational culture via communication, for example, by means of intelligible visions, stories, myths and ritual acts (Hackman & Johnson, 2004, pp. 223-125).

On a practical level, the aforementioned communication aiming at the orientation of employees can be taken as a link to the field of internal communication. Qualitative Interviews on internal communication with 60 employees and managers of three major enterprises suggest that communication between managers and subordinates can be extremely powerful. Face-to-face communication can enable a better and broader orientation than other channels of internal communication (Huck & Spachmann, 2008). Leadership communication is able to communicate current events and important topics. At the same time, it is able to deliver explanations, valuations and related context. Compared to an employee magazine, the intranet or communication between colleagues, the communication between leader and follower disposes of the *widest possibilities* (ibid.). At the same time, these possibilities can only be gained when all means of internal information and communication are co-ordinated towards the goal of orientation and when all contents are consistently communicated.

In the framework of communication that aims at orientating employees, leadership communication creates a link between the work-related and the organizational context. Communication between management and staff primarily matters on a personal level: Tasks are allotted and explained, information concerning the context is commununicated, interaction and communication strengthen the relationship between manager and subordinates. The implementation of leadership communication strongly depends on the communication skills of each leader, but also on the nature of the interaction with the staff. For internal communication purposes, leadership communication can play an important role if it is delivering information on the factual context of the organization and its issues or on the social context in order to create domains of organizational orientation.

3.2 Instrumental Perspective: Leadership Communication as a Part of Internal Communication

In the informational cascade, for the integration of employees into the company or through exemplifying corporate culture and philosophy, managers play an important role for top-down as well as for bottom-up communication. This communication strongly influences the organization's capacity to act (Semling, 2005, p. 30). That is primarily so, because leadership is based on a trustful relationship between management and staff and, thus, messages may possess an outstanding credibility (Kouzes & Posner, 1993, p. 5; Nawratil, 1997). At the same time personal leadership communication as a channel disposes of a potential for extraordinarily rich communication (Daft & Lengel, 1986). This advantage implicitly benefits internal communication when a manager seizes centrally communicated messages and supports them by adding his own interpretation. At the same time internal communica-

tion can intentionally use this potential by adopting leadership communication as an independent channel (e.g. in the context of the informational cascade) or in order to support printed and electronic media (e.g. through follow-up communication).

Leadership communication as channel supporting central media: Effective leadership communication on a micro-level contributes to internal communication on a meso-level, because it delivers facts on the organizational context and classifies and evaluates information. Leadership communication explicitly fosters the achievement of cognitive, affective, and conative goals when conforms to core messages, media channels and organizational interpretation patterns. Personal communication between leader and follower can take up content disseminated through central internal media, for example, when discussing a printed article from the employee magazine during a team meeting. The manager then can provide additional or contextual information or elaborate the concrete meaning of the article for his team.

Leadership communication as an independent channel of internal communication: At the same time leadership communication as a channel can be used independently by the top management or the internal public relations department. Most publications on this topic argue from an informational cascade perspective. Cascade communication distributes content fast, starting at one point (most of the time at the top-management-level) and then crossing various hierarchical levels. By doing so, an important advantage arises: All employees can be addressed individually and informed via face-to-face communication. Thus, the meaning of a certain decision, for example, can be made intelligible for everybody. However, there is a risk that information gets lost, is changed or enriched on its way from the top-level down through the informational cascade (Mast, 2007b, pp. 32-33; Mast, 2006c). Figure 2 provides an overview of the main linkages between leadership communication and internal communication.

Functional Perspective	Instrumental Perspective
Which functions can be fulfilled by leadership communication in the framework of organizational communication?	How can leadership communication be implemented in the framework of internal communication?
• vision as a "frame of reference" • initiating and shaping change • forming corporate culture and identity • creating "value links" to orientation tags	• disseminating information (e.g. in the framework of informational cascades) • supporting established media (follow-up-, face-to-face-communication) • independent channel of internal communication

Figure 2: Connecting lines between leadership communication and internal communication

Both in the framework of the informational cascade and as a channel supporting the dissemination of public relations content, leadership communication is less controllable than the central channels of internal communication. On the one hand, this is caused by its dependence on face-to-face communication. On the other hand, the communicative activities

of managers hardly are directly "manageable" by the communications department or even the top-management. Leaders are agents pursuing their own interests, whose communicative behaviours can be opposite to the requirements of official internal communication. This is a very important challenge to the internal communication system, because managers as stakeholders have to be addressed, informed and convinced to become "enablers" of leadership communication.

3.3   Internal Communication as Enabler of Leadership Communication

Internal communication is supposed to inform all employees and to establish dialogical relationships. Managers have to be included in these networks of information and communication (Mast, 2007a, p. 763). A high involvement is indispensable if managers are expected to act as leading communicators.

To round off the aforementioned connection lines between leadership communication and internal communication it is necessary to approach the field from a different angle once more: The previous section examined leadership communication as an instrument and as a channel of the internal communication system, whereas the following paragraphs will focus on the relevance of internal communication for an effective leadership communication. How important is internal communication for the management and leadership communication? How can it help managers fulfilling their task of disseminating information and as independent actors in the framework of organizational communication?

Supporting managers in disseminating information: To enable managers to spread information, but also to help them fulfil their role in the context of follow-up communication, they have to be sensitized to their leading and communicating task and to be prepared for it. First, they have to be provided with adequate information. Managers have a need for current information as wide and at the same time as detailed as possible (Kalmus, 1998, p. 75). Managers usually need information prior to their subordinates, more detailed and concerning more issues. "You are damaging the reputation of your own management team, if they [the staff, authors' note] learn about important news from colleagues, co-workers or the workers' council." That is what Michael Kalmus (1998, p. 75), a communication consultant arguing from a practitioner's point of view, observed. To be prepared for the employees' questions occurring in the framework of the informational cascade, the management has to be equipped with necessary background knowledge and context information by the top management or the public relations department. The department for internal communication can provide information face-to-face (e.g. by organizing a kick-off-event) as well as by preparing printed or digital documents (e.g. a presentation). It can name a contact person, who is capable of answering questions related to certain issues.

At the beginning of a cascade communication process it is insufficient to only inform the management. Instead, it is essential to deploy managers as multipliers of information and messages, and to make them disseminate the content as fast and as correct as possible suppressing unwanted connotations. A manager, who is not convinced and, thus, is transmitting a message grudgingly, will not be credible. Hence, the communication will not have the aspired impact on his audience.

Support of managers as communicators: There may be managers who are born with good communication skills. The bigger part, though, has to acquire the ability to

communicate and to handle the media first. According to the observations of Hackman and Johnson (2004, p. 27) „from a communication standpoint, leaders are made, not born." This also explains the multitude of how-to-publications offering recommendations on face-to-face communication in the framework of leadership communication – recommendations on how to be "successful," "convincing," and "efficient." Thus, there is no doubt that management training in face-to-face or mediated communication will enhance the communication with employees (Mast, 2006a, p. 280). Another approach to enhance communication performance is the systematic briefing of the management in terms of a personal communication coaching that is providing contextual information, i.e. information related to the organization and the specific situation of each manager. Under these circumstances, concrete and adequate information would be communicated instead of teaching abstract skills of persuasion. Up to today, there is a lack of scientific findings in this field. Thus, linkages that are more specific cannot be identified.

Management training usually is not a competence of public relations departments. In contrast, management information on relevant aspects in the area of internal communication indisputably is one of its tasks. The public relations department can make managers aware of their role as communicators who are important for the whole organization, not only on the mere work-related level. Managers, who are communicating basic information from the internal communication system or create frames of reference, have the potential to contribute substantially to an employee's integration into and his identification with the company.

When re-considering the facts mentioned above, it becomes obvious that leaders mainly have to be seen as receivers of internal communications messages and as communicators disseminating content. However, managers are not only passive recipients or neutral transmitters of information. They are also and most notably *actively pursuing their own interests*. No matter whether they want to protect their own position in management, increase their personal influence, or achieve their individual goals – leadership communication always is an expression and a mirror of personal interests. Hackman and Johnson (2004, pp. 27-30) are discussing this aspect in the context of impression management. Especially the top management is using important media of the internal communication system to systematically take stands on certain issues. Hence, managers possibly are interested in making use of immediate leadership communication, just as they are using central internal media for the purpose of self-representation, i.e. for self-PR.

Finally, *management communication* is a link between management and public relations. It addresses managers as an independent target audience of public relations using specific channels and instruments to reach certain goals. This discipline of internal communication aims at integrating managers into the internal network of information and communication. As for questions of leadership communication, which are dealing with communication between management and staff, management communication is only of little importance. Nonetheless, it is an important field of research that has not been addressed in-depth yet, too.

4   Implications for Research and PR Practice

Especially in Germany, but also in the Anglophone context scientists in the area of communication studies have only rudimentarily discussed questions of leadership communication. The German-speaking research community has not produced a theory yet that is covering the role and function of leadership communication in internal and organizational communications. It seems that many authors neglect the role of managers in internal communication or only mention them for the sake of completeness. In contrast, first cursory approaches to leadership communication can be found in various Anglophone publications. These works still are strongly influenced by business-management research. The predominance of how-to-approaches and practitioner guidebooks based in social psychology is obvious. Thus, persuasion of employees often is a popular topic.

 With the introduction of the transformative leadership approach, the perspective in the field of business-management research has basically changed: Now leadership communication is valued as an important factor, although it is not explicitly integrated in theory building or empirical research yet. Nevertheless, due to this communication approach leadership research is definitely drawing near the field of organizational communication. Communication between leaders and followers and especially leadership communication, which is going beyond the scope of mere work-related communication by informing the employee thoroughly, explaining the context, enriching information with interpretation, and supporting the achievement of social goals can become the nucleus of a credible internal communication system. In order to empower managers to fulfil their communicative tasks regarding this orientation function the internal communication department has to support their efforts. Top management has to support middle management by creating advantageous conditions and structures, which are making internal leadership possible. This can be done based on models for leadership systems from the field of business-management. They could provide helpful suggestions in matters of developing leadership as a day-to-day interactive process, of selecting adequate leaders and of ways to evaluate leadership (Huff & Möslein, 2005; Reichwald, Siebert, & Möslein, 2005).

 In the area of applied public relations, leadership communication can be a way of coping with change. It can be seen as a channel, which is adding value to the central media of internal communication by systematically providing adequate context to the communicated content and thereby supporting the employees' orientation. As a way to address followers directly, but also as a channel offering follow-up communication to the content of employee magazines, the intranet or any other communication channel, leadership communication is a suitable choice. During the daily workflow, certain practical problems will turn up, like the question of how to coordinate leadership communication and the central dissemination of communication. In fact, leadership communication cannot be controlled to a similar extent as centrally supervised media can. This involves certain implications. Finally, leadership communication can be implemented on an organizational level – another link between individual leadership and organization-wide communication.

 This article merely outlined the field of leadership communication. It is focussed on showing which linkages between leadership communication and internal communication can be identified from different perspectives. As a first review of the field, it detected numerous areas for further research. A *structural perspective*, for example, will be able to answer questions regarding integration and cross-linking of leadership and internal

communication. An *instrumental perspective* will help answering how to implement leadership communication, i.e. which channels to use. With the field of internal communication in mind, it especially would be promising to identify ways how to merge the individual level and the contextual level of the organization into a consistent frame of reference. Thus, a *content perspective* could be named as a third possible approach to this emerging research field. Furthermore, the development of a theoretical approach explaining the relation between micro and meso level might be fruitful.

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Internal Communication as Management of Trust Relations: A Theoretical Framework

Ulrike Röttger & Andreas Voss

As globalization continues, enormous change processes within organizations as well as in their environment promote uncertainty among members of organizations. Trust relations between the management of a company and their employees help to reduce uncertainty and make people moving. However, trust is a complex phenomenon. Internal communication needs to address all aspects of trust – its requirements, reasons and dimensions – to establish and maintain strong trust relations.

1   Introduction

Trust is a key concept both for modern societies as well as for business communication (Matthes & Kohring, 2003, p. 5). Trust is sometimes described as a "deciding factor for internal business success" (Bekmeier-Feuerhahn & Eichenlaub, 2004, p. 389), which composes "the basis for successful strategic management" (Krystek, 1999, p. 266). The significance of trust for a successful business can be deduced from the current state of our economies: whether one calls it globalization or progress, reflexive modernization or internationalization, it is clear that (world) society finds itself in a time of far-reaching change, which also affects businesses in many ways. In this dynamic and complex situation, trust takes on a central role regarding the formation and stabilization of relationships with the social environment, and business communication that encourages trust fosters value creation in companies. At the same time, however, a real "crisis of trust" (Dernbach & Meyer, 2005, p. 11; Bentele, 1994, p. 134ff.) can be seen in highly complex modern societies. In recent years, business organizations, whether due to their misconduct or perceived misconduct, have suffered significant loss of trust because of numerous business scandals.

Yet although trust is seen as a crucial factor for success, there is a lack of coherent concepts concerning how to deal with trust in a business. The relevance of this subject has not yet been adequately addressed, and therefore there is a recognizable need for the examination of trust in management.

The following article analyzes trust in management and describes starting-points for how to support the building of trust by internal communications. For this purpose, trust will be discussed first with regard to its various academic frames of reference. Then, it will be used more specifically according to Kohring and his theory of trust in journalism (Kohring, 2004). Kohring develops an interdisciplinary model that systemizes various requirements and reasons for trust as well as relevant dimensions of trust in management. This works as a basis for a trust-oriented concept of internal communication.

2   General Framework: Change and Uncertainty

Modern organizations find themselves in an irreversible process of functional differentiation (Schimank, 2005, p. 53ff.). This causes a certain dilemma because differentiation both manages and produces complexity at the same time. While every system reduces complexity via the system/environment difference, overall complexity and the communicative effort necessary for dealing with systems increase significantly (Willke, 1989, p. 48). Social systems differentiate themselves further, creating numerous, interdependent subsystems. In light of this social complexity and dynamics, it becomes more and more difficult to oversee and to control the processes of the organization as a whole. According to the theory of reflexive modernization (Beck, 1993), the current social transformation is as intense as it is because change processes lack any linearity and, rather, act reflexively back on themselves.

For businesses, increasing social complexity is closely linked to the phenomena of globalization and mediatization (Herger, 2006, p. 25f.):

- Globalization as a mega-trend shows itself particularly via the growing number of businesses with global value chains. At the same time, national authorities lose their impact on these global players and the economy as a whole. This is why questions on organizations' (self) control, the legitimacy of business transactions as well as trust become more relevant.
- Mediatization, i.e. the increasing penetration of media and social reality as well as a strengthened orientation of all social systems towards the rules of the media, introduces businesses to new communicative challenges. These challenges come from a constant public monitoring of business transactions on the one hand, and the increasing pressure for businesses to make information about themselves public and provide a sense of meaning behind them on the other hand.

Businesses are defined as open systems, which are in constant exchange with the environment from which they draw resources such as employees and to which they deliver their output. The openness of systems leads to the necessity to continuously adapt to the environment so that systems dither between the conservation of structures and system development (Dyllick et al., 1989, p. 83, p. 139). It follows that businesses come to feel social change and must both act in it as well as react to it. Since there is no end of this change to be seen on the social level, businesses have to exhibit a great readiness for and ability to change if they wish to survive on the market. Strategic adjustments, restructuring or personnel cutbacks indicate the intensity of change. Particularly for the management of a business, there is a huge gap, since more time is needed for decisions, but there is in fact less time available than before. Uncertainty – in contrast to comprehensive planning efforts – has to be taken consciously into account. The same is true for employees. Constant changes break up familiar patterns of action and demand the learning of new processes and routines. Consequently, workers gain freedom of choice and a wealth of their own alternatives. However, this freedom of choice can quickly become an ordeal, as the changes may be too much for the individuals: if nothing is done about this uncertainty and overwhelm, it may be that workers resign internally. On the other hand, if a trusting relationship with the company's management can be established, there is a good chance that the employees can be motivated to commit themselves more to the organization and to actively help support the

process of change. Internal communication can offer a mediating function between management and employees in terms of the company's goals.

3   Trust as the Subject of Scientific Research

Trust as a universal phenomenon is the subject of academic debate in various disciplines. Sociology, psychology, political science and the economic sciences use different ways of framing their questions with differing viewpoints of the complex construct of trust (for a brief overview, see Bentele & Seidenglanz, 2005, 2008). While, in psychology, interpersonal aspects of trust are brought to the foreground, German research in political science concerns itself particularly with questions of trust in political institutions. In the economic sciences, trust phenomena have been made the central theme in the context of e-commerce in recent times.

There is scholarly consensus as to the function of trust that Luhmann in particular has pointed out (Luhmann, 1989). Trust is a "mechanism for the reduction of social complexity" and plays a central role in social situations that are characterized by double contingency: each of the parties involved have several courses of action available and, at the same time, the expected success of one's own actions is dependent on the unknown actions of the other. The perceived, ambiguous course of action by the other party respectively (i.e. the contingency) leads to significant uncertainty in decision-making. Now if a subject of trust (employee) trusts an object of trust (management), he then acts *as if* he were sure about how the other will behave, even though there is not sufficient knowledge available regarding the other person's behaviour. Certainty of expectation remains an assumption; trust, a mechanism of "*a risky endeavor.*" (Luhmann, 1989, p. 23) In this sense, trust does not do away with uncertainty, but merely gives it a tolerable form. The uncertainty as such remains; the possibility of failure is inherent in every action.

In communication science, trust has been rather imprecisely analyzed. The dominant research gives a central position to the questions regarding credibility of media and information sources, and more recently, those strongly relating to the internet (Rössler, 1999). There are only a few fundamental concepts available in communication science regarding trust (especially Bentele, 1994; Kohring, 2004; see also Rühl, 2005). The same is true for the analysis of trust in the context of organizations and their internal and external communication. In addition, particularly regarding management and internal communication, there is a lack of coherent concepts like trust that can be used to alleviate employee uncertainty caused by change. Though Carl Hundhausen (1951) and Albert Oeckl (1964), the founders of German PR research, introduced the term "trust" in their functional descriptions of PR, they don't examine it thoroughly. In this regard, in times of social change, employee trust in management becomes an elementary requirement in order to promote corporate change. It appears more necessary than ever to precisely determine trust and find ways to strengthen it.

Bentele (1994) offers an early communication science contribution to the study of trust based on theories on social trust (Barber et al., 1983; Giddens, 1991; Luhmann, 1973). Having determined the increasing significance of open communication and the reality-creating function of the media, he shifts public trust into the centre of his analysis, which he differentiates from interpersonal trust as its basis.

> Public trust is a communicative mechanism for the reduction of complexity in which public persons, institutions and the general social system take on the role of the "object of trust". Public trust is a process moderated by the media in which the "subjects of trust" have future-oriented expectations that are heavily influenced by past experiences. (Bentele 1994, p. 141)

Ten years later Bentele und Seidenglanz explain "…*public trust* as a process and result of *publicly generated* trust in publicly visible actors (individual actors, organizations) and systems…" (Bentele & Seidenglanz, 2008, p. 49; original German edition 2005; italics in original).

His "Theory of Public Trust" (Bentele, 1994) focuses on the central role of information provided by PR and media and of public communication in general for the recipients' generation though also the loss of trust. In modern media societies, mass media related trust processes gain more significance as compared to personal experiences. In the public trust process, the moderators of trust (PR and media) play a central role.

Loss of and/or lack of trust are based on perceived discrepancies which Bentele (1994, p. 148) typifies as follows:

- On truthful communication
- Inconsistency of communication and action
- Inconsistency within action itself
- Inconsistency within communication itself
- Chronological inconsistency in communication
- Violation of basic moral or legal conditions

Public creation and/or loss of trust are, according to Bentele (1994, p. 145), particularly influenced by practical and problem-solving competence, consistency and transparency of communication as well as the level of responsibility of the object of trust (see Figure 1). It would be a very good idea to conduct systematic, empirical research as to whether and to what extent all these factors actually influence the constitution of trust. For instance, is there in fact a direct connection between companies' acceptance of social responsibility and the public trust that they receive? Moreover, how is social responsibility understood in this context?

Without question, Bentele's contribution to the scientific study of trust is so enormous because he indicated the exceptional significance of trust processes for public communications and the importance of public relations in this context at such an early point. However, further conclusions in regard to the orientation of trust are as relevant to action as well as a stronger functional differentiation between public and interpersonal trust would be desirable. When dealing with trust in businesses and/or in management, it is clear that the staff's perception and way of thinking could lead to various discrepancies of experience. Integrated communication is not enough to create trust; additionally, integrated action and its link with communication must come into play.

High trust value	Low trust value
Practical competence	Lacking practical competence
Problem solving competence	Lacking problem solving competence
Adequacy of communication	Inadequacy of communication
Consistency of communication	Discrepancy of communication
Transparency of communication	Obscurity of communication
Openness of communication	Closed-ness of communication
Social responsibility	Lacking social responsibility
Ethic of responsibility	Utilitarian Ethic

Figure 1: Reasons for trust (Bentele, 1994, p. 145)

4   Shaping of Trust as a Concept for Internal Communication

Considered as a whole, trust arises, according to Kohring (2004), in trust relations. Trust relations depend on several requirements and can be characterized by the two parties' particular reasons for trust (reference to experience) and dimensions of trust (reference to expectation). These three areas – requirements, reasons and dimensions – make up the terminological framework, with which the phenomenon of trust is to be more closely analyzed in the following (see Figure 2).

Past	Present	Future
Reason	**Dimensions**	
Context of trust	Trust in a correct system analysis	
Ability to trust	Trust in formulation of a sustainable strategy	
Trustworthiness	Trust in consistent strategy implementation	
Requirements		
Ability to learn	Freedom to act	Mutual apperception
Adressability	Subsequent measures	Perception of double
Justifiability	Current pressure to act	contingency

Figure 2: Shaping of trust in the management

A basic distinction needs to be done between the personal trust of an employee in an individual member of management and the trust of that employee in management as a whole (Bentele, 1994, p. 143f.; Kohring, 2001, p. 61ff.). Both of these trust relationships act reflexively back upon one another, however, and are very difficult to separate in reality. A concept for trust-oriented communications must, in the end, address every part of the phenomenon of trust and communicatively help remedy present deficiencies.

4.1   Requirements of Trust: Breaking up Constraints

In order for trust in management to come about at all, there is a need for various absolute conditions (Kohring, 2004, p. 125ff.; 2001, p. 63ff.).

- *Mutual apperception*: for trust relationships, mutual apperception is essential, unless lacking reciprocity is tolerated by the subject of trust or can be compensated by substitutes like internal communication.
- *Concurrent pressure to act*: the subject of trust and object of trust must act; they feel pressure to act.
- *Perception of double contingency*: both the subject of trust and object of trust are aware of the two-sided freedom of action (double contingency). The situational perception of double contingency with simultaneous pressure to act describes the interdependence of the parties.
- *Addressability*: the trust-object must be identifiable, so that there is a counterpart, whose actions in fact determine the fulfilment or disappointment of expectations. A diffuse attitude regarding trust is unimaginable.
- *Freedom of each party to act*: each party can choose freely from their alternative courses of action; each has at his/her disposal freedom of action and decision-making competence. This freedom of decision also implies the option to breach trust.
- *Subsequent measures*: if trust is not honoured or is breached, the subsequent action of the subject of trust must potentially bring about consequences for the object of trust.
- *Ability of the parties to learn*: the subject and object of trust must be capable of retaining and processing experiences. According to Giddens, "personal contacts with representatives of the system" (Kohring, 2004, p. 126) are vital for success in learning.
- *Subjective justification*: it must be possible for the subject of trust to find reasons for his actions with reference to experience, even if there can never be absolute assurance and certainty (complete knowledge).

In principle, the eight conditions for trust listed above can be taken for granted. However, a closer look shows that the conditions for mutual perception of employees and management, the perception of double contingency and subsequent measures can be severely limited in business, so that the establishment of trust may be hindered:

- The problem of mutual apperception: beyond a certain organization size, management and employees no longer perceive each other adequately if at all. Thus substitutive mechanisms like images, communicative measures and personal contacts to lower level organization members every once in a while become important, as well as sustainable internal controlling from a management perspective.

- The problem of perceiving double contingency: this perception is impeded both by management as well as by employees through negation of alternative courses of action available to them. Management communicates decisions as unavoidable/inevitable; employees cover up their own dependence on management decisions by referring to previous job security. In such a situation, the development of trust would be not only unnecessary but also even impossible. In order to encourage perception of double contingency, internal communication must disclose alternatives, justify decisions and conciliate the exchange of best-practice examples at team level as well as various future scenarios (best and worst case). In this way, a higher level of reflexivity can be reached and a feeling of community ("together we are strong") can be fostered.

- The problem of subsequent measures: employees may think that leaving the company is the only consequential feedback towards management; however, in light of mass unemployment this does not represent a realistic option. For a stronger set of subsequent measures, it is necessary to create alternatives for employees to give the management real feedback. On the one hand, this would mean encouraging employees to express criticism openly; on the other hand, there could be a regularly imposed employee satisfaction index that could also affect the bonus payments of the company's management.

4.2 Dimensions of Trust: Understanding Communications Management (also) as Expectation Management

Employees put expectations to their management, who should fulfil these expectations in order that trust may be validated and persist. Kohring's theory of trust focuses on these so-called dimensions, as they represent the individual expectations, which he combines into a factor model of trust. Individual expectations thereby appear to be expectations of certain results rather than expectations of processes. "*Dimensions specify trust's reference and thus refer to the function of the object of trust.*" (Kohring, 2004, p. 120, emphasis in the original) Which dimensions of trust are relevant at any given time can be determined based on what functional expectations are placed on the object of trust. If multiple dimensions are relevant for trust, then subjects of trust refer to these dimensions all at once; i.e. all expectations of the subject of trust must be simultaneously fulfilled by the actions of the object of trust in order that trust is confirmed. This understanding of trust opposes a static understanding of trust as an attribute – instead it emphasizes the importance of interaction in trust relations (Kohring, 2004; 2002, p. 108). Consequently, trust in management is to be determined as multi-dimensional trust in the (contingent but) specific actions of the management. A static understanding of trust could never include the important interactive processes of addressing and confirming multiple dimensions/expectations.

In principle, the dimensions develop individually, i.e. cognitively autonomously; only insofar as they markedly overlap can they be generalized among employees. Expectations of an object of trust therefore develop subject-specifically, but also context-specifically, i.e. with dependence on experience with processes of socialization and cooperation. A strictly calculative emergence of expectations – as according to Ripperger (2003)[1] with reference to

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[1]   According to Ripperger, trust is an „organizing principle of interpersonal exchange-relationships" (Rippberger, 2003, p. 1) that helps to avoid the opportunistic behavior of other parties. Rational cognitive calcula-

Coleman (1991) represented prominently in the economic sciences – is rejected, because this might overwhelm the cognitive problem-solving capacity of the individual, and it ignores the fact that the lack of knowledge itself is a condition for the need to trust. Ripperger's theory of trust is not successful in linking individually presumed cognitive calculations to a comprehensive model of trust *relationships* or at least trust *interactions*. To her, trust relationships are merely the sum of individual trust actions (Ripperger, 2003, p. 81f.), which fully negates social processes of adaptation or learning.

For any business that specifically tries to encourage trust, the employees' dimensions/expectations must be surveyed and managed in alignment with the self-image of the company's management. According to the functions of management, it could be, for example, that employees trust in a proper situation analysis, in the formulation of a sustainable strategy and its consistent implementation (see Figure 3). The latter may include trust in the commitment of management to client and cooperative relationships; for others, even trust in the external representation of the company to the public. As the expectations among employees may vary, management has more freedom of action than in the pre-modern management models (doing business without accepting trust as a social mechanism).

(1) Trust in a proper situation analysis

(2) Trust in the formulation of and or adaption to a sustainable strategy

(3) Trust in the consistent implementation of strategy
   (a) Trust in the commitment to client and cooperative relationships
   (b) Trust in the public representation of the company
   (c) Trust in the coordination of operational processes
   (d) Trust in the control of operational processes

Figure 3: Possible dimensions of trust in management

At the same time, it becomes clear that communications management in organizations can also be seen as expectation management. This implies that continuous communication about management's actions is needed to allow the employees an evaluation of their expectations. Furthermore, media-driven internal communications and interpersonal communication cascades can be used for justifying decisions, disclosing project status, rating project results, celebrating successes and conceding failures. Finally, it is essential to resolve expectational discrepancies, i.e. to actively manage the expectations of personnel or to change the self-image of management. The former requires communicating among the employees what they can officially expect from management; the latter requires confronting the top managers with the expectations of employees, sensitizing these and bringing them across in a way that minimizes conflicts of expectation.

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tions lead to decisions to trust (subject of trust) or to accept trust expectations (object of trust). In addition to simple cost/benefit considerations, situational risk must be weighed here against personal willingness to enter into risk (ibid, 2003, p. 42ff.).

4.3   Reasons for Trust: Creating Possibilities for Legitimization

Reasons are references to experiences that justify trust: why does one trust, even though there is insufficient knowledge available? Reasons can be differentiated into three categories: the trust context, the ability of the employee to trust and the trustworthiness of management. Kohring, like Luhmann, presents the viewpoint that, first and foremost, the "inductive coupling of empirical experience with trust relations" (Kohring, 2004, p. 178) has a legitimizing effect, which will be more closely analyzed here as the ability to trust. In addition to one's own experiences, ability to trust can include perception and reception of the confirmed trust-actions of other parties. Aside from that, there are less specific reasons that should be examined as to the trustworthiness of management and, depending on the situation, trust context (see Figure 4).
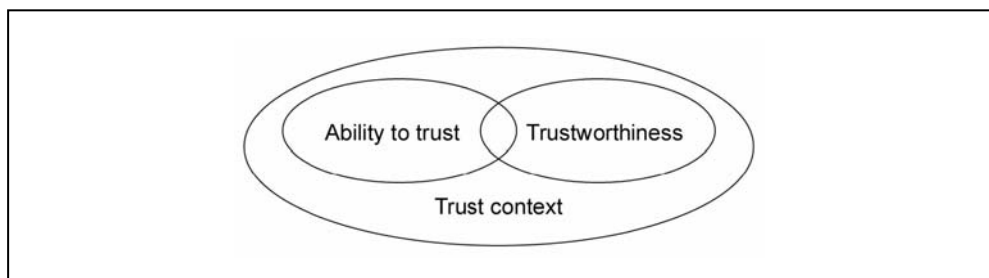
Figure 4: Reasons for trust in management

4.3.1   The trust context

The trust context is comprised of all aspects which are not bound to an individual, but which influence the development of trust. Most important to mention here are the company's organization (operative focus), corporate culture (social focus) and corporate development (chronological focus).

(a) Organization: a transparent, flexible organization (organizational structures and processes) with flat hierarchies supports the development of trust. Having barriers that are too large for criticizing other employees and superiors or approaching higher-ranking colleagues who are not directly responsible for oneself hinder the building of a trusting environment. Here, the great significance of colleagues as intermediaries can be seen, because good relationships with colleagues support the development of trust in management considerably across multiple hierarchical levels. The trust context is directly linked to employees' perception of the importance of hierarchy levels in the company as well as to the existence of cross-departmental networking opportunities.

(b) Corporate Culture: according to Schein's (1995) widespread theory, corporate culture helps to integrate new employees and stabilize social interaction routines. Schmidt (2004) understands corporate culture as a program that organizes all operational routines and also takes into account their reflexivity. Schmidt sees the very diversity within companies as an opportunity, as long as best-practice experiences are exchanged and used for

developing new procedures. Corporate culture programs can strengthen trust if they encourage open handling of differences and innovation and if they help employees to realize their freedom of action. What is necessary for that to happen is the establishment of a modern leadership approach that incorporates the integrity and autonomy of every single employee.

(c) Corporate development: internal communication must explain corporate development to all employees, and thereby highlight the field of tension between steadiness and change. It is necessary to increase readiness to change, to communicate the impression of continuity, to integrate the latest developments in corporate history (as well as in mid- to long-term future scenarios), and to justify decisions. An organizational development must be perceived as continuous to provide a fruitful environment for trust in management. If employees conclude that changes of strategy are carried out at random, the trust context suffers considerable damage, and they find it more difficult to justify trust in their management.

4.3.2   Ability to trust

The ability to trust or rather "familiarity with trust" (Mencke, 2005, p. 149) is something a person achieves through successive, life-long learning in all social contexts (Luhmann, 1989, p. 29). This includes positive and negative individual experiences with trust as well as observed and communicated experiences of trust from others. Internal communication must create learning opportunities and incentives to counteract the mechanisms of past instances of mistrust. For example, internal communication could establish opportunities for dialog across all levels of the hierarchy and strategically implement communication cascades that pass on information promptly and unfiltered.

4.3.3   Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of a company's management – an often discussed yet most often vaguely defined parameter – is determined (a) by the way the employees perceive management's actions and communication, (b) how they judge them on a personal level and (c) how they see management to be embedded in the institutional framework.

(a) Whether a senior manager is seen as trustworthy is significantly based on his/her perceived *consistency of communication and action* (Bentele, 1994, p. 147f.; see also Perry & Mankin, 2004). Ways of testing this consistency can be differentiated into four categories:

1. Perceived consistency: communication and actions of management are appropriate according to the employee's own appraisal of the situation.
2. Content-related consistency: communication and actions of management seem to be in accord regarding their content, i.e. there are no identifiable contradictions from the employees' point of view.
3. Temporal consistency: communication and actions of management conform to past communication and previous actions. Employees have the impression of continuity in management's behaviour.

4. Contextual consistency: communication and actions of management follow corporate values and social norms.

Here again, the importance of employees' expectations of management's behaviour becomes clear: the more the actions of management correlate with the expectations of the employees, the more trustworthy management is. Luhmann points out, however, that in times of change, consistency of action and expectation rarely exists, and instead, particular attention should be given to consistent self-portrayal (Luhmann 1989, pp. 67-69). Someone who constantly has to make new decisions and discover new courses of action in an altering environment cannot always be unwavering, but can most certainly have personal integrity.

Internal communication must take on an intermediary function between management and employees. The goal is to promote an experience of consistency and/or to resolve existing inconsistencies communicatively through clarification and rationalization. In this regard, interdependencies, e.g. between internal and external communication, have to be closely observed. Previous models of integrated communication do not reach far enough here, as they use a concept of communication that is too keenly reduced and instrumental, focus too much on client relationships (Bruhn, 2003; Kirchner, 2001) or demonstrate weaknesses due to high complexity when it comes to implementation (Zerfaß, 2004).

(b) *Attribution of characteristics* determines the perceived personalities of the managers. The definitions encompass attitudes, qualities of action, personal and social background, character traits as well as knowledge and qualifications. With the help of these many kinds of attributes, images of the managers emerge, which can vary from "band of mercenaries" to "benevolent patriarch." It is necessary to strategically position all members of management in the organization and to ascribe them various, multi-faceted and even contradictory character attributes. Heterogeneity in management suggests a balanced representation of interests and creates subjective points of contact as well as positive points of friction. The internal over-positioning of an individual manager should be avoided, because the trustworthiness of the entire management team must be developed.

(c) Lastly, knowledge of the managers' role within the institutional framework of the company can also strengthen management's trustworthiness. Information on *mechanisms of control* can verify the correctness of actions taken by management, even if individual actions are not (or cannot be made) clear. The idea behind this is that management appears more trustworthy when the managers' behaviour cannot be indiscriminate, but instead is subject to institutionalized controls. Control mechanisms that can be drawn on are the activities of supervisory boards, shareholders' meetings, media or rating agencies. For instance, it can be a good idea to allow the supervisory board a direct approach to the employees where they can report on their supervision of management; e.g. by regularly publishing articles in the employee newsletter.

5   Examples for Implementation

The basis of the proposed concept is the theoretically plausible, though empirically undemonstrated and difficult to demonstrate line of causality suggesting that business communication, which encourages trust both orients and motivates employees and thereby creates

significant added value for businesses. In summary, business communication must provide the following:

- *Stabilization of weakly established conditions for trust:* the existing conditions of trust regarding mutual perception, appreciation of double contingency and subsequent measures in companies may be restricted. Internal communication should remedy these restrictions or compensate with substitutes like communication of alternatives and the encouragement of internal criticism, so that the establishment of trust is not hindered.
- *Communication management as expectation management addressing the dimensions:* trust in management is confirmed by addressing different dimensions. Only in this way, through implied communication concerning management is it possible to allow for adequate evaluation of expectations. Furthermore, internal communication needs to close possible discrepancies between the expectations of employees and the self-image of management by directly influencing the one or the other in cases of doubt.
- *Allowing for justification:* trust for the subject of trust requires continual legitimation. The task of internal communication is to positively influence the trust context and to raise both the ability of the employees to trust as well as the trustworthiness of management in order to ease development of sustainable concepts of justification.

Internal communication practice aligns itself with these three key ideas in order to strengthen trust in management. At the same time, trust is seen as a complex social construct that is not easily implemented, since actively asking for trust from a sceptical public comes off rather as untrustworthy. Thus it follows that there must be a balanced array of internal communicative processes, not least importantly because even the communicative behaviour of the employees is subject to constant fluctuation, and preferences change from one situation to the next. Three examples clarify how internal media in the context of a trust-oriented internal communication can be further developed:

5.1   The Employee Newspaper as a „Discussion Sheet"

The employee newspaper as an example of printed communication can be put together modularly and thereby attends to different readers. A company-wide newspaper section could be used to supplement an inner section dealing with specific subjects of a particular business department, and especially dealing with the positioning of that department's manager. In addition, controversies and discussions could be taken up, even external contributions, in order to encourage alternative ways of thinking; there could be a page per publication created by the supervisory board in order to check the control of management in the company; or there could even be an entire edition each year overseen by an employee editorial staff that takes on full responsibility for its contents and is merely supported technically.

5.2   The Intranet as a Learning Platform

In the intranet, there should be two versions for each article: a short version with professional terminology and an elaborated variation in simple, explanatory language. In a weekly video-podcast, members of management could take turns giving three-minute statements on current subjects of interest. The more personal the appeal to employees, and the nearer the setting to management's actual work environment, the more authentic an impression it will make.

5.3   Employee Events as a Basis for Contact

Employee events of various sizes contribute to trust. In personnel meetings, ten employees would exchange with one member of management, and a previously decided captain would moderate. The captain would need to be trained beforehand. Moderated group events with 100 to 200 participants would take the place of employee assemblies and would occur in different locations every (other) month with only one participating member of management. In dialogue form without PowerPoint, this allows for continuous personal exchange.

6   Conclusion: Corporate Communication Fosters Trust in Management

Requirements, reasons and dimensions – these three perspectives of trust offer plentiful starting points for trust-nurturing and reception-focused internal as well as external communication. Trust-oriented communication and trust in management become substantially more important for companies from the viewpoint of far-reaching social change, as well as from the viewpoint of complex and dynamic environmental developments and the resulting willingness and ability to change they have to demonstrate as stabilizing forces.

     The model of trust-oriented business communication presented here lays out the conditions for qualifying trust in a business context, and thereby allows it to be evaluated. Particularly in the context of communication controlling, and therefore addressing the question of what contribution communication makes to value creation, the model presented here demonstrates possibilities for how trust created through communication can be seen as a value driver.

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Evaluating Strategic Communication: Theoretical and Methodological Requirements

Juliana Raupp

The discussion on public relations evaluation and measurement is characterized by continuity as well as by change. A recurring complaint refers to the fact that, while evaluation is repeatedly said to be absolutely important, in fact, the application of systematic evaluation remains poor. Aside from the issue of continuity, the focus of discussion on public relations evaluation has shifted from social science approaches of evaluation towards more management- and economic-based evaluation systems.

This chapter discusses the development of evaluation and measurement of strategic communication in practice and in scholarly literature. It argues that the new orientation towards management-based systems of evaluation offers a relevant additional view of the old question of what and how to measure. However, a comprehensive way to link social science- and economic-oriented evaluation systems is still lacking. The chapter concludes with suggestions for further research on the linkage of the various evaluation approaches.

1 The Practice of Evaluation

> The old public relations was based on intuition and instinct; the new public relations is based on the achievement of business results.…Today's resolute public relations practitioners must not only know how to measure results, they must know what to measure, what not to measure, why and how we measure up as a business, too! (Alfred Geduldig)

The plea that senior public relations expert Alfred Geduldig made at the 1993 Annual Conference of the Public Relations Society of America (Geduldig, cited in IPRA, 1994, w.p.) for a better-informed measurement of the effect of public relations is still valid: The questions of how to evaluate strategic communication activities and what to measure are among the most discussed topics in the field of public relations. Especially during the 1990s, international as well as German public relations experts and their professional associations published extensively on the topic (IPRA, 1994; GPRA, 1994); in 1997, the German Public Relations Agencies Association founded a commission on evaluation (Bentele, 1997). Evaluation was considered as a number one topic in the development of public relations practice and research. Since then the topic is still regarded as important, though it is no longer seen as the most important issue.

A closer look at the professional discussion on public relations evaluation shows that for a long time the most discussed question was the degree to which evaluation should be scientific. Within this context distinction between evaluation and evaluation research was drawn. "The process of evaluating programme planning, implementation, and impact, is called 'evaluation research'" (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2000, p. 432). This definition of evaluation research implies the systematic use of scientific methods from various disciplines like media studies, psychology and sociology. These disciplines offer different

research methods: Content analyses, surveys, experiments and market research. All of these research methods can be made fruitful for the evaluation of public relations and other strategic communication activities.

Based on the assumption that professional public relations and communication management is a research-based activity, the question arises as to the extent to which, and in what manner, scientific methods are actually applied by communication practitioners. With regard to this question PR-practitioners as well as PR-scholars conducted extensive research on the application of possible evaluation methods (for an overview see Watson & Noble, 2005, p. 29ff.). Underlying this research is the question of how to optimize the systematic application of scientific evaluation methods in public relations practice and thereby contribute to the professionalization of the field. The relevant studies can be systematized in two main streams of research: surveys of communication practitioners and content analyses of campaign entries for professional awards.

1.1 Surveys on the Application of Evaluation

Various surveys on practitioners' attitudes towards PR-evaluation were conducted in the late 1980s through the 1990s. Some studies on evaluation practices used professional bodies to survey a practitioner sample (Dozier, 1985; IPRA, 1994; Watson, 1996) or targeted samples of practitioners in prominent organizations (Lindenmann, 1990). Walter Lindenmann conducted one of the first surveys in 1988 among public relations practitioners in the United States. This examination revealed that although evaluation was regarded as an integral part of public relations, research was done more informally, rather than scientifically and precisely (Lindenmann, 1990). In 1993, the International Public Relations Association (IPRA) examined both practitioners' attitudes towards evaluation and the implementation of evaluation research, and again found a major gap between what practitioners said and what they actually did. Barely one in five interviewees claimed to frequently undertake research aimed at evaluation. Instead, they reported that evaluation was limited mainly to the sampling of press clippings and some intuitive judgment. However, nearly 90% agreed with the statement that evaluation research is necessary (IPRA, 1994, w.p.) In addition, the results of the tri-national survey on public relations practices, part of the so called "Excellence project" funded by the International Association of Business Communicators, showed that "seat-of-the-pants" evaluation was used more than scientific evaluation. A clear relationship was found between excellence and the use of scientific evaluation: The least excellent organizations used a more seat-of-the-pants type of evaluation, while the best organizations engaged significantly more in scientific evaluation (Dozier et al. 1995, 225). A recent online-survey among German practitioners (Fröhlich et al., 2007) also revealed that a variety of methods were used. But again, the "method" mentioned most frequently was the mere sampling of media clippings (88 %), which is a proof of media appearance but not an analytical tool to evaluate communication activities. Thus, the survey results suggest that practitioners of strategic communication are aware of various evaluation methods but that they apply only few of them.

1.2   Re-Evaluation of Award Entries

The second stream of research on the application of evaluation methods consists of studies which re-evaluate entries for professional awards or prize-winning campaigns. The entries are analyzed in order to find out how enterprises and agencies demonstrate their evaluation efforts. Many of those studies are designed explicitly to cover a longer research period in order to determine whether evaluation practice has changed over the years. Bissland was the first to undertake such an evaluation (1990): He studied the winners of the Silver Anvil Award, a prize conferred by the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA). He compared the winners of 1980/81 with those of 1988/89 and found an increase in the methods of evaluation applied. But even more significant was the rise in the usage of the word "evaluation": If nothing else, Silver Anvil winners (and their judges) changed their vocabulary, Bissland concluded (1990, p. 31). Similar studies were conducted in different countries over the following years by Walker (1994), Pieczka (2000), Baerns (Baerns 2000; Baerns & Raupp 2000), and Xavier et al. (2005). Baerns, for example, re-analyzed entries for the German "Goldene Brücke" competition for a period from 1970 to 1994 (Baerns 2000; Baerns & Raupp, 2000). She distinguished between scientific and non-scientific methods as following: content analysis of the desired media coverage according to a prior determined frame of reference; surveys commissioned for public relations or for marketing purposes; re-analyses of available survey findings; and experiments and interviews were coded as scientific. The following methods were considered to be non-scientific: the simple collection of clippings; the naming of "definite" results such as sales figures; greater use of services; and the general mentioning of positive feedback. As do the survey studies, Baerns' content analysis also shows an over abundance of non-scientific methods (in total 57%) against 25% of applicants coded as applying scientific research methods in order to plan or evaluate strategic public relations. A comparison over years showed an increase in entries but no significant increase in the application of scientific methods. For the long-term perspective, Baerns and Raupp concluded: "Over the past 25 years, German public relations has maintained a certain level of quality – but not more than that" (Baerns & Raupp, 2000, p. 33).

Pieczka (2000), who analyzed entries in the United Kingdom's Sword of Excellence awards for a 13-year period (1984 to 1997), reported similar results. A quite recent Australian study of Xavier et al. (2005) compared the usage of evaluation methods between 1997 and 2001. Like the Baerns' study, this examination revealed only little change in the application of evaluation methods (Xavier et al., 2005, p. 422). According to Xavier et al., the most common way to evaluate communication activities is to measure response rates like attendance at meetings (66%). Media monitoring (the sampling of clippings) was in the second place, followed by media content analyses. Overall, only 26% measured PR-outcome: activity outcome ranked first (30%), followed by surveys (26%) and unobtrusive data collection (18%). Like the survey research among PR practitioners, the results of the content analyses of award entries or of prize-winning campaign descriptions do not indicate progress towards more evaluation research.

1.3   Interpretation of the Results

Walker (1994) combined content analysis of award entries with interviews with award winners in Australia. Her research draws attention to the fact that neither practitioners nor scholars distinguish clearly between formal and informal methods of evaluation. In addition, neither the participants in the various studies nor the researchers always meant the same things when they use the term "evaluation." Instead, it is likely that the studies asked for different things: Some asked for *any* kind of evaluation activities, trying to grasp all possible means to judge public relations or communication activities. Other studies were more rigid and discriminated strictly between formal and informal methods, regarding the latter as non-scientific. On this basis we must be careful when we compare the results of the studies mentioned. The variety in labeling evaluation methods reveals two things: First, it shows that even the vocabulary for public relations evaluation methods is not standardized yet. Secondly, the arbitrary labeling of evaluation methods shows varying degrees of "tolerance" on the part of the authors towards the evaluation methods reportedly applied. Some authors are willing to accept all kinds of measurements as an indication of a pragmatic way to handle evaluation while others are trying to implement scientific standards in public relations practice.

Thus, a generalization of the results of the different studies is not possible. Nevertheless, they reveal a virtually unanimous conclusion in one respect: The results indicate a growing recognition of evaluation research among PR-practitioners. However, there is no clear evidence that practitioners are more likely to engage in systematic evaluation research today than 20 years ago. Frequently, a precondition for successful evaluation was not given: the formulation of a clear relationship between stated objectives and evaluation method. In sum, most studies found that lip service was paid to evaluation more often than that evaluation was actually practiced (Besson, 2004, p. 68ff.). Therefore, Grunig's ironic comment on the gap between saying and doing (formal evaluation research) still seems to hold true: "Just as everyone is against sin, so most public relations people I talk to are for evaluation. People keep on sinning, however, and PR people continue not to do evaluation research" (Grunig, 2001, p. 28).

There must be reasons for this. A broad consensus exists that evaluation research helps to define priorities and thus supports a better use of resources. Evaluation research is regarded as a necessary part of the systematic planning of PR activities. It helps an institution or business to spend the available money more effectively. In addition, quite simply, nowadays it is nearly impossible to avoid evaluation. Why is it then that evaluation is applied so seldom or at least not properly, namely as a systematic and research-based activity? The reasons for the discrepancy between practitioners' recognition of the importance of public relations evaluation and their neglect of systematic evaluation research are manifold: Evaluation research is costly while the budgets are limited, and often there is not enough qualified staff. Sometimes, PR-practitioners claim that public relations suffers as a communication discipline because of the inability to predict and measure outcomes (Watson, 2001, p. 262). Very often, the methodological know-how is lacking. Dozier and Broom (1995) suggest that the role and status of the PR-practitioner is an indicator for the use of evaluation research. The more practitioners occupy management functions the more likely they are to be engaging in evaluation research. When they are mere technicians, they will not apply scientific research methods for evaluation.

In addition, the expectations of the general management or of the clients towards evaluation are ambiguous. On one hand, general management expects public relations to be cost effective. But on the other hand, evaluation is often reduced to counting press clippings, for example, because that is what the client wants (Xavier et al. 2005, 422). Last but not least, public relations often is regarded as craft or art which requires personal skills, talent and creativity – characteristics which are supposed to be beyond measurement. This view wrongly presupposes a contradiction between creativity on one hand and measurement and evaluation on the other.

Nevertheless, although these reasons are valid in some cases, they cannot explain the insufficient application of evaluation in general. There are some organizations that engage intensively in evaluation research, and there are communication situations like crises when companies explore more evaluation activities than usual. The bigger and more complex companies are, the more likely they will evaluate their public relations activities. In addition, companies in risk branches will invest more in evaluation activities. Thus, the question should no longer be why there is too little evaluation. Rather, one should be asking what kind of organizations need evaluations, and what kinds of evaluation activities are the most appropriate for given situations. Alternatively, reformulated as a research question: What are the variables that influence the application of evaluation methods? Further empirical research on the application of public relations evaluation should take into account these factors more systematically.

2   Communication-Based Theories of Evaluation

Theoretical approaches in communication studies can help to answer the question of what evaluation methods are suited for a given communication problem. From the perspective of communication studies, the consideration of evaluation has its roots in the study of public communication campaigns and in media effects research. In general, there are two types of public communication campaigns: Campaigns which aim to change individual behaviour and campaigns assigned to change policy (Coffmanm, 2003).

Examples of campaigns that try to influence the behaviour of people on an individual level are anti-drug campaigns, health care campaigns, and (but this is a special case) election campaigns. During recent decades, campaigning has become professionalized and relies increasingly on the social science research for the planning, implementing and evaluating of campaigns. From the point of view of empirical social research, the generic objective of the campaign – individual behaviour – has to be set as the dependent variable. Independent or intervening variables are, for instance, exposure to campaign messages, media usage, knowledge and attitudes, socio-demographic characteristics, involvement and personal expectations. Based on this information one can define the segments of the public more precisely, one can formulate the key messages more properly, and one can choose the communication channels more appropriately. The necessary information is gathered by surveys, focus groups and in-depth interviews.

However, with regard to the complexity of public communication processes, it is difficult to detect immediate and direct effects of a communication campaign. People are getting information from various sources and they are influenced by various factors. However, this does not mean that public communication campaigns necessarily lead to limited effects. The failure to detect effects can also reflect an inadequate evaluation design and

wrong expectations regarding the effects. The effects of public communication campaigns may occur after some delay; they may be indirect and become visible only on an aggregate level. A direct association between media coverage and individual behaviour is rare. Often, the effects become visible only after a political measure. For example, Yanovitzky examined the association of drunk driving and media coverage on this issue. He found only little direct association on this level. However, there was a clear association between aggregate media coverage of the issue of drunk driving and subsequent legislation to curb drunk driving. In addition, there was an association between the passing of the legislation and a subsequent reduction in drunk-driving behaviour (Hornik & Yanovitzky, 2003, p. 209).

The result of this study leads to the second type of public communication campaign, namely those designed to affect policy change. This type of campaign attempts to mobilize public and decision-maker support for the desired policy change. Policy change campaigns are less understood and examined, but are gaining in importance (Coffman, 2003, p. 6). The role of media advocacy is crucial in these types of campaigns. Media advocacy is the strategic use of news media to advance a certain policy initiative. The way an article or news story is framed has an effect on the way people perceive an issue that is covered. Media advocacy can garner support either indirectly by support of certain populations or directly by influencing decision makers.

In the literature on campaign evaluation, typically a differentiation is made between various foci of evaluation (Communication Consortium Media Center, 2004, p. 10ff.). Depending on information needs and resources available, the evaluation of campaigns can focus on one or more of the following areas of evaluation:

- formative evaluation takes place before the campaign starts. In the formative stage, information will be gathered in order to define the situation (public awareness of the issue, degree of knowledge on the issue etc.)
- process evaluation examines the implementation of the campaign, like the outreach of campaign messages, media coverage of the campaign
- outcome evaluation measures effects in the target population, examines possible changes of behaviour or policy change
- impact evaluation examines a campaign's long-term outcome. Impact evaluation asks whether the generic social or political objective (like lowering rates of breast cancer, less drunken driving) has been achieved.

In order to determine whether the political or social effects were really caused by the campaign, a rigorous evaluation design – like quasi-experimental techniques – is required. The following table shows possible campaign evaluation designs with regard to impact evaluation (see Figure 1).

Design	Baseline	Intervention	Follow-up	Validity threats reduced
1. post-campaign only	-	X	O	None
2. pre-/post-comparison	O	X	O	Selectivity
3. pre-/ post-comparison and post-only control group	O	X	O	Testing
	O	-	O	
4. pre-/ post-comparison and pre-determined control group	O	X	O	History and maturation
	O	-	O	
5. pre-/ post-comparison and predetermined control group and post-only intervention group	O	X	O	Sensitization
	O	-	O	
	-	X	O	
6. solomon four group	O	X	O	All of the above
	O	-	O	
	-	X	O	
	-	-	O	

Figure 1: Study designs (Valente, 2001, p. 112)

The systematization of Valente illustrates that empirical social research has developed many methods and procedures for data collection and analysis that are helpful in measuring the impact of communication campaigns. While the literature on campaign evaluation emphasizes impact evaluation, the public relations literature on evaluation stresses process evaluation. This emphasis on process evaluation reflects the existing practice in many public relations cases: the analysis of media coverage. With respect to this, the method of scientific content analysis has been developed especially within media and communication studies. However, the techniques of content analyses are not yet developed for the specific requirements of the evaluation of media exposure. Up until now, academicians have focused too little on developing measurement tools for media exposure.

3   Economic and Value-Based Evaluation

For a long time the methods and procedures for public relations evaluation stemmed from social research. In recent years, an economic and value-based perspective has complemented this social science orientation.

Public relations evaluation has been differentiated in various levels, much like campaign evaluation. However, the terminology in public relations literature and practice is slightly different. A well-known and popular differentiation in evaluation levels stems from

Cutlip, Center and Broom (2000). They differentiated between three levels and 13 steps for evaluating public relations programmes (see Figure 2).
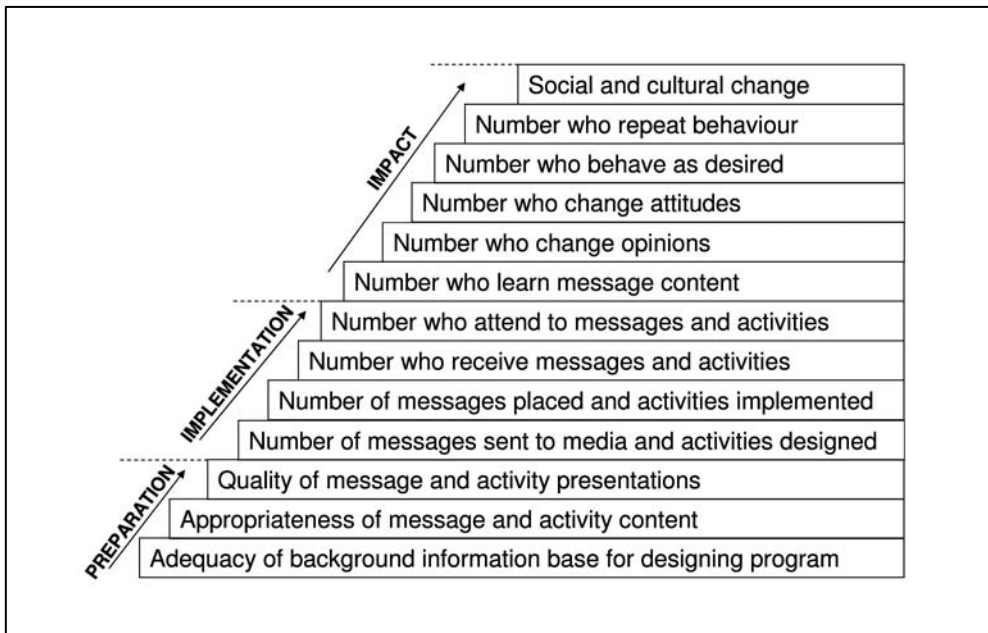
Figure 2: Levels and steps for evaluating public relations programmes
(Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2000, pp. 436-437)

The advantage of this differentiation is that the various phases of a public relations programme are named in detail and that they are linked with specific evaluation methods. A more general differentiation discriminates between output (the PR messages), outgrowth (the reach of the PR messages), and outcome (impact on the public). With respect to the evaluation methods used, the practitioner surveys and the content analyses of award entries which were described above showed a clear emphasis on output-oriented evaluation. However, methods to measure the PR-outcome were used less frequently. Here, public relations can learn from campaign literature about how to design evaluation on the level of outcome.

With the shift towards economic evaluation models, this differentiation in levels has been enhanced. Questions have been raised about the contribution of public relations and communication to organizational goals and a new level has been added: the level of outflow. The professional organizations have adopted this new systematic (Pfannenberg & Zerfaß, 2005; DPRG & GPRA, 2000) and it has become standard to distinguish between at least the three dimensions of output, outcome and outflow.

With respect to the dimension of outflow evaluation, the economic value of communication comes to the centre of discussion. The business management view of communication activities stresses the question of efficiency and suggests new evaluation instruments like ratios and scorecards. On the level of outflow, the role of public relations is measured with regard to its contribution to increase the economic value of a company. The DPRG lists, for

example, the following indicators for success: an increase in turnover, an increase in enduring customer relationships, growing productivity, cost reduction in comparison to traditional communication instruments, cost reduction in personnel (DPRG & GPRA, 2000).

Underlying these economic models of public relations evaluation is a view of strategic communication from a business management perspective. The generic question is no longer how communication helps to achieve a certain social or political aim but rather, what added value does communication create for the organization. This question became virulent during the last decade, especially for enterprises, which are listed in the stock exchange. Based on estimations that the shareholder value of a company is influenced by a firm's image for about 50%, the measurement of intangible assets became a "hot topic." From the business management perspective, public relations has been seen traditionally as part of marketing. A classical way to define the scope of marketing is the four P's, which make up the marketing mix: product, price, promotion and place. Public relations is located within the traditional marketing mix as part of promotion, next to advertising and personal selling. In the last few years, the idea of integrated communication became popular. In the English-speaking world, the term "integrated marketing communication" has become a key buzzword for the description of combined communication functions. In Germany, various concepts of "integrated communication" gained popularity. The economic and business management approaches to communication processed the discussion about "communication controlling" and the adaptation of ratios and scorecards to measure communication effects. In order to find an answer to the question of how communication can contribute to the value of an enterprise, the task of communication controlling has become important in identifying key value drivers.

Hard indicators, which add to the value of an enterprise, are return on invested capital, turnover and net profit. The measurement of these key performance indicators is unproblematic as they can simply be expressed in figures. However, how to measure intangible and non-financial assets such as image, popularity or trustworthiness? Naturally, non-financial measurement requires more explanation and thoughtful argumentation. In order to overcome this problem, several performance measurement systems have been developed; one of the most widely adopted concepts is the Balanced Scorecard of measurements that was developed by Kaplan and Norton during the 1990s within a multi-company research project on measurement organizational performance. The Balanced Scorecard (BSC) is based on the premise that an exclusive reliance on financial measurement is insufficient. Long-term value creation could be sacrificed for short-term performance, Norton and Kaplan argued (Kaplan & Norton, 1996). Thus, the Balanced Scorecard stresses non-financial assets like knowledge, employees, customer relationships and information technology as important factors for a company's success. These intangible assets should balance the traditional financial measures in three perspectives: customer related, with regard to internal processes and to learning and growth. As a management performance measurement system, the Balanced Scorecard emphasizes the linkage of measurement to strategy as well.

What does the concept of the Balanced Scorecard offer for the evaluation of strategic communication? Many authors claim that one seemingly trivial, but important advantage of the BSC is that it may narrow the mental gap that often exists between the communication managers and the accounting executives in charge of internal controlling. Thanks to the use of a scorecard system, communication experts may be better prepared to find a common language with accounting experts and with the general management.

However, this "translation help" is not enough to apply the scorecard approach to communications successfully. Because of that, several attempts have been made to adapt the Balanced Scorecard concept to the specific requirements of measuring public relations and communication results. The "Value Based Management of Communication" (Pfannenberg, 2005), the "CommunicationControlCockpit" (Rolke, 2005), or the "Communication Scorecard" (Hering, Schuppener, & Sommerhalder, 2004) are recent examples from German PR practitioners and scholars for the attempt to develop specific communication scorecard systems. Like the evaluation models from social science, these concepts try to systematize cause-effect relations between communication activities and outcomes.

The new perspective these concepts offer is the focus on identifying communication-based value drivers, and the attempt to define indicators to measure the performance. Thus, ratios and scorecards contribute more to the planning and steering of communication activities. Communication scorecards in combination with a value-based management system enable an integrated view of the role that public relations or strategic communication can play in companies. Ultimately, these concepts express the hope of an increased esteem of public relations as an organizational function.

As promising as those concepts are, they still face formidable problems. Empirical data, which are gathered by social scientific methods, have to be reformulated into performance indicators. There is much information that can be gathered by traditional social science research procedures and that can be expressed quantitatively. With regard to media analysis, for example it is quite possible to retrieve the following information: number of copies printed, number of copies sold, television viewers, Internet page visits and page impressions, number of published articles, number of names mentioned, number of positive or negative mentioning of a firm or person in media coverage. However, how to interpret these figures in terms of value addition? Rolke (1994, p. 187) for example defined an initiative quotient ("Initiativquotient") which means the percentage of media coverage which is initiated by public relations activities. He stated that a relationship of 70:30 is desirable; 70% of the issues in the media should be generated by public relations activities. Nevertheless, those ratios cannot be generalized without problems. Another way to develop key performance indicators is to define yardsticks based on former performance and in comparison with other organizations that are working in the same field.

It is beyond question that ratios and scorecard-concepts can contribute to the integration of public relations evaluation into the general strategic management of an organization. However, with regard to the application of outflow evaluation, empirical data are lacking: We do not know exactly when and what evaluation methods are applied, and we know even less about the application of ratios in public relations. Thus, empirical research is needed to examine the implementation of scorecard systems on a broader level.

Arnold (2005, p. 288) has interviewed German practitioners and PR-experts who themselves have developed scorecard systems. Asked how they see the future of the application of communication scorecards, the experts reveal quite varied expectations. Especially because there are several challenges connected to the development and use of scorecard systems, it is not likely that they will spread quickly and be adopted widely. General management-based views of communication, however, will become even more important. Thus, the existing management approaches to communication evaluation have to be developed further, together with media centred evaluation activities. The main task, however, will be to integrate the various dimensions of communication evaluation.

4   Integrating the Dimensions of Evaluation

It is important to accept that there are various evaluation approaches and different evaluation dimensions. Models should aim at capturing these different dimensions and including them in an overall yet flexible evaluation approach. Evaluation covers different areas: efficacy (impact, meeting defined goals); effectivity (the degree to which effects have been reached); and efficiency (the appropriate usage of resources). Each of these areas requires different evaluation approaches and working theories. In order to draw sound conclusions from an evaluation activity, assumptions with regard to the success of the communication strategy have to be formulated for every single evaluation area. The core of every evaluation activity is to meet evaluation objectives which have to be defined before designing the evaluation methodology.

As a consequence of the dependency of evaluation on different evaluation objectives, striving for one general theory of evaluation of strategic communication would be idle. Instead, empirically grounded social theories should be used in order to evaluate communication with regard to efficacy. Economic and management-based models should be used to design the evaluation programme with regard to effectivity and efficiency. While there cannot be an overall evaluation theory for public relations that does not mean that evaluation has nothing to do with theory development: On the contrary, the results of evaluation activities can deliver important insights for the further development of theories.

The following figure compares the two prevalent approaches to public relations evaluation (see Figure 3).
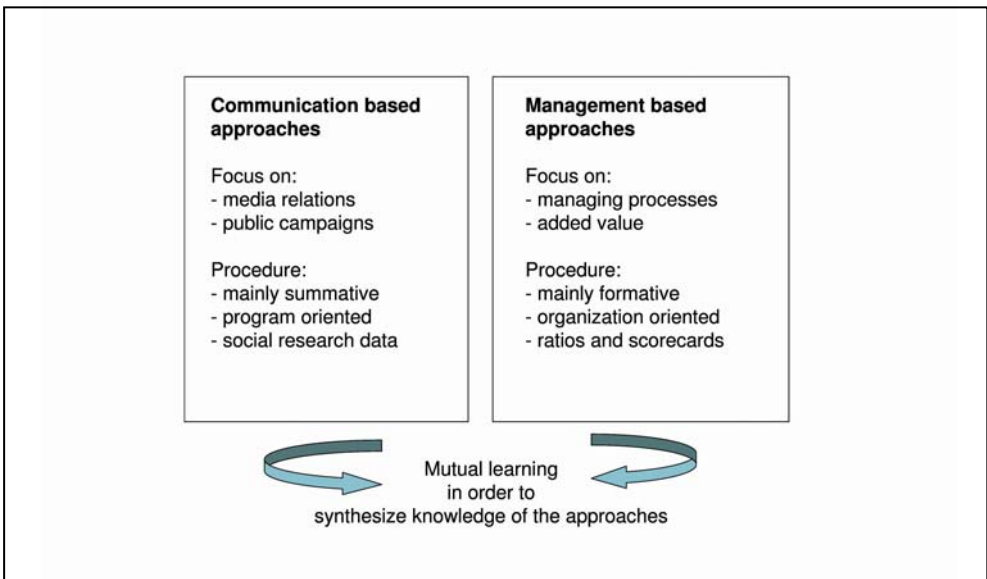
Figure 3: Comparison of different evaluation approaches

In order to synthesize the different bases of knowledge, which can be retrieved, from the application of the different evaluation approaches, the disciplines have to learn from each other:

> Corporate communication departments in the future will have to function like war rooms in a political campaign headquarter. As in a campaign, sophisticated research on perceptions of various publics and grassroots techniques will become standard practice. (Radford & Goldstein, 2002, p. 254)

Campaigning Communication research makes hypotheses about the circumstances under which media exposure will have an effect, about why people use which media, and so forth. These hypotheses are a precondition for setting communication goals. The knowledge of empirically grounded communication theories and of theories of media effects is a necessary requirement for the successful evaluation of public relations and corporate communication. Similarly, business corporate communication can learn from public and political campaigning because in corporate communication, too, the goals are first of all communicative, such as change in attitudes and increase of knowledge, framing and selection of information.

On the other hand, not-for profit communication and public and political campaigning can learn from business and market communication. The development of ratios and scorecards are attempts to manage communication processes more effectively. This is also applicable to organizations other than business enterprises.

Further research should seek to integrate the knowledge and methods from the disciplines and adapt them to public relations. In terms of future development of evaluating strategic communication efforts, we should seek

- to further develop scientific methods for evaluation on the levels of impact as well as process,
- to integrate the methods of evaluation with the aims of strategic communication and
- to integrate the levels of evaluation in a concept of overall evaluation.

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Political Public Relations: Research on its Success and its Influence on German Media Coverage

Romy Fröhlich

In Germany, research about the influence of PR on journalism (determination research), has a comparatively long tradition. Underlying the majority of studies is an explicit normative understanding of the value of independent journalism for democracy. This is especially true for political journalism. However, the ever-growing behind-the-scenes activities of spin-doctors and political PR are becoming more and more important and influential. This chapter provides a critical synopsis of German determination research and of current research on the interplay between political PR and media coverage on politics.

1   Introduction

More and more, professional political PR is regarded as being the third force in news making – next to the two traditional forces journalism and politicians (Graber, Norris, & McQuail, 1998; Esser et al., 2001). Political PR performs a public service by bringing issues to the public's attention. Decades of research have shed light on this function of public relations, its success in shaping the topic selection and production of news media and the nature of the interaction between political PR and journalism (for example Turk, 1988; Shoemaker & Reese, 1991; Berkowitz, 1993, Cameron, Sallot, & Curtin, 1997; Curtin, 1999; Davis, 2000; Curtin & Rhodenbaugh, 2001).

In Germany, research about the interaction between journalism and public relations has a comparatively long tradition. Since the early eighties, when Barbara Baerns published the first comprehensive empirical study on PR's role in and influence on journalism – a content analysis on local politics and news coverage in North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) – the field has been further developing under the label "determination research."[1] The topic and its kind of research can virtually be referred to as a discrete and independent specific German area of research; the US-American PR and news research to date does not pursue this topic consistently. The specific approach of the German determination research is unknown in the US. In the United States, only Judy VanSlyke Turk (1986, 1987, 1991) pursued a similar question during the mid and late eighties, though she did not deal with "determination". On the other hand, in the US research on the interaction between politics, and political media coverage (and journalism respectively) has a much longer tradition than in Germany and so has ever since been considered as part of agenda-building and agenda setting research. Thus, research on political influence through PR, lobbying and spin on media and journalism in the US has never been considered original PR research (see, for example, Lang & Lang, 1981; Cobb & Elder, 1983; Berkowitz, 1987). Consequently,

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[1]   Meant here is the determination of journalism and/or media content through PR.

Turk's early research on public relations' influence on news was later integrated into the context of agenda-setting research (Turk, 1991), although it was not actually developed within this approach.

Underlying the majority of German determination research is an explicit normative understanding of the value and importance of independent journalism and media for democracies. The widely accepted principle for the media in Western democracies is that journalists should meet high standards of objectivity and balance, pluralism, truth and accuracy. This is especially true for political journalism and media. In particular, during election campaigns citizens should be comprehensively and precisely informed to enable them to make their choice. However, in all Western democracies media and journalism are suffering from time, budget and staff constraints. This limits their independency and makes them increasingly dependent on political sources and the public relations material of the political players. The behind-the-scenes activities of spin-doctors and PR consultants like lobbying are becoming more and more important and influential in politics in particular (Palmer, 2000; Sumpter & Tankard, 1994; Schlesinger, Miller & Dinan, 2001)[2]. Tenscher (2004, p. 516) writes:

> Especially the emergence and rise of differently specialized *political communication experts* – media consultants, campaign professionals, spokespersons, public relations experts, *"spin doctors"* etc. – within campaigns and beyond seem to indicate and symbolize, like a *pars pro toto*, how political communication in Germany has apparently been changing to a higher degree of professionalization and modernization.

Against this background, public relations professionals are already called "framing strategists."[3]

2   Current State of German Determination Research

Back to the German determination research: Different approaches and empirical studies describe the editorial interaction between political PR and journalism (Baerns, 1985; Barth & Donsbach, 1992; Bentele et al., 1997; Donsbach & Wenzel, 2002; Fröhlich, 1992; Jarren & Donges, 2002, p. 127ff.; Saffarina, 1993; Schönbach, 1992; Schantel, 2000). Already the very first empirical study from Baerns (1985) has its focus on the coverage of the politics department of dailies. Baern's comprehensive content analysis on the influence of political PR on media coverage about domestic politics in North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) is regarded as the initial study for determination research in Germany. Baerns' results show that on average 62% of the analysed media coverage of domestic politics in NRW date back to public relations material and content from the political players. In part, individual media

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[2]   For a more essayistic approach see Kurtz, 1998 and Press, 2001.
[3]   As a consequence of this development in political journalism and political public relations, a new research topic has emerged, the analysis of so-called metacommunication. Esser et al. (2001) define metacommunication as the news media's self-referential reflections on the nature of the interaction between political PR and political journalism. They talk about metacommunication as a "new, third stage in election coverage after issue and strategy coverage" and even call it "a new concept in political communication theory" (p. 16). In their understanding, metacommunication is the news media's response to professional political PR.

and types of media[4] even reached a higher percentage of up to 80%. Since then a large number of empirical and theoretical studies have been conducted in Germany to explore the influence of PR on media coverage and journalism in more detail. Two major lines can be identified here. First, an action theory oriented approach which explores the interaction between PR practitioners and media representatives including journalism (for example, Jarren & Röttger, 1999; Pfetsch, 2002). This research elaborates on aims, routines, roles and self-perception of journalists, as well as on the question of how others perceive journalists with the help of surveys. The second approach works with content analysis and elaborates on the question of how strong and in which manner PR material is reflected in news coverage.

The previously existing determination studies show that PR activities and material play a very important role within the process of news selection and production since PR codetermine journalists' selection of topics and the timing of media content. However, so far there is no definite proof, that PR really *controls* media coverage – control in a negative sense as problematic and objectionable manipulation (Schantel, 2000, pp. 73-76). This is because existing data and results consistently differ from study to study. For example, in their content analysis about the PR of political parties represented in the Saxon parliament Donbach and Wenzel (2003) could not replicate the high determination proportion from Baern's study. Donsbach and Wenzel found only one fourth of the media coverage analysed to be initiated by the political parties' PR (determination rate)[5]; the media (response rate) had considered only 28% of the parties' press releases[6]. Many earlier studies also amount to consistently different determination and response rates. The margin for determination rates varies from 65% (Salazar-Volkmann, 1994, p. 196) to 18% (Schweda & Opherden, 1995, p. 154) to as low as 10% (Fröhlich & Rüdiger, 2004) – the lowest share thus far. Depending on the study, the margin for response rates varies from 73% (Müller-Hennig, 2000, p. 61) to 11% (Safarnia, 1993, p. 416).

The reasons for these differences are subsequently sufficiently known: differences concerning the theoretical background and differences concerning the operationalization of research questions and the methodology. For example, there is evidence that the different nature of PR material (for example, content from conventional print press releases vs. content received at press conferences) plays an important role as well as criterions like different editorial departments (for example, business news, politics, sports etc.) and different media types (local newspapers vs. national dailies; tabloids vs. broadsheets, TV vs. print media etc.). Furthermore, the status of an organisation conducting PR (Saffarnia, 1993) seems to be just as much responsible for the different determination and response rates of PR as the respective topic. Thus, future studies need to keep a check on these aspects and factors when aiming to conduct an empirical comparison with earlier studies and findings. Besides, one has to consider that for pragmatic reasons the vast majority of existing studies worked exclusively with conventional print press releases as PR material.[7] Press releases,

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[4]   Baerns analysed numerous local and regional newspapers, all radio and television news in NRW as well as the coverage of local/regional news agencies.

[5]   The determination rate specifies the share of media coverage dated back to PR activities and material. It is a quantitative criterion for the determination of media coverage through PR.

[6]   The response rate (some authors call it selection rate) specifies the share of PR material selected for publication. It is a quantitative criterion for the response of PR in media coverage.

[7]   Baerns's (1985) early study is to date the only empirical study which combined the analysis of different types of PR material (press releases, speeches and "spoken word" at press conferences, flyers etc.).

however, are only *one* form of PR. Moreover, nowadays in particular modern and highly professional political PR applies various other forms of information and persuasion when interacting with journalists and media people – forms which are not available for research and thus cannot be empirically analysed (for example, confidential background talks with journalists, invitations to trips for special investigations etc.).

Apart from the more or less differing results concerning response and determination rate, there is some universal consistency after all. (1) The majority of studies show that journalists shorten and edit PR material when selecting it for publication – a result which was already revealed in Barbara Bearns's earlier study. (2) Several studies show that besides this (rather simple) kind of journalistic activity there is also a certain kind of journalistic passivity towards PR material. Media content, which traces back to PR material, predominantly adopts the given thematic emphases. (3) The vast majority of journalists when using PR material for their articles do not specify the sources used as PR sources (Fröhlich, 1992; Grossenbacher, 1986; Rossmann, 1993; Salazar-Volkmann, 1994; Schweda und Opherden, 1995).

Furthermore, there is a general consensus among researchers that the response and determination rate depend on a set of – mostly professional – factors considered by PR. (1) Several studies show that both rates are highly dependent on the question of whether or not and, if yes, to what extent PR (material) considers professional editorial skills and standards. (2) Others show that the rates also depend on the question of whether or not and, if yes, to what extent PR considers organisational and temporal routines of journalists and media organisations.[8] (3) The same is true for the consideration of news factors[9] when producing PR material like, for example, press releases.

Donsbach and Meißner (2004) recommend a different research strategy when exploring the influence of political PR on political media coverage. They suggest a stronger specification of the determination rate (share of media content traced back to PR activity/material) and the response rate (share of PR material selected for publication). In their own empirical study on news agencies they differentiate between determination rates and response rates which apply to (1) single actors (like individual politicians), (2) to groups of actors (like political parties or factions) and (3) to special thematic subjects (like foreign affairs, domestic policy, social policy). Respectively, they differentiate between individual, thematic and general rates. Donsbach and Meißen revealed interesting results. They found different response rates subject to the respective PR source. PR material from political players achieved a much higher response rate (30%) than PR material from players of the economic system (8%) (industrial associations, for example). In addition, while PR material from the legislature and political parties only achieved a response rate of 22 to 24%, PR material from the executive reached a much higher rate (42%). However, *overall* the respective journalists had used only 20% of the total PR material made available for the news agencies under examination. In comparison with this, the general determination rate of 48% was much higher.

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[8]   The consideration of organisational and temporal routines of journalists and media organisations through PR influences the amount of PR content selected by journalists for publication; it also has an (from the PR point of view) positive effect on the actual process of editing and reshaping PR material for publication (Grossenbacher, 1986, p. 727; Schweda & Opherten, 1995, p. 172).

[9]   News factors like, for example, negativity, prominence, geographical closeness etc. influence the selection of press releases; the higher the newsworthiness of the PR material the higher the chances for the material to be selected for publication (Barth & Donsbach, 1992, p. 153; Gazlig, 1999, p. 197).

Moreover, for the determination, Donsbach and Meißen found interesting differences for different media departments and beats with the politics department having the lowest determination rate (36%) and the economics department the highest (55%). The authors' findings reveal an interesting coherence. While the response rate for PR material from the field of political players is high and the respective rate for PR material from the field of players of the economic system is low, the situation is exactly contrariwise for the determination rate. In summary, this study found two factors to be most influential when analysing the effect of political PR material on media coverage: the nature and provenience of a PR source (like, for example, ministries, political parties, political associations, NGOs, corporations, politicians etc.) and the topic and editorial department respectively on the part of the media. With their study, the authors showed that it is most fruitful to first strictly differentiate between determination and response rate and second to follow a broader approach instead of merely analysing a single topic, a single editorial department and/or a single PR source one at a time.

Another study indicates that it is worthwhile to invest in developing a *framing*-based instrument for the measurement of political PR influence on media coverage. Fröhlich and Rüdiger (2004, 2006) conducted a detailed frame analysis of the PR and news coverage of the two major parties, SPD and CDU, on the debate on immigration policy. The study has shown unaltered messages from the press releases were seldom directly used in the press coverage meaning press releases were not a significant source of *direct* quotes during the debate. This could be hastily taken as a sign for the failure of political PR and for its poor influence. However, while the detailed frame analysis also showed that by no means journalists merely assimilate the *frames* they receive from political PR they instead alter the *focuses* of some frames, or add their own focuses. Interestingly, the amount of these alterations seems to be connected to two factors. One factor is the general thematic consensus in public debate. Positions outside this general consensus will often be "framed out" by journalists. The second factor is the more or less clearly expressed focus of positions in the political players' PR. When political players choose to communicate broad and unfocused positions (like the Social Democratic Party SPD in this case study), they obviously run a greater risk that the messages in media coverage related to them will not correspond to their very own perspectives.

To sum up, results from German determination research in the field of political media coverage and PR remain confusing and partly contradictory. This is without question the result of some striking deficiencies.

▪ Not only most of the previous determination studies but also more current approaches like the "intereffication model" of Günter Bentele et al. (1997) disregard the *process dimension* (Scheufele, 2003b). This is surprising in particular for the case of political PR since different process models used in political communication research (Downs, 1972; Jarren & Donges, 2002, p. 39ff.) allow the assumption that, for example, during political election campaigns the respective PR material of political parties influences media coverage in some phases of the campaign strongly but in others not at all. To investigate these temporal effects it is necessary to conduct a longitudinal content analysis based on an input-output approach.

- The conditions for success and failure of political PR are widely discussed. However, besides the theoretical examination[10] empirical studies dealing with the topic are rarely to be found and/or mainly focus on specific issues or situations (Donsbach & Wenzel, 2002; Donsbach & Meißner, 2004; Fröhlich & Rüdiger, 2004, 2006; Kepplinger & Maurer, 2004). This hinders the transferability and generalizability of empirical results.
- Besides, we need more empirical research about the *interaction* between unforeseeable events, PR activity and media coverage. For example, studies in the field of political sciences argue that during the national election campaign of 2002 in Germany the political campaigns of the conservative parties (then opposition and contender) focussed too strongly on "ratio, strict concept and linear perfection" (Wiesendahl, 2003, p. 73; see also Raschke, 2003). Thus, they were not been able to react to unforeseeable events like the tragic flood disaster in Germany at that time. As a result, the political communication of the conservative parties had much less success than the rather flexible communications strategy of Gerhard Schröder, the leader of the government.
- The majority of studies about the influence and success of PR (e.g. Donsbach & Wenzel, 2002; Fröhlich, 1992; Grossenbacher, 1986, 1989; Müller-Hennig, 2000; Rossmann, 1993; Safarnia, 1993; Salazar-Volkmann, 1994; Schweda & Opherden, 1995) only contain formal indicators of the success of PR like, for example, the degree of revision and/or of verbal acceptance respectively through journalists. Such formal and simple indicators, however, say very little if anything about the often fluctuating determination and response rates. Through their detailed analysis of individual, area-specific and general determination and response rates Donsbach and Meißner (2004) show that in addition to the *level of analysis* (executive, legislature, associations/federations, unions etc.) the respective *editorial department* (politics, business, economy etc.) and the respective *type of media* (radio, tabloid, quality paper, TV etc.) also play a crucial role (Saffarnia, 1993).
- Furthermore, simple formal indicators of the success or failure of PR suppress other vital questions of political communication. For example, from the perspective of the framing approach (Scheufele, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2003a, b) shares and quotas of the verbal acceptance of PR material through journalists are largely irrelevant. Election campaigns, for example, not only rely on the creation of images, event management or agenda setting but also on frame management (Scheufele, 2003a, p. 224). A political party does not get anything out of the mere fact that indeed it successfully launches its issues into the media (agenda-building) but at the same time, the opposing party prevails by tackling the very same issues and in addition creates a specific frame of reference for these issues (frame-building). Thus, the aim of political PR is not only to shape the media's and/or the public's agenda of issues ("strategies of issues management"; Neidhardt, 1994) but it instead also needs to communicate the client's very own *interpretation* of issues (interpretation of problems and suggestions for solution) to the media with the objective of receiving support from the public for respective political actions and decisions (persuasive strategy).

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[10]   See, for example, Schönbach, 1992. For an overview of the theoretical discussion see also Jarren & Donges, 2002b, p. 103ff.

3   Current State of German Research on Election Campaigns and PR

Election campaigns are considered as a special case of political communication and as a prototype of the political PR campaign. The majority of studies assume an effect and impact of political PR on voting decisions (for example, Kepplinger et al., 1994). This approach considers the respective media coverage – influenced by political PR – to be an independent variable for the voting decision. Empirical studies on PR during times of election campaigns that consider media coverage as a dependent variable are rather rare.[11] Kepplinger and Maurer (2004) who conducted a content analysis of media coverage on economic policy and on the PR material of political parties during the election campaign of 2002 did one such study.[12] The authors showed that press releases, which had a clear and specific strategy of argumentation (for example, performance record, economic comparison, argumentative denunciation, and argumentative defence), had a comparatively high likelihood of being selected for publication.[13] Their results also support previous findings concerning the influence of the editorial policy and political position of a newspaper on the selection of PR material from respective political sources.[14] Kepplinger and Maurer (2004, p. 123) subsume:

> Left wing to liberal media selected press releases from the SPD [Social Democratic Party Germany; R. F.] and Bündnis90/Grüne [The Greens; R. F.], right wing to liberal media rather from CDU/CSU [Conservative Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union; R. F.] and FDP [Liberal Free Democratic Party; R. F.]....The most striking characteristic of successful press releases was that they compared the achievements of their own party with the asserted poor performance of their political rival. A successful strategy was also to attack their political rival. Merely communicating one's own achievements as well as defence and apologising for any political offence, however, proved to be an ineffective communications strategy. [translated by R. F.]

A second prominent field of research on political communication and PR deals with political PR outside of the times of elections and election campaigns (*"Normalzeiten"/*normal times; Baringhorst, 1998; Bentele, 1998; Patzelt, 1998; Fröhlich & Rüdiger, 2004, 2006) or with PR of non-established political players (for example, Vowe, 2001). However, we know nothing about the impact of political PR activities on German media coverage in times of major crises like, for example, "September 11th" or in times of political and/or public crisis.[15] Other scientific literature on political elections in Germany (for example, Schönbach, 1996; Plasser, 2000; Wilke & Reinemann, 2000) postulates an Americanization of German elections and election campaigns, i.e. a loss of topical debate in favour of personalization and election horseracing.[16] However, convincing empirical evidence of this is still missing.

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[11]   A first empirical study in this field was done by Knoche and Lindgens (1988). Very few other studies apply a theoretical approach, such as Esser (2000).

[12]   However, this study too disregards the above-mentioned *process dimension*.

[13]   For similar results see Fröhlich and Rüdiger (2004).

[14]   This in turn supports Kepplinger's theory about "instrumentelle Aktualisierung" (instrumental actualization).

[15]   For an exception to this rule see Barth and Donsbach (1992). For a general examination of media coverage and the selection process of journalists during specific public conflicts see Scheufele and Brosius (1999).

[16]   For more ambitious and complex approaches see Brettschneider (2002) and Scheufele (1999; 2003a).

In Germany the question of whether and, if yes, how political parties successfully convey their points of view to the media and to journalists with the help of political PR has so far only been explored for print media and in particular for newspapers. When it comes to elections, however, television seems to be very important for this question. One can assume that particularly during election campaigns, TV news play an important role for the emergence and alteration of individual images of candidates (cf. for example, Kepplinger et al., 1994; Schulz, 1997, 1998). Within our specific context (influence on PR on political media coverage) though, TV media coverage has not yet been analysed. This is due to the comparatively high effort in the data collection process through content analysis[17].

Currently there is only one single empirical analysis in Germany dealing with the topic (Fröhlich & Scheufele, 2004). It is a quantitative *longitudinal input-output* content analysis about the influence of political PR on *TV* media coverage during the national German election campaign of 2002. It also investigates the *impact of particular events* in Germany (like, for example, emerging political scandals, the war in Iraq, the flood disaster, the publication/announcement of opinion polls regarding expected voting decisions etc.) on the interaction between political PR and media coverage at that time. The study combines the framing approach with approaches from classical German determination research and approaches from psephology. It considers the above-mentioned process dimension (longitudinal approach) through the calculation of cross-correlations in time series as well as through rank correlations per week.

Roughly summing up the results, it can be said that the PR material of both of the two most important political parties[18] analysed clearly revealed an offensive style. Against the background of Kepplinger's and Maurer's (2004) results mentioned above and showing that a communicative PR strategy of defence and denunciation of the political opponent is the most successful approach in encroaching upon media coverage, both parties obviously made the right decision. However, while the ruling conservative Union parties, unperturbed from unpredictable happenings, kept up this strategy almost until the end, the left-wing SPD was much more flexible in its press releases. The results show that the greater flexibility and ability of the SPD's PR to react to those events paid off. Their messages more easily encroached upon media coverage.

With the help of cross-correlations in time series, the authors investigated the dynamics of the coherency between the parties' PR messages and TV coverage of the parties. Significant correlations between the range order of issues in the PR material and that of the TV coverage were only found for certain calendar weeks. In some cases, the television media even noticed events launched by PR – for example, the celebration of the start of the respective election campaign, the offer of a political coalition between the two parties or the chancellor's PR during and about the flood disaster in Germany then. Finally, the results show a complex and interesting interaction between unpredictable events (in particular the flood disaster), PR activities (in particular pseudo-events launched by PR) and the media coverage. Depending on the different phases of the whole process of the national election campaign (start, mid-phase, end), this interaction either led to the success of the respective political PR or its failure.

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[17]   On this point see also the explicit commentary in Kepplinger and Maurer (2004, p. 115)
[18]   These have been at the moment the described research was undertaken SPD (Social Democratic Party Germany) and its opposition, the CDU/CSU (Conservative Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union).

4   Conclusion

It remains difficult to analyse the transfer of information from PR to press and thus to gather clear empirical evidence for the success and failure of political PR and its influence on journalism respectively. The main problem is the lack in both PR research and practice of a clear concept on how to *quantify* PR success and/or influence. For example, the frame study of Fröhlich and Rüdiger (2004, 2006) on the debate on immigration policy has shown that press releases were not a significant source of *direct* quotes during the debate. The gainfully applied framing approach measured the *level* of effectiveness and/or influence of PR actions in more detail and beyond the search for *directly quoted* PR material. It showed that journalists alter the *focuses* of some frames or add their own focuses and that the amount of these alterations seems to be connected to specific circumstances related to the respective political debate and other interesting factors. Thus, a content-based evaluation of political PR cannot be reduced to an analysis of themes or issues alone. Instead, the aim of advanced research should be to examine (1) the *complex perspectives, interpretations* and *contexts* of issues in the PR source material and in media coverage. Fröhlich and Rüdiger (2004, 2006) showed that the framing concept is an ideal method for this task. The study of Fröhlich and Scheufele (2004) showed that it should investigate in more detail (2) the *impact of particular events* (political scandals, war, disaster, opinion polls etc.) on the interaction between political PR and media coverage at that time. The same study also showed, that advanced research in this field should finally considers (3) a process dimension which consequently leads to quantitative *longitudinal input-output* content analyses.

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Public Relations and Public Diplomacy: Some Conceptual Explorations

Benno Signitzer

The purpose of this chapter is to contribute to a conceptual analysis of public diplomacy from a public relations perspective. Concepts of and approaches to public relations will be explored as to their applicability to public diplomacy.[1] The article begins by presenting conceptual systems of public diplomacy; it then goes on discussing issues of terminology and exploring aspects of publics and approaches in a public relations and public diplomacy context. The term "public diplomacy" is employed as a point of departure; we shall, in the course of this chapter, explore the usefulness of other, more public relations-related language; however, we are not proposing a new term at this point in time. In some parts of this chapter, we will experiment with ideas, concepts, and examples; perhaps some of our students will find some of them worth testing in empirical settings.

1   Conceptual Systems of Public Diplomacy

While traditional diplomacy refers to relationships at the level government-to-government (and diplomat-to-diplomat), the focus of public diplomacy has shifted to the level government-to-people (of another country) and, in an extension, to the level of people (of one country) to people (of another country) (Manheim, 1990; Henrikson, 2006).[2]

The term *public diplomacy* covers a wide array of processes and activities which encompass a continuum from, by way of an example, the interview given by the Austrian Prime Minister to a Canadian television journalist (comprising, inter alia, the Austrian position on a contested issue) in the wake of a state visit to Canada all the way to academic exchanges between Austrian and Japanese guest professors laid down in a Cultural Agreement signed by the Education Ministers of both countries and ratified by the respective parliaments. In the former case, the Austrian Prime Minister is speaking, by way of the media, to the Canadian people (level: government-people), in the latter the two professors are performing the activities of public diplomacy actually themselves and the two governments' role is confined to that of enablers and facilitators (level: people-people).

The above examples reflect – in terms of ideal types – the end points of a continuum illustrating two central functions of public diplomacy: persuasion on the one hand (the

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[1]   While in our earlier work the focus was on exploring common conceptual ground between public relations and public diplomacy (Signitzer & Coombs, 1992; Signitzer, 1998; Signitzer & Wamser, 2006), the focus here is on an attempt to test the applicability of public relations thinking to public diplomacy; L'Etang (2006), in her critical article „Public relations *as* (emphasis added) diplomacy", appears to take the opposite direction when stating that (her) „review ... attempts to draw out possible implications for public relations theory from the more developed international relations model" (p. 373).

[2]   See Henrikson (2006) for a detailed discussion of the relationship between traditional and public diplomacy.

Prime Minister's television interview), and mutual understanding on the other (the academic exchange). Two practitioners' definitions of public diplomacy may, in a rough way, provide a first outline of these two approaches:

a. "Public diplomacy (is) a government's process of communicating with foreign publics in an attempt to bring about understanding for its nation's ideas and ideals, its institutions and cultures, as well as its national goals and current policies" (Tuch, 1990, p. 3);

b. "[the goal of public diplomacy is] ... to influence the behaviour of a foreign government by influencing the attitudes of its citizens" (Malone, 1988, p. 3).

Using language coined by Deibel & Roberts (1976) and Malone (1988), these functions could also be regarded as the two basic dimensions of public diplomacy: political information (persuasion) and cultural communication (mutual understanding). *Political information* aims at fairly short-term explanations and defences of specific policies and behaviours of one's own government. *Cultural communication's* focus is, in contrast, on the long-term presentation of one's own society *in toto*. Deibel & Roberts (1976) referred to a dichotomy introduced by James (1955), when they distinguished between a *tough-minded* school of public diplomacy on the one hand (political information; using *fast media* such as newspapers, news magazines, radio, television, internet etc), and a *tender-minded* school on the other (cultural communication; using *slow media* such as films, language instruction, academic and artistic exchanges, exhibitions etc) (Frankel, 1965).

Again, political information and cultural communication are to be seen on a continuum with a certain measure of oscillation being the rule rather than the exception. Such oscillations may, one the one hand, reflect shifts in governments' *broader* political philosophy (say, from "conservative" to "liberal" or vice-versa) or else reflect *specific* changes in the relational structures between governments and (some of) their foreign publics. The very end points of the continuum remain somewhat undefined; we may, however, accentuate them by radicalizing them. Thus, along with Malone (1988), we may conceptualise political information as *political advocacy*; and the aim of cultural communication would move beyond the creation of mutual understanding between two societies to include the sensibilisation of one's own society as to how it is seen by the other society – an idea well established in the communication science approach of co-orientation (McLeod & Chaffee, 1973; Kim, 1986). In addition, even beyond co-orientation, a major task of cultural communication in the future may be to enter into a dialogue with the own society over the opportunities and the risks of the integration into the globalised world system. In a curious way, the old truism "public relations begins at home" may find its equivalent in public diplomacy "...has to begin at home" – a far cry from the situation in some countries where public diplomacy activities directed at the own population were (and are) even outlawed (for example, the Smith-Mundt Act of 1948 still prevents the distribution within the United States of official American information which was intended for foreign audiences).

As to the *organisation* of the public diplomacy function, political information is usually located in a political section of the foreign ministry, that is, close to the top policy-making apparatus, or with the political secretary of an embassy; cultural communication, in contrast, is somewhat shielded from day-to-day foreign policy pressures and usually entrusted to a cultural section of the foreign ministry or an embassy (or else to an international section of an education or culture ministry), a cultural institute abroad, or some type of semi-autonomous body such as the British Council or the German Goethe Institute. While

the acting persons in political information would usually be civil servants of one kind or another (a classic example would be the press attaché), the people doing cultural communication would, to some extent, also be civil servants (with less direct reporting lines), but in many cases the very artists, scientists and professionals involved would actually be the "cultural communicators."

A certain measure of conflict over content and process between political information and cultural communication appears to be method in the system. This holds particularly true when such societal values as professional autonomy, artistic freedom and journalistic independence come into play. Repeatedly, poetry readings in embassies and cultural institutes by artists critical of their own country have caused controversy; and international shortwave broadcasts deemed too liberal by foreign policy professionals have lead to protracted discussions. From a larger perspective, such conflicts may be regarded not only as unavoidable but also as useful mechanisms of system adaptation.

While the political information side of public diplomacy has not been further studied and conceptualized – except for the study of press attachés (e.g. Fankhauser, 1985; Fischer, 1985; de Jong, 1977) –, the cultural communication dimension has received attention in the work of British author and cultural diplomat Mitchell (1986). Here, cultural communication has been further differentiated into cultural diplomacy and cultural relations. *Cultural diplomacy* has, according to Mitchell (1986; see also Signitzer & Coombs, 1992) two levels of meaning. One refers to the negotiation of formal cultural agreements, the other applies to the "execution of these agreements and the conduct of cultural relations flowing from them" (Mitchell, 1986, p. 4). This may be seen "either as the extended responsibility of governments or as something delegated by governments to agencies and cultural institutions" (Mitchell, 1986, p. 4). The goal of cultural diplomacy is to produce positive attitudes towards one's own country with the hope that this may be beneficial to over-all diplomatic goal achievement. *Cultural relations'* aim, in contrast, is to move from unilateral to bilateral or multilateral advantages. Alternatively, as Mitchell (1986, p. 5) put it:

> At their most effective, their purpose is to achieve understanding and cooperation between national societies for their mutual benefit. Cultural relations proceed ideally by the accretion of open professional exchanges rather than by selective self-projection. They purvey an honest picture of each country rather than a beautified one. They do not conceal but neither need to make a show of national problems.

L'Etang (2006, pp. 378-379), in contrast, has expressed scepticism about the reality of public diplomacy's goal dimension of "mutual understanding" and general criticism of the concept of "symmetry" in public relations.

On the basis of an empirical overview of the reality of several countries' activities in the cultural communication field (namely, the United States, Italy, United Kingdom, and France), German author Peisert (1978; see also Frauscher, 2001) arrived at a four-fold typology of respective goal structures of what he termed "foreign cultural policies": 1) exchange and cooperation; 2) one-way transmission of own culture abroad; 3) information; 4) self-portrayal. Although Peisert (1978) himself has not done so, models 1 and 3 could be attributed to the cultural relations dimension of cultural communication, models 2 and 4, in contrast, to cultural diplomacy. Signitzer & Coombs (1992, pp. 143-144) and Signitzer & Wamser (2006, pp. 451-452) will be used as a guide to give a brief presentation of the four models. In Peisert's first model, *exchange and cooperation*, both sides have equal rights.

The partners team up in joint efforts to contribute to the solution of cultural, social, and scientific problems. As far as organisation is concerned, there may be a central but autonomous institution (e.g. an academy of science) whose task it is to pass on information to the professional and/or academic bodies involved who actually carry out such activities as visiting scholars programs, joint research projects and the like. The ultimate – and perhaps lofty – goal is to substitute national for international loyalties. Peisert's second model is *one-way transmission of own culture abroad*. Its basic structure is one of imbalance. There is a central organisational unit, which is close to the foreign policy apparatus and whose task it is to make sure that the gist of the projects is in line with the values and strategies of general diplomacy. A typical example of this approach is a network of language schools abroad and systematic language policy is providing the guiding principles of the activities. His third model Peisert calls simply *information*. The goal is to bring about among foreign publics positive attitudes and acceptance for one's own country. There is a need to carefully study these publics in terms of feed forward – a task usually undertaken by cultural institutes abroad.[3] In Peistert's fourth model, the *self-portrayal* approach, the aim is the portraying abroad of a very specific picture of one's own country. The activities are centrally planned and coordinated by an organisation close to foreign policy. An example for this approach would be high-profile cultural institutes imbued with a strong national flavour.

The acting country	is INTERESTED in the culture and cultural issues of the other country	is DISINTERESTED in the culture and cultural issues of the other country
Aims at CULTURAL CHANGES in the other country	**EXCHANGES AND COOPERATION**	**ONE-WAY TRANSMISSION OF OWN CULTURE ABROAD**
Accepts the CULTURAL STATUS QUO in the other country	**INFORMATION**	**SELF-PORTRAYAL**

Figure 1: Goal structures of cultural communication (Peisert, 1978)

2   A Question of Terminology

No doubt, several, not only pragmatic, arguments speak in favour of the continued use of the term "public diplomacy." One of its pluses is its fairly broad acceptance both in the scholarly and professional realms. The U.S. Department of State has an "Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs"; the German Foreign Ministry uses in the official homepage description of its Division K ("Communication, Public Relations, Media") the English term "public diplomacy" just as this term has become increasingly common as a loan-word in German professional language in general.[4] Asked in a media interview, what his "main task" was, the newly appointed Austrian ambassador to Germany simply responded: "public diplomacy" – again using the English term (Prosl, 2004). Another plus is

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[3]   This model could also be called „image advertising" to better take account of the persuasive intent.
[4]   As of now, I am not aware of any systematic study on the use of the English-language term „public diplomacy" as a loan-word in additional languages.

the relative clarity – via the conceptual component "diplomacy" – as to public diplomacy's place within the foreign policy system at the level of the *implementation* of foreign policy (the other levels would be foreign policy as "process of action" and foreign policy as "output of decisions"). Still another plus is the fact that the discussions on the changes in overall diplomacy can be quite easily related to public diplomacy (example: changes in the role of the press attaché in the age of CNN; Gilboa, 2005). Also, the question "who acts?" – frequently asked in a politics/policy setting – appears to be amenable to at least preliminary answers.

On the other hand, one of the above pluses of the term, namely public diplomacy's connectedness with the foreign policy system, carries in it also a limitation on the very (communicative) *activities* of public diplomacy at the expense of a focus on the environment in which they take place. With such an additional focus in mind, public diplomacy's place would be gradually moved to the "international system" and the discipline of "international relations." This environment is composed, *inter alia*, of both the traditional publics of public diplomacy (segments of the population of other countries) and new publics such as international governmental and non-governmental organisations, civil society formations, and more or less organized systems of ideas and values (e.g. climate change, women's rights).

With a view to encompass both the foreign policy and the international relations dimensions of public diplomacy, we posit at this point that the – not so elegant – term of *international public relations by governments and nation states* may be worth considering and exploring as to its usefulness. Obviously, this will carry with it the flavour of an exercise of "imperialism", of imposing a strange and odd and perhaps quite unwelcome concept on two disciplines which, so far, have not really shared a common scientific and professional culture – except perhaps for the occasional employment of public relations agencies by governments to perform certain image campaigns abroad in times of crisis and/or discontent (and, to be frank, which have provided "PR watches" with meat for their investigative reporting) (Kunczik, 1990). Again, for the purpose of this chapter in the context of this Festschrift, the emphasis is on "exploring" this term with a view to bring to the fore useful insights into public diplomacy.

The concept *international public relations by governments and nations* contains the *international* dimension in terms of both the trans-border aspect (that is, communication flows between two or more countries) and the global aspect (that is the increasing interconnectedness of the international system and its levels). The *state* dimension of the concept alludes to the issue of who are the actors in public diplomacy on a continuum of closeness or distance to the governmental systems with the "(nation) state" here being regarded as the link between government and society.

The *international* dimension may help us better come to grips with the fact that public diplomacy's primary *publics* are still population segments of another country, but, increasingly, they tend to become segments of a world population. The *government/state* dimension may help us better understand the fact that public diplomacy's primary *actors* are still related to a government (albeit, at times, quite loosely so, as in parts of cultural communication), but there is an increasing shift to both non-governmental and non-nation-state actors – perhaps again on some sort of a continuum with such illustrative items as (a) Greenpeace communicating with national and/or global publics and even, at times, with national governments; (b) national sub-units such as California or Bavaria engaging in, what has

been termed, "regional foreign policy" (including certain mainstream public diplomacy activities but also novel aspects such as "place branding"; Olins, 1999;); (c) supranational organisations such as the European Union involved in information and communication activities outside of Europe, but also in accession and member countries (Gouveia & Plumridge, 2005).

The dimension of *relations* being introduced to public diplomacy by way of a public relations view of it, adds the dynamic element of an ever-changing state of the relations between the respective actors and their publics. In mainstream public relations, too, attempts to highlight the relations dimension of public relations has gained momentum over the past decade (for a summary of this view, see Ledingham, 2006).

Finally, additional interdisciplinary dimensions of public diplomacy may be furthered by a public relations approach to it. An attempt at conceptualising a broader system was made by Szondi (2006) when introducing "international public relations for countries" as umbrella term with the following specialisations: destination branding, country (region) branding, cultural relations (cultural diplomacy), public diplomacy, and perception management (propaganda). It is easy to picture an even larger umbrella by introducing the term "international public relations" as encompassing planned trans-border communications of all kinds of organisations – profit, non-profit, and governmental. The promise of this, of course, is conceptual enrichment by way of interdisciplinary discourse and cooperation but also, perhaps, at long last, the emergence of first signs of a common intellectual and professional culture. As a case in point for this emerging development may serve the recent establishment of an "Association for Place Branding & Public Diplomacy" in Berlin.[5]

3   Publics and National Images

Mainstream public relations, over the years, has developed fairly seasoned analytical tools for coping with situations of communicative competition and complementarity – not only with competitors and partners acting at the same level (e.g. companies vying for the same clients or as coalition partners in a chamber of commerce) but also with more diffused publics at the level of public opinion (e.g. segments of the consumer protection movement or local politicians). Employing public relations-centred notions of publics, public diplomacy would, for example, view Amnesty International (AI) as just another public which needs to be analysed along such categories as (a) kind of linkage with (our) (nation) state; (b) AI as opportunity or threat in a given situation; (c) level of awareness and mobilisation (see, *inter alia*, the situative theory of publics by Grunig, 1997).

Still in the realm of publics and (segmentation of) audiences, public diplomacy may find public relations' very "political" and power-orientated way of viewing publics worth considering. Publics, in this approach, are not defined by their traits (as, e.g., in marketing) but by the kind of relationship between them and the organisation.[6]

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[5]   The mission statement of the Association for Place Branding & Public Diplomacy reads in part as follows: „Our mission is to establish and shape place branding and public diplomacy as a distinctive discipline with own progressive methods. The association aims to become the central network, meeting and presentation platform that unifies thought leading academics and professionals...".

[6]   In this vein, Grunig & Hunt (1984, pp. 143-144) quote philosopher Dewey who defined a public as "a group of people who (1) face a similar problem, (2) recognize that the problem exists, and (3) organize to do something about the problem" (see also Grunig, 1997); the definition of „stakeholder" is similar: „a stakeholder

Applying this view of publics to the question of *national images* – still regarded as one of the hot issues in public diplomacy – we would, in a first analytical step, quite radically deny the existence of such a thing as a general image Austrians might have of France. Rather, we would take as a point of departure different types and levels of relations between France and Austria producing a great variety of different, even contradictory images that different groups of people in Austria might have of France. For this purpose, it is necessary to develop quite precise ideas what it really means when we are thinking about "another" country. Nightingale & Halloran (n.d.) (see also Signitzer, 1993; Bentele, 1995) propose three levels at which criteria for significant contexts and topics can be placed:

(1) the level of *relations between two countries* (current, historical, and future expectations); the idea of Hungary on the part of groups of Austrians may be influenced by the fact of a common history and differ, on the basis of this, from that of, say, Norway; the relative size and power as compared to the own country may make Austrians view the United States quite different from Chile; the image of a country will also be influenced by this country's relations with other countries; the idea groups of Austrians have formed of the United States may have been for some time influenced by the relationship between the U.S. and Vietnam (and today perhaps Iraq) and also by the relations between the U.S. and the then USSR;

(2) the level of the social *institutions* in which a person is involved in the broadest sense; take the example of an Austrian university professor with a private interest in nineteenth century impressionist painting: his image of France will be quite differently shaped from that of his colleague without such interests and working in a discipline where the majority of the international professional points of contacts are with British scholars; the first level of the general relations between two countries impacts on the second and vice-versa when an individual witnesses "his" institution in a direct relation with that of the other country; an Austrian interested in football may have to slightly adjust his image of France after a lost or won international match between the two teams; Austrian media coverage of France – which will most of the time consist of reporting on some sort of French institutions and their behaviours – will, therefore, show a tremendous variability in the impacts on the Austrians according to differing institution involvements;

(3) the third level is that of *personal relations and experiences* with the other country; obviously people develop their national images also in the context of touristic travel, student exchanges, relations with relatives, friends and colleagues abroad, migration movements and the like.

A public relations approach to public diplomacy is, in principle, akin to such linkage- and topic-related analyses as a basis for audience segmentation and the detection of publics. After having deconstructed the notion of a general national image we may now begin to reconstruct the national image – but it will not be one or a few images Austrians have of France but a very great number which French public diplomacy planning officials in Austria may want to group and regroup and group again and form publics around them according to over-all diplomatic strategy, resources, and priorities set. Even if, pragmatically, French public diplomacy for Austria had to conclude that the resources available (including the political will) allowed for only *one* over-all image dimension to be reinforced among Austrians as a whole (presumably a positive one) and only *one* to be corrected (a negative

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may be thought of as any individual or group who can affect or is affected by the actions, decisions, policies, practices, or goals of the organization" (Carroll & Buchholtz, 2006, p. 67); see also Karmasin (2005).

one) and perhaps another *one* to be freshly posititioned on the Austrians' agenda, the above analysis – perhaps only as a mental low-cost exercise – would not be in vain for it provides intellectual substance for planning, improvement, and also yardsticks for evaluation.

At least at the research and analysis levels of public relations (and public diplomacy), the detection of publics presupposes a great deal of listening and carries with it the promise of two-way communication and dialogue. At the implementation level of public relations (and public diplomacy), however, dialogue is only one of several options available and in many cases, simple information or even publicity will suffice. However, even when employing those less ambitious strategies and techniques, which, most of the time, are also the less costly, public relations and public diplomacy still need to know their publics very well in order to be able to choose the right (information/communication) strategy in the right settings.

4   Three Views of Public Relations – Different Views of Public Diplomacy?

Looking at public relations as a whole, we may distinguish between three approaches to public relations: organisational, societal, and marketing. Each of these approaches can be capsulised in a question for both research and practice. The organisational view of public relations is addressed by the following question: "What is the contribution of public relations to the achievement of organisational goals?". The question for the societal approach is: "What is the contribution of public relations to the functioning of modern societies such as Western-pluralistic societies, the transitional societies of Eastern Europe, or a developing country?". The marketing view of public relations is expressed by the following question: "What is the contribution of public relations to the achievement of marketing goals of organisations, particularly in terms of complementing such marketing communication instruments as advertising or sales promotion?". From a public relations perspective, we would think of the societal approach as the broadest, the marketing approach as a narrow one, and the organisational approach taking a position in the middle (Signitzer, 2007).

An attempt will be made to explore relationships between these three approaches to public relations and public diplomacy. A definition of public relations resting clearly in the *organisational* mode is the one by Long and Hazleton (1987): "Public relations is a communication function of management through which organizations adapt to, alter, or maintain their environment for the purpose of achieving organizational goals."

For analytical purposes and for the sake of developing an argument, let us for a moment pursue the paradoxical idea of treating a nation state as if it were a company – a metaphor whose inherent limitations are obvious at once. We would ask quite tough and probing questions for which the organisational approach allows. Is there a recognisable contribution by Austrian public diplomacy to the achievement of Austria's governmental and societal goals?[7] Are Austria's public diplomacy professionals aware of these goals and, if yes, have they operationalised them into workable units? Which of those goals can be achieved by means of communication alone and where can communication provide which input into problem-solving? Which problems (and opportunities) of Austria's diplomacy are

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[7]   More succinctly still, we may not only speak of the goals of Austria's government and society, but also of Austria's „corporate strategy" to which public diplomacy is called upon to make a contribution (Zerfaß, 2004).

communication problems (and opportunities) and which are other problems (and opportunities) such as product problems, distribution problems, and people problems (and opportunities) and which – often hidden – parts does communication have even in the "other" problems and opportunities. Only if we have a clear idea of the potential range of action of public diplomacy, that is what public diplomacy *can* do and *cannot* do, can we expect to measure its contribution to over-all diplomacy and foreign policy.[8] As already hinted at, with the organisational approach to public relations and public diplomacy the promise (or threat?) of hard-nosed evaluation keeps lurking around the corner. The organisational view of public relations, particularly in the mould of the above Long and Hazleton (1987) definition, also addresses questions of power, especially the power relationships between the organisation and its publics. How strong is Austria's public diplomacy acumen with its publics in terms of both its argumentative capital and the information and communication resources available? The results of such power analyses may or may not correspond with the results of a general assessment of Austria's strengths and weaknesses at the political, economic, military, cultural, and value-based levels.

While the organisational approach to public relations and public diplomacy appears somewhat mechanistic and self-centred, the *societal* approach, in contrast, seems to enormously widen the horizons of the debates leading to demanding and ambitious questions, such as the following: If we – metaphorically speaking – regard the sum-total of "all" public diplomacy activities performed worldwide – do we think of the net result of its contribution to the world system as "positive" or rather as "negative." Does public diplomacy as a whole contribute to more transparency, openness, stability, peace, and human rights or else does it contribute to more manipulation, suppression, warfare, and instability? Can smaller and weaker countries, through the professional and skilful use of public diplomacy, contribute to a relative increase of their power status, or is it so, that those already strong will, through the use public diplomacy, become ever stronger? Is there any evidence of a dynamic that "good" causes may benefit more from public diplomacy than "bad" ones? Even if there was more agreement on international value systems, it becomes apparent that there cannot be such a thing as easy and clear-cut answers to these questions. Still, at least some tentative answers are needed – not only for reasons of scientific curiosity but also for the more "political" reasons of professionalism and legitimacy (see discussion below). Public relations has been facing similar questions since it began its quest for professional recognition. Is the function only useful for the company or also for society? On impulse, this question would probably produce no more than derisive laughs. Already in the 1970's scholars (and professional associations, for that matter) have attempted to formulate a positive societal role for public relations by referring to (neo-pluralistic) democracy theories which state that organisations, simply by expressing their views and interests, make a positive contribution to the development of democracy that can only thrive and survive when "all" interests in society, with the help of public relations, are articulated and given a (fair) hearing in the courts of public opinion (Ronneberger, 1993; see also Barthenheier, 1982). [Even so, public relations continues to be in an uphill fight when arguing its public service dimension in the quest for professionalisation.] Transferring such attempts at formulating a positive role for

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[8]   Recently, American experts have voiced quite sober views as to the potential of U.S. public diplomacy (in the Middle Est and Muslim worlds) even when the reforms they propose were implemented: „Still, a reformed and enhanced public diplomacy should be accompanied by limited expectations about what it can realistically accomplish" (Wolf & Rosen, 2004, p. 23); see also Henrikson (2006).

public diplomacy in society and in the world system, we may argue that just as the United Nations system adds legitimacy to the world system by implementing the principle of the sovereign equality of states through mechanisms for, *inter alia*, equal voting on issues of concern to the countries of the world, the sum-total of public diplomacy activities does so by providing countless platforms for the articulation of national interests, including actors at the semi-state levels. Certainly, this idea is full of imperfections and clashes with the realities of marked power imbalances.

Still, picturing by way of an example, the very opposite, that is a country refusing to express its national interests by means of public diplomacy, would leave us quite uneasy and perplexed as well. Just for sake of argument, let us take an unlikely and grotesque example: the United Kingdom. Therefore, in our phantasy, the UK would, from one day to another, discontinue all its public diplomacy activities. Prime Minister Brown would still attend the EU summit in Lisbon, but give no press conference and also no informal talks with foreign journalists (just as the British government at all levels would do no more press relations of any kind addressing foreign audiences). The British Council offices would be closed worldwide – with not even an answering machine left. No more BBC External Service, no more BBC materials for language instruction. No more official student exchange programmes, and the universities would be put under some pressure by the government to grade down their visiting scholars' programmes. The foreign outposts of the chamber of commerce would continue their work of supporting British firms abroad, but the UK as an interesting place for foreign investment would no longer be advertised in glossy brochures. The individual hotels would still vie for foreign tourists, but the touristic destination UK as a whole would no longer be presented. The two-way aspects of public diplomacy would be dismantled as well: no more press attachés at the British embassy in Vienna and no more reports back to London about the coverage of the UK in the Austrian media. Also no more surveys of the Austrian cultural and scientific communities by the British Council or by a culture or science attaché. In addition, this would go on for months and years. We may carry on with this example, with other countries following the British lead and so on and so forth. In addition, we may say, using the German title of a 1970s bestseller by C. Northcote Parkinson and Nigel Rowe (1986), "Schweigen ist Schwäche" (roughly "Silence is weakness") and they are only hurting themselves. However, the assumption is that this very creeping and protracted silence would send shockwaves of *angst*, and terror, and unpredictability through the ranks of the many publics involved and beyond. We would also expect a massive erosion of social trust (Bentele & Seidenglanz, 2008; Ronneberger & Rühl, 1992). After months and years, the first public diplomacy message, and were it ever so blatantly propagandistic, would probably be welcomed with deep sighs of relief. The choice of the example was particularly grotesque with a view to making the point intended. However, then, with such countries as North Korea or former Communist Albania in mind – although the settings are largely different – we may detect the contours of a positively framed public diplomacy function at the societal and world system levels.

A *marketing* approach to public diplomacy would relate the function to certain segments of goals of nations and societies such as "modernisation" or "export orientation" and to the contribution of public diplomacy to the achievement of goals of such kind – at times within the context of broader marketing programmes by Ministries of Trade or Tourism or Science. The questions for research and practice are here appreciably more concrete and specific as they were in the organisational or societal approaches. Examples: What is the

contribution of public diplomacy to project the Austrian economy as modern, efficient, technology-based; and being able to produce a positive balance of trade? How did public diplomacy activities contribute to damage control in the context of several Austrian scandals such as the 1980s wine scandal or the Waldheim affair? How does public diplomacy monitor and support the astonishing amount of Austrian investment activities in Central and Eastern Europe, including the management of some hot issues such as, currently, the contested take-over of the Hungarian petrol company MOL by Austria's OMV? A specific perspective of the marketing approach to public diplomacy has been termed *place branding*, that is the application of insights from consumer goods marketing and brand management to public diplomacy (Olins, 1999).[9]

Another macro aspect of public relations theory, namely that of *professionalism* (not only regarding the people doing public relations but also the legitimacy of the function as a whole) may have some relevance for public diplomacy as well. Reference is made here to a view of the process of professionalisation that – in a two-phases-model – progresses from an economic function, that is the matching of knowledge systems with occupational systems, to an ideological function that is legitimisation of the acquired professional territory by the state (Larson, 1977). While organisational approaches to public relations appear to be useful for successfully completing the first phase, societal approaches are needed for the second phase. Adopted to public diplomacy and its quest for professionalisation – again with respect to the very professionals but, and most importantly so, also with respect to the legitimacy of the function, this would raise the question whether and to which extent public diplomacy, in the second phase, will manage to develop an argument that it is useful not only for the governments and states that employ it but also contributes to a peaceful development of the world system. The lines of reasoning developed along the above delineation of the societal approach to public relations and public diplomacy will, in principle, be applicable in the professionalism context as well.

5   Concluding Remarks

Looking back at this summary of some conceptual work around public diplomacy, one cannot help *not* denying the term a certain suggestive power. Perhaps, some of this impression is related to the fact that the English term is currently making friendly inroads into the German (and perhaps some other) languages at both scholarly and professional levels. The very alliteration may also help pave the way for relationship building between public diplomacy and public relations.

In a more serious and less formal vein, we may conclude tentatively that, in principle, public relations *can* contribute to a deeper understanding of public diplomacy and that there should be time and energy allotted to further probing into this concept's elasticity vis-à-vis some of the notions mentioned in this paper – from "international public relations for countries" all the way to "place branding." In the best of worlds, of course, conceptual debates would gradually be substituted by debates over content and cooperation. It augurs well that hegemonious struggles over umbrella terms do not appear to be imminent. In its teaching

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[9]   For a report on a Berlin conference on place branding and public diplomacy, August 2007, see Place branding and public diplomacy (n.d.).

and research, the public relations discipline may find public diplomacy a worthwhile field for making useful contributions – towards intellectual gain and professional development.

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Communication Management, Organizational Communication and Public Relations: Developments and Future Directions from a German Perspective

Stefan Wehmeier

> Whenever a new method solves a new problem and finds truths which help to create new angles, a new science emerges. (Weber, 1991/1904, p. 44)

Public relations still seems to be an immature academic field. It is not news to say that only in the USA, the scholarly field of public relations is a significant one, but over recent years public relations has claimed its place in European universities, too. Sometimes, however, it is known by other terms such as communication management or organizational communication. This chapter takes these different terms as a starting point to look at the disciplinary status as well as the neighbouring fields of public relations. By showing overlaps in theories, methodologies and epistemological questions, it points out not only differences but also similarities between different disciplines converging in the field of public relations. The main section then highlights the characteristics of public relations research, communication management, and organizational communication. At the end, it is argued that the focus should be on interdisciplinary approaches. Only through them can the complex communication world be adequately analyzed and described.

1   Introduction

In 1974, one year before the first scholarly US-American journal devoted to public relations (*Public Relations Review*) started, the German author Carl Hundhausen wrote an article entitled "Public relations as an independent academic discipline." In this article, Hundhausen sketches the contours of the public relations discipline in two ways: first by providing the reader with six criteria of public relations and secondly by marking the boundaries of the field in relation to its neighbouring disciplines.

Inspired by US-American literature, Hundhausen names six ontological criteria for public relations: 1. PR deals with partial or segmented publics. 2. It is about a communication process between sender and receiver, a relationship of people. 3. This relationship has something to do with public interest, and it is the goal of PR to achieve mutual adjustment. 4. The public interest or the broad interest of the public comes first. 5. Public relations should anticipate the future; PR should be long-term practice. 6. The public must be won over by the communicator, and winning means doing hard work.

In order to clarify not only the core of a discipline called public relations, but to see where its boundaries and its neighbourhood are located, Hundhausen (1974) sees six disciplines that are related to public relations (see Figure 1). These disciplines provide the public relations practitioner and the public relations scholar with special and useful knowledge.

Psychology provides public relations with knowledge about the conscious experience and knowledge about the individual perception process. *Sociology* gathers knowledge about interpersonal relations and it gathers quantitative data through empirical social research. Both might provide a helpful basis for decision making in public relations processes. *Social psychology* is about the social behaviour of human beings; it provides the public relations discipline with insights into social and cultural learning processes. While these three disciplines offer basic knowledge about individual and social processes, the other three disciplines are related more to techniques of communication and persuasion. *Mass communication* research can be used to get knowledge about mass communication models and the use of mass media to reach different publics; *"Publizistik"* offers the art and the public responsibility of persuasion in the public sphere, and *advertising/propaganda* are fields that can inspire public relations communication through their knowledge about techniques of persuasion.

Figure 1: The Hundhausen wheel of neighbouring disciplines (own illustration on the basis of Hundhausen's ideas)

More than three decades after the publication of Hundhausen's article, things have changed. Not because the ontological dimensions presented by Hundhausen are irrelevant today nor that the neighbouring disciplines have completely changed but because two dimensions that have become eminently important are missing: firstly the management perspective and secondly the organizational perspective. Both aspects have deep impact on how communication is framed and for what purpose research in this field is done. Today, the terms and academic fields of public relations, communication management, and organizational communication coexist, differ, and overlap. In this essay these concepts are seen as frames that guide not only practitioners regarding what they do but also researchers in what they

analyze and how they do it (section 3). However, the first step is to outline the current disciplinary status of public relations from a German perspective.

2 Public Relations: Disciplinary Status

Hundhausen (1974) was right in one way. Public relations in the US, he said, is a fully accepted and integrated discipline at the university. However, in Germany we are far away from that point. Even today the disciplinary status of public relations in Germany can be questioned (Seifert, 2007). At the university level, only six full and associate professorships exist in public relations (the denomination varies: public relations, strategic communication, communication management, corporate communication). Two of these professorships were founded in the first half of the nineties; the others were founded after the year 2000. At the level of polytechnics, there are more professorships in public relations but the high teaching load often prevents these colleagues from being active researchers. In Germany and the German speaking countries there is no academic journal devoted to public relations. The body of knowledge consists of edited books, dissertations (that have to be published in order to get the academic grade "Dr.") and other monographs. In the early nineties, a special section of the German Communication Association, named *Public Relations and Organizational Communication,* was founded. Today it has approximately 100 members, but for many of them public relations is only one field of communication research among others. To sum up: In contrast to the US where public relations is a fully integrated academic discipline, the situation in Germany is still different. However, the number of professorships and the existence of specialized academic journals are only one way to judge whether an academic field is a discipline or not. I would, therefore, concur with one of the leading German scholars in the field of philosophy and history of science, Jürgen Mittelstraß who denies that the mere existence of an academic chair is a sufficient condition to term an academic domain a "discipline" (1998). More important than professorships are factual dimensions.

The modern academic disciplines (lat. disciplina, instruction, education, academic field) emerged in the 18th and 19th centuries (Stichweh, 1984). Originally seen as systematic fields of knowledge that can be taught at universities, disciplines developed to become a social system of specialized areas of research and communication (Stichweh, 1994). The emergence of disciplines is seen as partly driven by evolutionary differentiation and partly pushed by political decisions (van den Daele & Weingart, 1975). When trying to locate disciplines it is necessary to name criteria, which a discipline should contain. Krüger (1987) lists four ways of demarcating disciplines: the research subject, the methodology, the epistemological interest, and theories.

(1) The research subject: At first glance, this dimension looks as if it is easy to determine. It can be said that stars, for example, are the research subject of astronomy, a specialty in the discipline of physics. However, there are many research subjects that are researched by more than one discipline. Communication, for instance, is researched in at least communication science, philology, sociology, and psychology.

(2) The method/methodology: Disciplines follow different ways of discovering truths. Physics and chemistry follow the classic deductive and nomologic method while in the humanities hermeneutics prevail. Sociologists often follow empirical analysis while

historians interpret the sources they find. However, these differences are very rough and there are many disciplines that follow more than one methodology. Interpretive sociology and quantitative empirical analysis, for instance, are both part of sociology.

(3) The epistemological interest: The epistemological and scientific interest is only useful as a criterion if one looks at a field at a special period. Societal, technological and scientific changes often change the epistemological interest.

(4) Theories: As with the research subject, it is difficult to demarcate disciplines in line with theories because many theories are based on interdisciplinary approaches. Of course, there are disciplinary theories such as neoclassic economics or the wave theory of light in physics. In the field of social science, in particular there are many hybrids, for example, the theory of communicative action (Habermas, 1981) that uses speech act theory, philosophical, political and historical models and is framed in a critical, normative way. Furthermore, there are metatheories like systems theory, which is a base theorem for lots of disciplines.

Following Käbisch (2001), a combination of these criteria can be useful to make statements about the disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity of a research field. In this view, disciplines contain theories, methodologies, research subjects, and epistemological and/or scientific interests. By combining these criteria, it is easy to see that disciplines may have a single core yet overlap. Research in public relations in Germany is mainly done in three disciplines: communication studies, business, and sociology, even though these disciplines may overlap and differ at the same time. Most of the approaches coming from communication studies see public relations as strategic external and internal communication ("Öffentlichkeitsarbeit"). The sociological approach is not framed by strategic attempts to control. It is more focused on the communication between managers and subordinates (organizational communication). The business approach focuses mostly on the financial value that public relations adds; questions of efficiency and effectiveness are at the core of the PR-related business mainstream. Marketing as well as management approaches to public relations are located in this area.

Apart from different approaches to public relations or organizational communication, these disciplines offer different research goals, different questions, interpretations, and methodologies. While sociology and communication studies mostly have an empirical and analytical approach to their fields of study, the business domain is more interested in normative models of how processes in business could work and how these models could be implemented in praxis. The objective of this normative-praxeological methodology is to advise practitioners by what means the best realization of goals can be achieved (Raffeé, 1995).

The following figure tries to show the areas of overlap and difference in the three disciplines. Here *online communication* is chosen as an example of an overlapping research subject. Online communication can be analyzed in all the disciplines mentioned. In order to gather data for academic reasoning all disciplines can work with the survey method. The scientific interests, however, differ: Communication studies are interested in the analysis of communication processes in terms of communication flow and participation of sender and receiver. For sociologists, communication processes are a vehicle only. They, for example, like to analyze the impact of online communication on the process of decision making in organizations. Business scholars, in turn, are interested in establishing models for the improvement of the communication flow in order to make the organization more efficient and effective. These scientific interests correlate with the main methodologies in the disciplines

mentioned above. Yet despite these methodological differences, there are also links. The business domain, for example, has links to communication studies as well as to sociology: The research subject can be analyzed by using the excellence theory of public relations (Grunig in this volume) which is founded as much in communication as in business (management studies). Moreover, it is possible to investigate the impact of online communication on leadership in organizations. Here it can be examined from a normative business perspective as well as from an empirical sociological perspective to gather data about its impact on the relationship of management and subordinates.
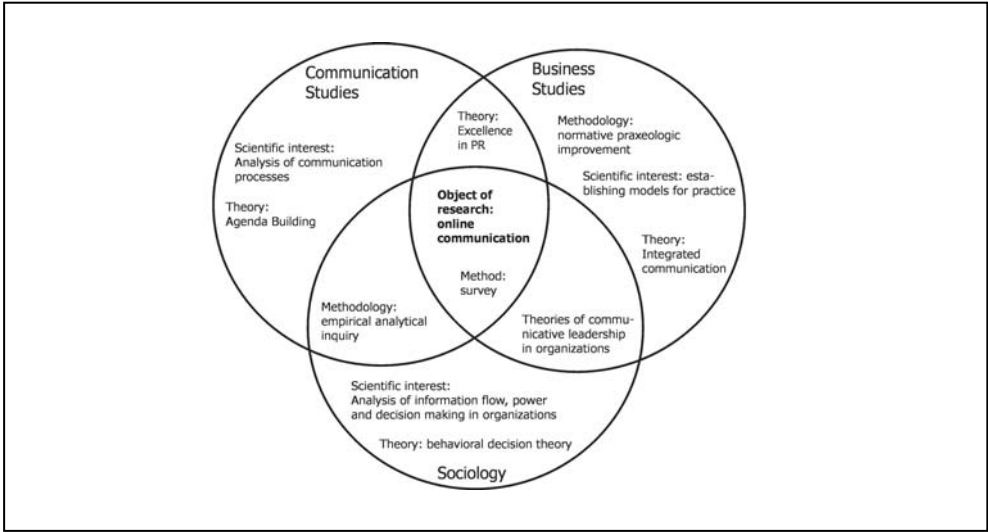
Figure 2: Overlaps and differences of disciplinary approaches to online communication

To sum up: From an international perspective public relations today is not a discipline in the strong sense of the word. With the exception of the US and some other countries like Great Britain, it lacks professorships, specialized courses at the university level and genuine academic journals. No single discipline is able to claim public relations as its own genuine area of research. The figure above shows that at least three disciplines have stakes in this field; but more disciplines, like, for instance, psychology are relevant for understanding, analyzing and modelling a holistic perspective of public relations. Public relations is researched from many perspectives with different methodologies and different scientific interests. Often based in the discipline of communication, the field has no social or cognitive autonomy. It is not a specialty in the way Whitley (1974) defined once, and it rarely looks like an interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary field in which scholars coming from different disciplines try to find a special methodology to solve problems (Balsiger, 1999; Käbisch, 2001). Today, it still appears more like a multidisciplinary field where approaches of different disciplines are used in an unrelated manner to analyze public relations phenomena. As Schmid and Lyczek put it: "Business administration oriented research in the field of corporate identity, corporate marketing, stakeholder management and the communication

studies inspired research in public relations ignore each other to their own drawback"
(Schmid & Lyczek, 2005, p. 4).

3   Competing Terms

Having the diversity of disciplinary approaches to public relations in mind, we now can
look deeper into terms and how the terms frame a field of research and teaching. From a
German perspective, the terms public relations, communication management, and organiza-
tional communication are sometimes used synonymously and sometimes refer to different
meanings. Clarifying remarks seem to be necessary.

3.1 Public Relations

The first documented use of the term *public relations* was in 1937 when Carl Hundhausen
brought it to Germany from the USA. However, due to the political and cultural circum-
stances in the Third Reich English terms did not have good opportunities to become
broadly and officially accepted. After 1945, Albert Oeckl rediscovered the term "Öf-
fentlichkeitsarbeit" as a German synonym for public relations. Both terms, "Öffentlichkeit-
sarbeit" and public relations, are widely used in practice as well as in academia today.
      Public relations is probably the most ambiguous of the three terms. It can be inter-
preted from a meso and from a macro level. Most approaches analyze public relations from
a meso perspective as an organizational management function or organizational subsystem.
Leading definitions in the field such as "public relations is the management of communica-
tion between an organization and its publics" (Grunig & Hunt, 1984, p. 6) or "Public rela-
tions is the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial rela-
tionships between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depends"
(Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2006, p. 5) emphasize the organizational function. These or
similar definitions are starting points for most of the research in the field of public relations.
This research tries to find out how public relations practice works, what goals practitioners
have and how they accomplish these. It asks what role practitioners have in an organization,
how public relations deals with cultural, international/global and financial issues and how it
can be improved (see, for example, Andres, 2004; Janik, 2002). In order to gain knowledge
about these fields of interest most of these books question public relations practitioners and
thereby get what they have asked for – a communicator-biased picture of what communica-
tors think they do. At its core, this approach is a positivist empirical analysis of how the
(PR-) world is seen by those who inhabit it. This is of high value, as the academic field of
public relations has to gather empirical data on communication processes and organiza-
tional functions. However, this position can only be a starting point for going further. It
would be of great interest to know more about the ways public relations communication is
seen from the viewpoint of publics. Further knowledge is desirable about what publics do
with information sent through public relations channels, how they interpret this information
and how they make sense of it. Another area of great interest is the following question:
How are public relations efforts used internally to make sense of the world outside? Are
new instruments like balanced scorecards used not only for purposes of improvements in

effectiveness and efficiency but also or predominantly used for internal legitimization to make plausible the claim that public relations is able to add measurable value for the entire organization? (Wehmeier, 2006) However, these questions can only arise if researchers do not solely start their work by using the definitions of public relations mentioned above. Critical (sociological) perspectives and theories are missing (L'Etang & Pieczka, 2006), and theory building that goes beyond specific middle range theories is rare (for one exception see Szyszka, 2004).

Moving to the macro level perspective we find questions and theories coming from sociology, although these do not tend towards the critical. From the macro level, public relations is seen as a functional system of society (Ronneberger, 1977; Ronneberger & Rühl, 1992). While this approach promises to answer the question of what function public relations has in society, the answer itself is unsatisfactory. Formally, this analysis follows the non-normative approach of Luhmann (1984; 1998) as it tries to model public relations as a functional system of society, but the function itself is normatively biased. The authors see the prior societal intention of public relations in organizing themes that are able to serve and strengthen the public interest, the common welfare, and the social trust in the public sphere. They do not deny that organizations have partial interest but they argue that the partial interests of all organizational public relations will generate welfare on the level of society (Ronneberger, 1977). Despite the fact that it is almost impossible to find empirical evidence for this claim, terms like social trust, public interest and common welfare would need explication and definition. However, the main question Ronneberger and Rühl try to answer is still worth investigation, as it aims to discover the role public relations plays in society (Heath, 2006).

It is not only the theoretical implications of public relations that are somewhat problematic. The public use of the term also diminishes its academic potential. Its use in the mass media is often negatively connotated (Park, 2001; Cline, 1982; Spicer, 1993). Terms like *PR gag*, *mere PR*, *PR battle* or *manipulated good news* can be found almost daily in the mass media. This connotation is – amongst others – a reason why the population does not have a lot of trust in public relations (at least in Germany) (Bentele & Seidenlanz, 2004). Furthermore, analysis of the mainstream marketing literature shows that public relations is diminished to one tool in the crowded box of marketing instruments. In this perspective, it is not related to a strategic or a management function.

3.2 Communication Management

The term *communication management* is displacing public relations today in many ways. New study courses in Europe are more often named in this way and no longer termed public relations (for example the programs in Amsterdam, Leipzig and Lund). The new academic journals in the field are entitled *Journal of Communication Management* and *International Journal of Strategic Communication* while the older ones have the name *Public Relations Review* and *Journal of Public Relations Research*. Is public relations outdated? The rise of the term communication management has many causes. Unlike public relations, there is no negative connotation attached to communication management. It is a neutral term that combines the words communication and management as well as it tries to put together parts of the philosophies and methodologies of the two fields (Zerfaß, 2004).

Communication Management carries no historical burden like public relations, which once was characterized as "hidden persuasion" (Packard, 1963). While communication means a transfer of information or a dialogue of sender and receiver within a process of information, selection and understanding (interpretation), management in a basic sense means to plan, to organize, to co-ordinate and to control in a strategic way (Kast & Rosenzweig, 1979; Kieser & Walgenbach, 2003). Communication management transports the idea and the philosophy of reducing complexity by planned and strategic communication, something that might count in a highly complex globalized world. It promises certainty in uncertain contexts and goes in line with a general business orientation at universities. In central Europe especially with its harsh changes in the university system due to the Bologna process (Walter, 2006), a management orientation in the social sciences in which communication is located is advantageous. The reorganization from the traditional "Magister" to a more job related B.A. and M.A.-system challenges the social sciences and the humanities – in this perspective communication management is a tool to legitimize disciplines in the eyes of their stakeholders (practitioners, politicians, students). Another reason for the rise of communication management might lie in the classic business administration definition of public relations as one (operational) part of marketing. Communication management is surely more than one of many parts of marketing communication

However, the definitions of public relations mentioned above (section 3.1) have led to this new term by characterizing PR as communication management. The term *communication management* narrows and broadens the field at the same time. Communication management is not bound to public relations, but to all managed communication of and in organizations. This concept can be expanded to all marketing activities like advertising and direct mailing, and it could be expanded to the ideological communication concepts of propaganda, too. Thus leading to agreement with Szyszka's opinion (2005) that communication management has the potential to absorb the term *integrated communication* as the normative concept of combining all communication functions of organizations in a strategic way. In this way communication management looks like a catch-all term. Nevertheless, as a strategic management function, communication management is entirely bound to a meso perspective of organizational functions or subsystems. It lacks the openness to larger societal questions that seemed to be naturally attached to the concept of public relations. Further it frames communication from a top-down perspective, as the title of a new book in the field *Corporate Communication: Communication Management from a CEO perspective* (Schmid & Lyczek, 2006) promises. While public relations has a boundary spanning function with the PR practitioner being inside and outside the organization, the top-down view of leading managers inside the organization might lack something that is crucial: the environment. Even if environmental scanning is part of a communication management, it cannot be externally and internally holistic. It sticks to a management view of communicative risks and opportunities.

3.3 Organizational Communication

From a German perspective, a discipline or a field of research termed *organizational communication* merely exists. Internationally, for instance on the level of the International Communication Association (ICA), a public relations division is accompanied by an

organizational communication division while the German Communication Association has only a combined division with practically 90% of the scholars doing research in public relations and communication management and only a handful of scholars analyzing the field of organizational communication. In the case of the ICA, the public relations division was a spin-off of the organizational communication division. In Germany, organizational communication has no tradition as a field of research. Yet the field has much to offer that can fill the gaps that public relations and communication management produce. From this perspective, organizational communication is the only logical link, which can make the research in communication of organizations of every kind more holistic.

While communication management and public relations are focused on the strategic aspect of communication done by specific departments and practitioners, organizational communication broadens and complements this by analyzing all communication processes in and of organizations. Taylor, Flanagin, Cheney, and Seibold state that "the area of organizational communication is vibrant and flourishing" (2000, p. 100). However, its boundaries can be drawn. Rooted in rhetoric, human relations and early models of organizational and managerial theory, organizational communication combines communication with sociology and management.

> [Organizational communication] is concerned with international organizational affairs like supervisory-subordinate relations, employee socialization, worker participation, and media and technology usage as well as inter-organizational networks and the roles of the organization in the larger society. (ICA, 2006, p. 13)

Here Rühl's description of a social science oriented organizational research that is biased by communication theory (2004) might at least partially suffice to characterize this field.

A broad definition of organizational communication as the research in communication *of* the organization, *inside* the organization and *about* the organization would offer a holistic approach. Public relations and communication management could be part of this approach as they are heavily related to communication *of* the organization. The term organizational communication has also the potential to cover all levels of social research: The micro level is represented by the communication inside the organization. The range spans from daily talk of employees about their experience at work, the communication between supervisors and subordinates to managed communication like internal newsletters or billboards. The meso level would be communication of the organization, public relations activities controlled by a communication management and the macro level would be communication about organizations. On this level, the organization is not only seen actively as in communication management. It is also seen to be dependent on environments. Organizations, so neo-institutionalists would say (Scott, 2001) seek to adjust to changing environments. In order to survive, the structures of the organizations have to fit with the structures outside the organization (structural isomorphism) (Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975; Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Walgenbach, 1999). Isomorphism is necessary and whenever the environment changes and creates new demands like corporate social responsibility, the organization has to internalize these demands.

However, there is more than mere adjustment to external environments. The main stream in neo-institutionalism underestimates the organizational power of enactment – the construction of social reality by organizational communication and action. The information flow into and out of an organization can be described as an intertwined process of sense-

making and sense-giving. The outcome of these processes is the interpretation of an inter-pretation: "Sensemaking and sensegiving processes are inextricably and reciprocally tied as sensemaking guides sensegiving and sensegiving guides sensemaking." (Sutcliffe, 2001, p. 220). To make this concept more concrete, Cheney and Christensen (2001) give an example of how environmental pressure and organizational activity interrelate and so enact or create a new environment that can be controlled by the organization – at least for a short time. They cite the example of the Danish firm Novo Nordisk that began early to set internal environmental standards without being heavily pressured by external publics:

> The medical corporation Novo Nordisk….has become well known for its proactive stance on the "green" issue. In the early 1990s, the corporation issued a 40-page report on this issue, including a detailed evaluation of its own contribution to pollution.…the step taken by Novo Nordisk was proactive and not a reaction to *specific* environmental demands.…[However,] the report did commit Novo Nordisk to a number of specific goals. With its "eco-productivity index"…the re-port prescribed quite specifically how pollution was to be reduced: as an ongoing increase in the eco-productivity index. This self-imposed prescription is not easy to fulfil and puts a heavy bur-den on all departments of the organization. Interestingly, the proactive introduction of this index allows Novo Nordisk to define for itself the measures necessary to reduce its pollution….Instead of responding reactively to environmental issues as they "pop up" in its surroundings, Novo Nordisk refines and shapes proactively the issues that it addresses: a strategy that allows it to operate in a more familiar universe defined, in large part, by its own actions. (Cheney & Chris-tensen, 2001, p. 256)

This example illustrates how environments are not only objectively given but also created and enacted by organizations. Novo Nordisk made the best out of the anticipated trend of accountability and sustainability. Before others did, it put itself under pressure, admittedly by using its own standards.

4   Future Directions

Of course, we cannot predict the future, but modern science has techniques to estimate future trends. A recently conducted international Delphi study (Wehmeier, 2007) looks at the future trends in the field of public relations. Thirty-two scholars and practitioners par-ticipated in the study. The majority of the participants are interested in more fundamental research, which means that they see the necessity for developing more middle range and general theories in the field of public relations. The most selected answer to the question "Where should PR research focus on in the future" is "on the interaction between organiza-tions and society." Asked to judge the future importance of academic disciplines for public relations, communication comes first, but sociology and not business is second. However, the business perspective leads when it comes to concrete academic concepts and theories: stakeholder theory, issues management, and strategic management are seen as the most important concepts/theories in the future. However, if one compares the estimated impor-tance of concepts and theories today with their estimated importance in the future, two of the three leading concepts that emerge are complexity theory and the power control per-spective. Obviously, both scholars and practitioners see the need for both a management perspective of communication, a sociological view of what managed communication does, and how it can be interpreted in a larger, societal context.

Observing the world of public relations, communication management, and organizational communication from a German perspective, the academic scholars throughout the field should go beyond the boundaries that limit and narrow the questions they have, the theories they build and the methodologies they use. After years of separation and specialization, lone academic men and women tapping around in the twilight of different fields cannot analyze the complexity of a globalized communication world. A complicated and complex world (of communication) cannot be appropriately described through simple theories and approaches in specialized fields (Vollmer, 1987). Interdisciplinary research might be the only way to understand complex communication processes. Probably inspired by this insight into the complexity of human societies, Robert Heath has marked the contours of a fully functioning society theory of public relations. This theory combines different perspectives like management and complexity, rhetoric, corporate responsibility, and organizational communication, embedded in a democratic and participative culture. This embeddedness in a democratic and participative culture is important: public relations, communication management, and organizational communication should not only be seen and analyzed as mere techniques to improve efficiency and effectiveness of organizations. This would be the perspective a co-driver in a car would have, advising the driving communication manager where the next short cut could be or the next detour might arise to achieve his goals. Instead, it should be analyzed from a helicopter pilot's perspective, looking at both the goals of organizations and the needs of those who have no advocate – the receivers who constitute an interpreting and sense-making audience (Jensen, 1991).

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Part III

European Perspectives in Communication Management

Reflection: Legitimising Late Modernity

Susanne Holmström

Observations of the co-evolution of society and organisation during the stages of modernity increase our insight into the premises of organisational legitimacy today, where continuous public relations processes have grown imperative to most organisations. The research programme of *a reflective paradigm* – based on a theoretical reconstruction of late modernity's empirical ideals as *reflection* – analyses the interrelation between society's constitution and organisational legitimisation. Since the principal conclusion is that ideals of organisational legitimacy are closely interrelated to a given society's specific coordination processes, then it follows that such ideals differ in various regions of the world. It is, however, possible to uncover generic patterns by relating legitimating notions to a society's constitution.

1   Introduction

From being relatively simple and a question of legal and unambiguous market relations mainly, the interrelations between organisation and society have grown decisively more complex and ambiguous during the latter half of the 20th century, increasingly activating and diffusing new legitimising structures such as public relations. However, most theories of organisational legitimisation take an historical perspective, rarely taking into account the constitution of society as a basic condition of organisational legitimacy and the fact that the interrelation between society and organisation changes over time, and furthermore that legitimating notions differ in various regions of the world today. Moreover, they mainly focus on the pragmatic and strategic aspects, which see legitimacy as an operational resource to be generated and managed strategically. In contrast, the research programme of "a reflective paradigm" (Holmström, 1997, 1998, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005b, 2007), upon which this chapter is based, stresses the cognitive processes which transcend any single organisation's purposive intentions. Although this approach acknowledges that intentional strategies may to some extent influence the institutionalisation of cognitive ideas, then moral evaluations, pragmatic assessments or strategic choices on their part are seen as embedded in cognitive notions. Consequently, focus then is on the social dynamics that constitute the fundamental premises for legitimacy by continuously forming and changing our conceptions of what is right, relevant and reasonable. Organisation is seen as a socially constructed institution, which evolves over time based on changing legitimating notions.

I shall demonstrate, *first*, how since pre-modernity expectations to organisational legitimacy have changed in co-evolution with society's basic ideas, constitution and regulation. *Secondly,* based on the thesis that society's turbulence strikes in organisations (Luhmann, 2000a, p. 412), that we may understand ideals of organisational legitimacy today as a result of modernisation having reached a stage where the problems created as side-effects to the blind reflexivity of solid modernity and full functional differentiation reach a critical mass. *Thirdly*, that we can parallel contemporary ideals of legitimacy with

the analytical concept of *reflection* – the specific worldview which facilitates an organisa-tion's self-insight in relation to the social context – as opposed to *reflexivity. Fourth*, that we may relate contemporary inherent conflicts of legitimacy experienced by globalising organisations to the different ways in which societies are constituted today.

The basic theoretical optic of the research programme of "a reflective paradigm" is Niklas Luhmann's theories due to their comprehensive analyses of the evolution of soci-ety's constitution since pre-modernity; to their intertwining of the dimensions traditionally denoted macro, meso and micro; and to their in-depth analysis of social dynamics.

2   Co-Evolution of Society and Organisation

In order to illustrate the co-evolution of society and organisation three closely interrelated dimensions are applied: the general perspective of *modernity*, the more specific dimension of society's *differentiation*, and finally the *political form of regulation* (see Figure 1).

The description of society's fundamental transformation since the 1600s from a pre-modern to a modern era focuses on how society's meaning formation shifts from an exter-nal reference in God to internal references in society itself (Luhmann, 1997, p. 678ff, 1998b). What in previous societies just happened over the course of time or by God's will, in modernity demands decision-making. To secure a connection between past and future, an explicit coupling is required in the form of decisions. The modern organisation evolves as a specific way of bounding and systematising social processes. Organisation establishes a social identity – stable expectations over time – which bridges the gap between past and future, and it is by means of organisations "and only there! that a society enables itself to act collectively and to make programmed decisions" (Baecker, 2000). As the integrity and rights of the individual human being come into focus, from being integrated in feudal es-tates and monasteries in pre-modernity and in guilds during absolutism, organisation in modernity becomes identified with the individual owner who is responsible to himself only. Organisational legitimacy is paralleled with the moral of the owner. During the course of evolution organisation is dehumanised and takes on its own life, independently of owners and employees who come and go. The legitimacy rests in taken-for-granted norms, profes-sionalized routines, institutionalised rules and conventional law.

The second aspect is the evolution of society's way of differentiating its meaning for-mation. With modernity, it shifts to a series of gradually separated societal spheres. Some prominent examples: with the emergence of politics, the state is separated from religion (Luhmann, 2000b). Similarly, education, science and medicine develop each their rationale in specific communicative systems (Luhmann, 1990b). The dynamics of material produc-tion and trade evolves based on economic relations (Luhmann, 1999). These functional systems are general and comprehensive; they communicate normatively different about the same themes; and they have different perceptions of legitimacy. During the former stratifi-catory differentiation organisation was characterised by a multifunctional identity, as for instance in feudal estates and monasteries where religion, politics, production, science, education and family were integrated in various ways. With the emergence of functional differentiation, specialised organisations emerge, monofunctionally oriented towards eco-nomically based production in business companies; politics in political parties and govern-ments; knowledge generation at secular universities etc. Even if all organisations today

refer to several functional rationales and all of them at least to law and economy in democratic countries, they predominantly identify themselves with reference to one of society's functional spheres. The fundamental legitimacy rests with functional expectations – e.g. that a business enterprise earns its profits, political parties have influence on collectively binding decisions, research institutions produce knowledge, mass media make information available, hospitals provide medical treatment, schools education and socialisation etc.

Approx->	>1700	1700<	1800s	1900s	2000
Modernity	Pre	Enlighten-ment	Classic	Full, solid, reflexive	Late, liquid, reflective
Differentia-tion	Segmentary, stratifica-tory	Functional start	Functional development	Functional stabilisation	Functional adjustment
Regulation	Theocracy	Absolutism	Constitu-tional state	Welfare state	Poly-contextualism
Organisation	Monaster-ies, feudal estates	Institution as part of a whole (guilds)	Organisation = individual owner (pri-vate sphere)	De-humanised, professional-ised	"Corporate citizen", poli-ticised (partly in public sphere)
Legitimacy		No auton-omy	Only respon-sible to himself	Law-abidingness and functional succes	Responsible to society at large

Figure 1: Meta-trends of the interrelation between society and organisation

The third aspect is the form of political regulation. With the transition from absolutism to the early constitutional state, a distinction is made between state and society, and between individual and society. Correspondingly, the function of the emerging public sphere (Habermas, 1989) is seen as a defence of the private sphere against the new state power. Organisational legitimacy focuses on the rights of the individual owner and private companies as part of the private sphere – not at the organisation's responsibility towards society. When social responsibility is explicitly practiced, it is as patronage of the arts, of science, education or social relief. Gradually, organisation is made independent as a dehumanised legal unit. As society grows increasingly complex and differentiated, the welfare state emerges and by means of intervening law takes on almost any regulatory challenge. At this stage, law abidance becomes a pivotal antecedent of organisational legitimacy.

3   Adjustments of Modernity

Where the first stage in focus represents a fundamental transformation of social and societal processes, then the second stage involves the still ongoing transformations since the latter half of the 20th century, which in sociology is denoted *full*, *radical*, *late*, *second or liquid*

modernisation. This period is not characterised by a revolution or an end to the ideas and ideals of modernity and its characteristic functional differentiation of society. Rather, modernity and full differentiation adjust in order to cope with their own radicalisation.

3.1   The Responsible Organisation

On the dimension of modernity, we see how basic norms and institutions over the centuries have gradually grown naturalised, anthropologised and taken-for-granted, and how they rigidify in reflexivity and autonomised dynamics. A critical mass of side-effects of modernisation calls into question the foundation of modern society and increasingly activates protests against rigidified authorities (Beck, Bonss, & Lau, 2003; Luhmann, 1993).

According to Luhmann, within the history of western culture, modernity is reaching its fulfilment to the extent that contingency becomes its basic feature ("Eigenwert") (1998a; cf. also Gumbrecht, 2001): "Something is contingent insofar as it is neither necessary nor impossible; it is what it is (or was or will be), though it could also be otherwise" (Luhmann, 1995, p. 106). When something – a norm, a decision, an observation – is seen from a second order observer's perspective, it is seen as contingent, i.e. as a social construction which could be different (Luhmann, 1998a, p. 47). Where legitimacy has so far rested mainly in tacit assumptions and taken-for-granted norms, it grows subject to continuous discursive processes. In the latter half of the 20th century, following the evolution from *full* to *late* modernity, we see a change from *conventional* to *post conventional* legitimacy (Antonsen & Jensen, 1992; Habermas, 1984); from *solid* to *liquid* modernity (Bauman, 2000); a *re-modernisation* (Latour, 2003). This chapter mainly applies Bauman's notions of solid and liquid modernity because they seem indicative also in a systems theoretical context. In the solid society of yesterday, control and socialisation guaranteed stability. With the recognition of contingency, norms and values grow liquid. Presumptions of universalism and procedures aiming at consensus are replaced by acceptance of disagreements, ambiguity and conflicts. The general recognition of contingency has several implications to organisations:

- Reflexive justifications based on reasons of necessity, nature, authority or conventions no longer suffice. Organisations are brought under continuous pressure to justify their decisions and the underlying rationales without the possibility of relating to any ultimate reason.
- When decisions are seen as contingent choices – then they are made responsible. The question of *responsibility* is raised and attributed to society's predominant decision-makers, organisations. Everything from climate changes to obesity is attributed to decisions. Correspondingly, *sustainability* – which involves taking responsibility of the future – has become a prominent issue.
- When danger is no longer attributed to natural norms, but to contingent decisions – then, from the position of potential *victims* the legitimacy of decisions are continuously questioned (Holmström, 2005a; Luhmann, 1993).
- Relations are no longer mediated by passive *confidence*, but by active *trust* (Bentele, 1994; Jalava, 2003; Luhmann, 1968).
- The premises of decision processes are no longer given; they have to be generated along with the decision processes. Formerly tacit values of an organisation are explicated, and the *identity* of an organisation is continuously regenerated.

- When the *environment* is acknowledged as contingent constructions, a new environmental sensitivity is brought into focus in the form of increasingly dynamic and diverse stakeholder models.
- When universality is replaced by *diversity* and univocality by *ambiguity* – then "objective" information and transparency produce dissent rather than consensus. What different observers consider the same thing generates quite different information for each position.

3.2   The Polycontextual Organisation

As to differentiation, when the functionally differentiated society during the latter half of the 20th century reaches its full development with firmly stabilised functional rationales, society threatens itself with "rigidifying into repeated, but no longer (…) adequate patterns of behaviour" (Luhmann, 1995, p. 372). The mono-functional specialisation has evolved to an extent where the self-centred functional systems of economy, politics, family, science, education etc. strain each other as well as society's environment.

No social logic can comprehend organic, psychical or psychological processes before they can be decoded into specific social processes, and even then, much is lost or distorted in translation. For instance, the economic system cannot observe its side effects such as pollution, deforestation, stress or oppression of human rights before they affect market conditions and consequently can be seen with economic distinctions. Moreover, what is observed is reconstructed by economic distinctions. A similar (in)sensitivity goes for all social dynamics. The fundamental benchmark of politics is: will it help us gain votes? Of science: will it create new insight? Of mass media: is it new information? In their reflexive criteria of relevance, the functional rationales serve as gatekeepers, which specialise society's sensitivity. At the same time, this specialisation activates an increasing mutual interdependence between the functional systems. For instance, the development of new medicine involves science, which is dependent on the educational system for qualified scientists and the health system for clinical tests, which are again dependent on economy, which is dependent on law for intellectual property rights, which is again dependent on the political system for legislation, which depends on mass media for references to public opinion, and so forth.

When the legitimacy of the blind reflexivity of functional logics is questioned, the pressure of justification is directed towards organisations. Key feature is ideals of increased sensitivity:

- The legitimacy of organisations changes from resting in monocontextual reflexivity ("profit") to polycontextual reflection ("people, planet, profit"), i. e. a balancing of social, environmental and financial considerations in the *triple bottom line* principle. A new sensitivity is provoked to NGOs representing the perspective of nature or of human beings such as WWF, Greenpeace and Amnesty International.
- When the growing interdependence motivates organisations to increased sensitivity – then the fundamental rationale is additionally filtered through other rationales, although the basic dynamics of most organisations remains monofunctional: a business organisation's primary rationale continues to be economic, a research institution's science. However, what is new is that the fundamental functional rationale of the reflec-

tive organisation is not always undisputedly taken-for-granted trump in the decision processes.

- The organisation goes through a transition from seeing as relevant a monocontextual environment to seeing a polycontextual environment. The legitimating reference of organisations evolves from state and an inner, native environment – which to business is market – to include an increasing range of stakeholders.

3.3   The Politicised Organisation

The third interrelated aspect is the political form of regulation. Analyses show how the intervening law of the welfare state gradually grows overburdened and inadequate for flexibly containing the accelerating speed and complexity of social processes (Andersen, 2004; Sand, 2004), for simultaneously securing the interdependence and independence of functional dynamics (Holmström, 2003; Luhmann, 1990a), seen also in relation to national legislation's impotence in the wake of globalisation. With liquid modernity, new political forms emerge, so far conceptualised as for instance *supervision state* (Andersen, 2004; Willke, 1997), *context regulation* (Willke, 1994), *cosmopolitan polycontexturality* (Sand, 2004), or *polycontextualism* (Holmström, 2007). They share the analysis that formerly known types of legal regulation are supplemented by flexible and decentralised governance structures, and *substantive* law by *reflective* law (Teubner, 2006). Substantive law regulates by means of intervention. Reflective law is more subtly oriented towards regulating individuals' or organisations' way of reflecting their own role and responsibility in society. Procedural qualities such as transparency and publicly available information are key elements of polycontextualism. Mass media are given the pivotal function of thematising issues to be dealt with polycontextually, and of taking continuous random samples of legitimacy. Correspondingly, sanctions take more subtle forms: e.g. consumer boycotts, mass-mediated crises, recruiting, motivation problems, and failing investments.

To an organisation, polycontextualism implies not only continuous legitimisation processes, but also new and extensive expectations to legitimate practice. The organisation is "politicised" to the extent that this notion implies taking into account the societal horizon:

- By means of notions such as *corporate social responsibility,* the horizon of society-at-large is internalised within organisations. For instance, the EU commission promotes corporate social responsibility as "the circumstance that organisations voluntarily integrate social and environmental considerations in their everyday decision processes through interaction with stakeholders" (European Commission, 2001).
- Still more organisations voluntarily involve in labile private policy networks and partnerships across societal fields with other private organisations, public institutions and a multitude of NGOs to solve common issues in particular in regard to social responsibility and sustainable development.
- Organisations relate to the representation of society within society whether this is denoted public sphere, public opinion, or "the population."
- Organisations are constantly prepared for random sample tests of their legitimacy by the mass media; they reflect upon how decisions made from their own basic perspective, whether for instance economy, science or health, are observed from the mass medial perspective.

4 Legitimate Practice as Reflection

4.1 Reflection Provoked by Reflexivity

The frames of explanation presented above share the conclusion that the increase of legitimising structures such as public relations and the evolution of contemporary ideals such as social responsibility, stakeholder dialogue and triple bottom line reporting can be seen as response to challenges of modernisation and globalisation. Analytically, these ideals can be identified as the raise from first order to second order perspectives – from *reflexivity* to *reflection*. Any organisation can observe only a segment of the world, depending on the complexity not of the world, but of the organisation, and furthermore, the organisation reconstructs the world in its own image (Luhmann, 1986, p. 40ff). "When put under a pressure of selection, the organisation principally synchronises itself with itself only, however can do so in forms that are more or less sensitive to the environment" (Luhmann, 2000a, p. 162). Reflexivity and reflection denote two fundamentally different perspectives of an organisation's view on its environment, related to solid and liquid modernity respectively. Reflexivity relates to solid norms, passive confidence, stable patterns of expectation and taken-for-granted institutions. Reflection relates to contingent social norms and institutions, fluid patterns of expectations and a continuous generation of trust.

Reflexivity implies a perspective from within, from where the organisation perceives its worldview as necessary, natural. Reflexive practice is blind, autonomous reproduction, which conflicts blindly with other worldviews. Furthermore, the narrow perspective is negligent to the broader context and consequently to its own unintended, however often far reaching side effects, and to the risks involved in its decisions.

Reflection is a classic ideal of modernity related to the individual, to consciousness. In late modernity, however, with social systems theory the ability of reflection is related to social systems, to organisations. In reflection (Luhmann, 1993, p. 219ff; Luhmann 1995, p. 437ff), the perspective rises to a higher level which facilitates a polycontextual worldview. The organisation sees itself as if from outside, in the larger societal context, and sees the interdependence of the socio-diversity. It sees how it sees through a contingent social filter that could be different, and sees that it sees differently than other perspectives. Consequently, reflection is the *production of self-understanding in relation to the environment*. On the one hand, the organisation clarifies its specific *independent* identity accordingly. On the other hand, it develops restrictions and coordinating mechanisms in its decision-making processes in recognition of the *interdependence*.

Ideals of reflection are embedded in the evolution of legitimating notions during the latter half of the 20th century. In the context of liquid modernity, we may see reflection as a reaction to the blind side-effects of reflexivity. Reflection uncovers the contingent nature of social processes and opens up to acknowledging the responsibility involved in decision-taking. As to the adjustment of functional differentiation, reflection implies a broader perspective and sensitivity of the socio-diversity. As to polycontextualism, the reflective perspective seems a precondition for an organisation to navigate in a polycontextually coordinated (world) society.

As society's turbulence strikes in organisation, we can identify learning processes from reflexivity towards reflection in specific stages of organisational practice (Holmström, 2002, 2003, 2005b). In a *conventional* stage, stabilised structures from previous evolutions

are challenged by the suggestion of variations in what counts as legitimate practice. In a *counter-active* stage, these challenges are countered and conventional practice justified as necessary. In a *reflective* phase, the variations are negotiated and selected. The variations diffuse and grow into *good practice* routines. Finally, the adjusted social filters stabilise as a *taken-for-granted reflective paradigm* for legitimate organisational practice.

4.2 Reflection or Reflexivity

The evolutionary changes of the legitimating notions characterising the interrelation between society and organisation can be identified on three closely interrelated dimensions in organisations (see Figure 2): *Sensitivity, self-observation (identification)* and *self-presentation*.
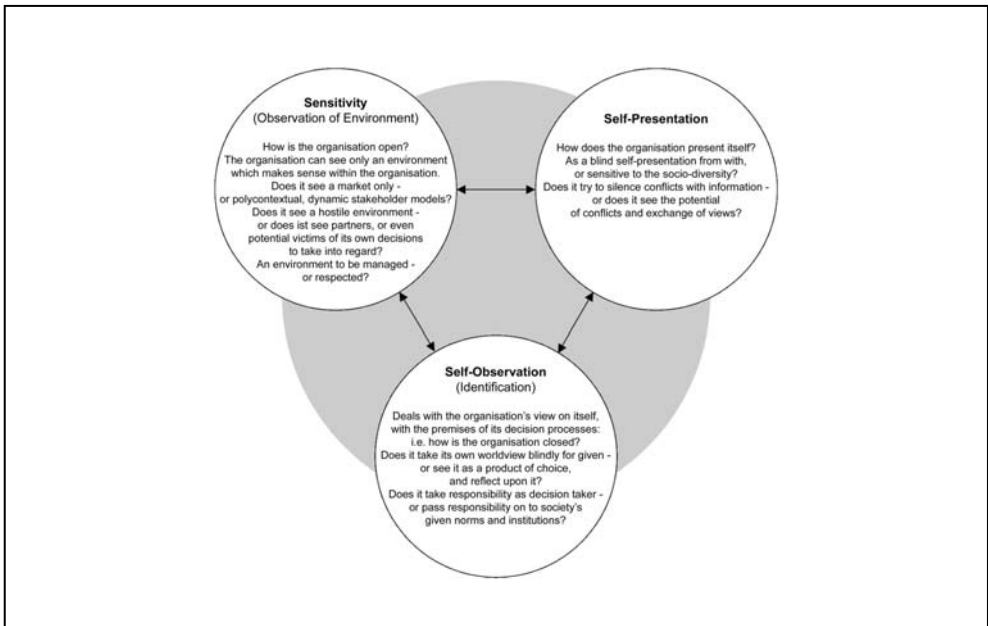
Figure 2: Reflexive or reflective practice respectively can be identified on three organisa-
tional dimensions – sensitivity, self-observation, and self-presentation

As to *sensitivity*, an organisation can see only an environment which makes sense within the organisation – or more precisely: as environment counts only what can be constructed within the organisation (Luhmann, 2000a, p. 162). Consequently, the degree of sensitivity proves decisive to the legitimacy of the organisation.

Identification or self-observation deals with the organisation's view on itself. When the contingency of decision premises are acknowledged, then these premises are no longer taken for granted: they must be continuously regenerated along with the decision processes.

Self-presentation is the organisation's way of establishing expectations with the environment. When legitimacy cannot be justified in "naturalness" or necessity, then consistent but sensitive and consequently constantly changing self-presentation is required.

Figure 3 shows how the difference between reflexivity and reflection emerges in organisations. Even if characterised by reflection, none of the three functions of sensitivity, identification and self-presentation on their own lives up to contemporary ideals of legitimacy. They have to be closely interrelated in the organisation. For instance, deliberations on identification would be seen as illegitimate if not rooted in sensitivity. Self-presentation would be seen as for instance *window-dressing* or *whitewashing* if not in accordance with identification as well as sensitivity.

5 Differing Contemporary Ideals

The empirical foundation of the analysis presented above is North-Western Europe, and since the principal conclusion is that ideals of organisational legitimacy are closely interrelated to a given society's specific social and societal coordination processes, then it follows that – although we see traits of global policy and global opinion – legitimating notions differ in various regions of the world.

With globalisation, the interdependence and thus the sensitivity between different or even conflicting cultures increase. It grows a pivotal problem for an organisation to retain legitimacy in still more cultural contexts where its decisions may have consequences – i.e. all the way back to peripheral sub-suppliers and all the way forward to side effects of a product in a distant country. Furthermore, not alone does globalisation demand navigation within a diversity of inherent conflicts of legitimacy – but the ability to relate to different perceptions of legitimacy *at the same time* in a globalised public space, where local response can no longer be locally confined. A focus on the micro- or meso-dimension – as in most strategies and technologies such as reputation, issues or stakeholder management – does not suffice. Analyses are required which see legitimacy also in relation to a given society's constitution. We may identify emerging ideals as *meta-reflection*, implying that an organisation acknowledges its notions of legitimacy as basically rooted in a contingent societal and cultural context, and consequently continuously clarifies its own identity, and at the same time is able to take into consideration different national or regional contexts within which the organisation operates.

	REFLEXIVITY	REFLECTION
SENSITIVITY		
Perspective	Monocontextual, self-centred, narcissist view from within; narrow, unambiguous perspective	Polycontextual worldview as if from outside; sees itself in the larger context; attempts to see the world through the eyes of others
Approach	Environment to be managed (socio-uniformity)	Environment to be respected (socio-diversity)
Reconstruction of environment	Sees only its native environment (stockholders, monocontextual markets from a conventional logic of exchange + state)	Sees a larger and more complex environment as relevant (to business: stakeholders, polycontextual markets, public)
Conflicts	Society divided into black/white	Understands the conflict between decision taker and victim as inherent in society's construction
Synthesis	Sensitivity disconnected from corporate core decisions	Sensitivity interrelated with overall corporate policies
IDENTIFICATION – SELF-OBSERVATION		
Necessary/ contingent	Solid identity: takes own worldview for given, natural, necessary; by being responsible to society	Liquid identity, continuous identification; sees own worldview as contingent; questions own identity, role and responsibility
Responsibility	Passes responsibility on to society's well-established norms; does not acknowledge the risk involved in any decision (rather feels as victim)	Sees the risky decisions are inevitable; acknowledges responsibility as decision taker and commits itself to society
Monophone/ polyphone	Monophone functional logic unrivalled trump in decision processes	Polyphone decision processes; ability to shift between different functional logics
Interests	Blind particular interest (business focus: profit)	Enlightened particular interest (profit – in regard of people, planet)
Synthesis	Contact with society disconnected from overall corporate decision process	Activates top management, leadership, influences overall politics
SELF-PRESENTATION		
Character	Blind counter-action, "asymmetrical communication"	Precise, continuous and consistent signals on expectations to be met by the organisation (generation of trust)
Approach to conflicts	Does not see conflicts or tries to silence them	Sees the potential of conflicts; exposes their background and facilitates exchange of views
Universality vs. diversity	Blind self-presentation from within: sees universality, "objective" information and transparency produce dissent instead of consent	Self-presentation sensitive to socio-diversity, takes into account other worldviews (consent on dissent)
Information vs. responsibility	Believes conflicts can be dissolved by information; does not see the inherent conflict between victim and decision taker	Acknowledges own responsibility as decision taker, and commits itself in relation to society
Semantics	Growth, productivity, efficiency, stakeholder management	Ethics, corporate social responsibility, partnerships, values, dialogue, stakeholder engagement
Synthesis	No synthesis between identification and self-presentation (window-dressing, whitewashing)	Consistent self-presentation sensitive to environment and in accordance with identification

Figure 3: Differences between the categories of reflexivity and reflection on the three organisational dimensions of the reflective paradigm

To emphasize my main point of the interrelation between societal constitution and organisational legitimacy, which I analysed in the evolutionary perspective above, I shall indicate how we may differ between various types of societal constitution and correspondingly different perceptions of legitimacy in contemporary world society. Roughly, a distinction can be made between fundamentally different societal forms, and between different ways in which a specific societal type is coordinated.

Even though functional differentiation has spread over most of the world, then stratificatory societies also exist where functional differentiation plays a secondary role only, and where hierarchical relations constitute the main societal structure. In a stratificatory society collectivism rules in contrast to individualism, hierarchy in opposition to pluralism (Baraldi, 2006; Luhmann, 1995, p. 437ff; Luhmann, 1997, p. 678ff) with substantive implications to the legitimacy of organisations, and to the way legitimisation proceeds. Societal coordination is subject to religious, ethnic and political hierarchies. Social relations are based on orthodoxy; norms are seen as necessary to maintain society, as inevitable and incontestable matters of fact. Freedom of expression without boundaries is illegitimate. Premises of legitimacy are not open to discussion; it is illegitimate for an organisation to discuss norms as contingent, or to try to introduce modernist values. As opposed to the ideas of a public sphere with equal access for a diversity of individual expressions in the functionally differentiated society, the stratificatory society is characterised by top-down public communication processes, maintaining a collectivist identity. Organisations do not engage in public relations or refer to public opinion as a legitimising horizon. Furthermore, there are no distinct boundaries between religion, politics, mass media, economy, family, education, law etc. Market mechanisms are subject also to religion, politics, or to societal strata. In this societal setting, reflective ideals such as the acknowledgment of contingency, a pluralist legitimating environment, and a proactive stance to political problems will be illegitimate. Scandinavian dairy co-operative Arla Foods experienced the inherent legitimacy conflicts between stratificatory and functionally differentiated societies in 2006. First, the company was boycotted in Arab countries following urgings by religious leaders because of a Danish newspaper's cartoons of Muslim prophet Mohammed, publicised as "a test of freedom of expression" (Rose, 2005). Later, after having tried to legitimise itself in Arab countries by publicly expressing respect of local values, Arla Foods was threatened boycott back home in Scandinavia for betraying modernist values.

Globally, functional differentiation is the dominating way of societal constitution today. However, although ideals of legitimacy in most functionally differentiated societies are articulated as social responsibility, triple bottom line etc., and although the ideals analysed as a reflective paradigm are contained in global guidelines such as Global Compact and GRI (Global Reporting Initiative) and are part of the legitimising ceremonial of most major multinational companies – then empirically we find different forms of organisational legitimacy and legitimisation which we may relate to different political ways of regulating the functionally differentiated society. The forms of regulation can be categorised according to certain variables. In particular, we can compare the degree of *monocentred* versus *decentred* regulation; *exterior other-regulation* vs. *self-regulation; internal* vs. *external complexity* (see Figure 4).

Com-plexity	External: low	External: high
Internal: low	(Premodernity) (Repressive regulation)	**Communism, totalitarianism** Central regulation: Monocentred. The functional dynamics of the different societal spheres are other-regulated by the state and partially decompose. Organisations' legitimisation: Rests with one societal sphere, a political ideology, and is mainly substituted by control.
Internal: high	**Liberalism (early modernity)** Reflexive regulation (classical liberalism): Decentred. Self-regulation by the societal spheres. Minimum state intervention. Organisations' legitimisation: Mainly self-legitimisation in self-referential environments (to business: the market).	**Democratic welfare society (solid modernity)** Mixed regulation: Monocentred and decentred. Exterior other-regulation by strong nation state law supplemented by reflexive self-regulation by societal spheres. Organisations' legitimisation: Law-abidingness, self-legitimisation in self-referential environments (to business: the market).
		Polycontextualism, reflective society (liquid modernity) Polycontextual regulation: Other-regulation as self-regulation. Reflective self-regulation encouraged by political initiatives and reflective law. Organisations' legitimisation: More important than in any other type of societal regulation. Polycontext-referential self-legitimisation, i.e. a reflective paradigm.

Figure 4: Analytical categories of political regulation of functional differentiation's societal spheres and their implication to organisational legitimisation

Empirically, we find combinations and transition forms. For instance, post-communist countries of Eastern Europe show different transitional stages from a politically monocentred dominance towards a society constituted by independent functional spheres. Economy is gradually developing on autonomous premises with private propriety rights and without political planning (Lawniczak, 2001, 2005). News media are gradually freeing themselves from their function as mediators of political propaganda. Correspondingly, companies are slowly learning to take on independent responsibility and to install measures of self-restriction after having been strictly politically controlled. However, transitive societies have not stabilised the specific societal constitution which is a precondition of the notions of organisational legitimacy analysed as a reflective paradigm.

6   Perspectives

The above demonstrates the importance of attention by the study and practice of organisational legitimisation such as public relations to evolutionary and cognitive forces. The interrelation between society and organisation is regulated by legitimating paradigms, which differ with society's constitution, partly on the time dimension, partly on the space dimension.

In still ongoing transformations since the latter half of the 20th century, the side-effects of the reflexive practices of solid modernity and full functional differentiation provoke new legitimating notions such as corporate social responsibility, triple bottom line, sustainability, stakeholder dialogue, etc., analysed as a reflective paradigm which seems to consolidate modernity and functional differentiation by adjusting status quo.

Reflection copes with contingency, opens up to acknowledging the responsibility involved in decision-taking, implies a broader perspective and sensitivity to socio-diversity, and seems a precondition for an organisation to navigate in a polycontextually coordinated (world) society. However, reflection also increases the perception of contingency and flux, and may lead to hyper-irritation, feelings of powerlessness and indifference, paralysation of decision processes – where the responsibility of decision-taking is handed over to stakeholders or public opinion – or to distorted resonance or extensive resources spent on symbolic instead of substantial activity, i.e. on demonstrating a green image with environmental accounts and sponsorship of green marathons instead of developing radically new energy-saving solutions. Furthermore, the risk should probably be taken into consideration that part of the ideals that constitute the reflective paradigm may backfire. Companies are challenged to take a proactive stance to societal problems and to interfere with societal decision processes, and where companies decide on societal policies instead of democratically elected politicians doing so, ideals of legitimate practice may paradoxically lead to democratic deficit and a lack of transparency (cf. also Michael, 2003; Willke & Willke, 2007).

Since the principal conclusion is that ideals of organisational legitimacy are closely interrelated to a given society's specific social and societal coordination processes, then it follows that – although we see traits of global policy and global opinion – legitimating notions differ in various regions of the world. Several types of inherent legitimacy conflicts challenge an organisation which goes global and exposes itself to an increasing variety of societal forms, cultures and values. It is, however, possible to uncover generic patterns in the diversity of legitimacy conflicts by relating them to a society's constitution and its form of social coordination.

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Public Relations, Persuasion and Propaganda: Truth, Knowledge, Spirituality and Mystique

Jacquie L'Etang

This chapter draws together a number of concepts and lines of argument to confront directly the challenge of separating PR and propaganda through a methodological discussion that demonstrates the complexities of such analysis. Attention is drawn to language practices and the significance of the subject position. Spiritual dimensions of public relations are also explored in relation to vocation, public service and propaganda.

1   Introduction

This chapter reflects upon the definitional and methodological issues that concern the relationship between public relations and propaganda. It builds on previous research that highlighted the spiritual convictions of public relations practitioners and spiritual dimensions of public relations work (L'Etang, 2006) grounded in historical evidence (L'Etang, 2004). Links are made between the history of public relations and propaganda, and between these two concepts and notions of spirituality, mysticism, religion and ethics. The powerfulness of such concepts may also help explain the fear and loathing often expressed in relation to the public relations function.

I will explore the conceptual and historical links between what is usually seen as the troublesome link between public relations and propaganda and interrogate the reasons why these concepts are hard to define in relation to each other. Public relations academics are quite likely to be motivated to forge a clear distinction between these concepts, or may only accept propaganda as an historical antecedent of contemporary public relations practice. I suggest that such efforts may lead to simplistic definitions designed to service the rhetorical efforts of the academic public relations campaign for public relations. Models are renowned for both their usefulness in simplifying connections and their concomitant inability to convey subtle distinction, interplays and dynamism. Public relations literature has had a rather limited conceptual engagement with propaganda and here I try to demonstrate the complexities of the definitional task. In the process of essaying this challenge, I suggest that the dominant scientism of the field has possibly distracted the academy from understanding public relations work as having mystical dimensions. Little work has been done to identify practitioner belief systems, ideologies, or deeper thought about the social role of public relations, and its link to propaganda, in various cultures. Further insight is needed into the motivations of those entering the practice and their composition (class, race, political orientations and affiliations): If there are indeed common ideologies of public relations practitioners in relation to their social role and purpose that has not yet been sufficiently revealed. It may be that it is this lack of occupational transparency that leads to fear and criticism by the media and wider public. I would suggest that the role of influential public relations

practitioners might be far more subtle, complex and powerful than is suggested by the usual "management-technician" dichotomy. It is possible to envisage practitioners as performing a function somewhere between priest and magician. As Brown points out, "The lens of history reveals more clearly the significant relationship between public relations and the human imagination, as well as PR's roots in messianic religion and political statecraft" (Brown, 2004, p. 382).

Therefore, this exploration highlights the importance for public relations scholarship of engaging with historical sociology and sociological history (which give different emphases in prioritising and structuring analysis and narrative[1]), anthropology, and religious and spiritual beliefs. Such approaches could help us towards understanding the *texture* of relationships that public relations practitioners engage in by highlighting points of reference and influence. Appropriate, for example, to a discussion of professionalism, might be analysis of practitioners' views of the nature of *vocation*. Who or what do practitioners see themselves serving – functionally, societal and spiritually? These questions would help towards an understanding of practitioners' spiritual moral universe, their understanding of "good" and "right." It has often been claimed that public relations should act as organizational "ethical guardian" (L'Etang, 2003), yet it is not clear that practitioners are qualified to do this.

Spiritual aspects of public relations are available through reflection upon PR as a holistic organizational and cultural enterprise, which transcends the technical tools of PR and contributes to change and transformation, thus providing a clear connection to some ideas about propaganda. Public relations aims to engender community, common purpose, emotional connections – all aspects of spirituality (Robinson, 2007, p. 8). Within organizations, public relations practitioners are clearly involved in work that connects to spiritual practice, "Spirituality…involves the recognition that employees have an inner life related to their soul…assumes that employees need to find work meaningful…organization is portrayed as a communal centre, promoting mutual obligation and commitment based on trust" (Mirvis, 1997; cited in Bell & Taylor, 2003, p. 332).

Public relations also has its own rituals, both as an occupational culture *and* as a practice. These accoutrements also help create a sense of mystique that bolsters the status of practitioners – especially consultants. Parts of the public relations industry is engaged in a "professional project" which requires self-reflection and contemplation on its social role and potential for public service. In this chapter, I aim to reflect upon some of these themes in relation to debates concerning the apparent dichotomy between public relations and propaganda.

I begin by summarising recent arguments concerning the relationship between public relations and propaganda (L'Etang, 2006; Weaver, Motion & Roper, 2006). In so doing, the methodological difficulties entailed in defining public relations and propaganda, and in distinguishing these two concepts from one another, are highlighted. This section concludes with a short personal reflection and autobiography to clarify my own subject position. Such auto-ethnography is unusual in public relations and my purpose in including this element was multi-fold: to specify the socio-cultural, political and personal experiences that bear upon my approach to, and interpretation of, this challenging topic; to increase the

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[1]   Historical sociology is structured around sociological concerns such as issues of power, gender and race enlightened by historical data; in contrast, sociological history take a story-telling/narrative structure enlightened by sociological concerns.

transparency of my work and to avoid writing myself out of my own work; to make a philosophical and political point about current writing and research discourses in public relations.

I then move on to consider more closely the relationship between theoretical conceptions of public relations and propaganda and the practice of public relations. The emergence of a recognisable occupation with some key distinctive features and the formation of "professional" bodies marked the beginning of a phase of heightened and rather intense introspection. The "professional" bodies began to demarcate inclusionary and exclusionary processes to reflect upon their purpose, principles and values, and thus to contribute to the formulation of discourses and ideologies of public relations. This was partly influenced by the organizations public relations practitioners serviced, or – to use a more vocational term suitable to a discussion that takes in apparently spiritual aspects of public relations practice – "served." Post-war relief, Cold War fears, and a sense that the occupation had an important societal, not purely organizational role and orientation also influenced public relations practice in the UK. It seems that UK practitioners' discourse and ideology was distinctly different from that identified by the US-based sociologist Leila Sussman in her US-based study published in *Public Opinion Quarterly* in 1948 "The personnel and ideology of public relations" (Sussman, 1948). This difference suggests that culture (including historical, political and economic factors) was profoundly important in the emergence of PR in different contexts.

I have previously made the point that the promotion of theoretical models or typologies based on one interpretation of US history is problematic (L'Etang, 2004, p. 5, pp. 9-10; 2006, pp. 143-144). In my view an evolutionary and progressive "model" that functions as historical explanation and as a typology of practice is inevitably flawed because (a) it is based on one reading of development (b) it fails to take account of political, cultural, religious factors in non-US settings and (c) it is deterministically optimistic and idealistic (progressive). I argued that

> There is an assumption in much of the literature that public relations was first developed in the US and was then exported elsewhere, a view [I challenge]…[a] feature of historical reviews within public relations is the way in which public relations is defined as akin to activity carried out by the Greeks or the Romans, as well as journalists and activists such as Jonathan Swift, Daniel Defoe, Charles Dickens and William Wilberforce. Such definitions imply that persuasion, rhetoric, sophistry, advocacy and lobbying are a central part of public relations practice. At the same time, claims are made for the importance of public relations as part of management, a move that suggests a respectable, technocratic, neutral function. The tension between these broad and narrow types of definition is of fundamental importance to the study of public relations particularly from the sociological perspective. (L'Etang, 2004, p. 5)

In other words, it seems that much existing literature on the one hand claims that public relations is a modernist US creation, but at the same time links it to universal practices of public communication whilst simultaneously trying to separate public relations from propaganda – largely presented as part of "pre-PR history." This lack of engagement has consequences. First, it means that scholarship is mixed up in the "PR for PR" campaign. Second, it leads to a signal failure to engage with the rich texture of public relations practice. Similarly, Brown suggested that an essential part of public relations practice has been ignored,

> Not withstanding the historical and aesthetic origins of public relations, PR textbooks and scholarship pay scant homage to history, myth and art, preferring positivist methodologies and models that emphasise rationality, civility and negotiation. However, positivist scholarship's selective exposure has cut public relations off from its historical and aesthetic, if ethically problematic sources. By abandoning history and art, public relations scholarship has narrowed and weakened the foundations of public relations theory by passing over historically persuasive explanations for the unquestionable prominence of public relations in the modern world. (Brown, 2004, p. 382)

These arguments suggest that there are important aspects of public relations that have not yet been explored, which could add to our understanding of public relations as a cultural practice. While this chapter has as its main focus the relationship between public relations and propaganda, it seeks to find alternate understandings of that relationship both methodological and also fundamental.

My discussion later reflects upon the nature of public relations conducted on behalf of activist groups, religious and political organizations, think tanks and politicians. In the final part of the chapter, consideration is given as to the mystical, spiritual, relational and emotional aspects of public relations work. This discussion is influenced by literature in management studies, which has explored the role of spirituality in leadership (Calas & Smircich, 2003). Public relations can be seen to be engaging in "pastoral care" and "emotional labour" in relation to internal and external stakeholders. Bearing in mind the popularity and short life of management fads and fashions and the market for management gurus it is not beyond the bounds of reason to conceptualise the internal public relations practitioner as a witch doctor engaged in organizational cultism, and brought to the fore in instrumental "change management" programmes. Such programmes often seek "conversion" processes and, since they take place in power structures, could well be defined as propagandistic since there is a degree of coercion entailed. But one can also reflect on existing managerial discourse, which connotes both spirituality and religion in terms such as "mission" and "vision," but also on the cultural influence of New Ageism, which connects with some concepts of corporate social responsibility, "encouraging a more holistic view of work organizations as communal centres, where actions can be seen as practically and morally interconnected with the physical and social environment" (Bell and Taylor, 2003, p. 330).

My thinking in this area is connected to my interest in "public relations in every day life" (L'Etang, 2006, p. 262; L'Etang, 2007, pp. 211–229) and in lifeworlds and lifestyles (L'Etang, 2006, p. 247) and connects to the significant contributions of Pieczka (2006a, 2006b), Edwards (2006a, 2006b) and Hodges (2005, 2006).

2   Methodological Issues

2.1   Interdisciplinary Perspectives

It can be argued that there are many variable and dynamic relationships between public relations and propaganda depending upon the political, historical and cultural contexts, the subject position and disciplinary orientation of an author, and the potential for multiple readings. Elsewhere (L'Etang, 2006), I have argued that many of the difficulties in analysing the relationships between public relations and propaganda were methodological. I

suggested that one strategy for analysing this inevitably moving target should combine conceptual and applied approaches, employing a variety of academic disciplinary tools including philosophy, psychology, politics, history, sociology and mass communications. Analytic, conceptual and applied research approaches would need to be combined. Such an eclectic mix would doubtless produce a variety of interpretations and emphases that could usefully enlighten understanding of specific cases. The disciplines would clearly operate rather differently, for example: a philosopher might unpack the concepts of public relations and propaganda, examine the logic of existing definitions, try to specify necessary conditions, and apply ethical concepts; an historian would try to recount the political, economic and social processes that led to certain communication practices; those from politics and sociology might focus on ideology, power, hegemony and the public sphere; those from psychology and communications might consider cognitive-emotional processes of persuasion, "brainwashing" and conversion experiences. This combination of approaches could deliver a detailed understanding of context, key players, influences and intentions, media coverage, reception and public opinion, as well as useful data about individual and activist freedoms, resistance and accommodation. Such an approach would, however, generate different understandings and interpretations of motivations, powerful people, institutions and networks.

Thus, my first proposal might generate multiple perspectives, a post-modern *bricolage*. At least it could highlight critical incidents, the inter-play of key factors, the relation between the exercise of power and communication, and language practices.

The generation of multiple perspectives, however, somewhat complicates the definitional debate without particularly resolving it. There is the risk that the concept "propaganda" can become an empty concept or a shape-shifter – so broad as to be meaningless. One might argue that to some degree this has happened in popular discourse, certainly in the UK, where definitions of, and distinctions between, public relations, promotion and propaganda are not clear, especially in political contexts.

2.2   Terminology in Practice

Some practitioners acknowledge overlap between PR and propaganda, and in the UK, history shows that a number of practitioners moved quite smoothly from wartime careers in propaganda to civilian careers in public relations, thus implying shared practices and concepts. Some practitioners of the 1950s and 1960s used the terms "public relations" and "propaganda" quite interchangeably and apparently unproblematically. Some saw "propaganda" as the over-arching concept and public relations as one technique in the armoury; others saw public relations as the over-arching concept and propaganda as one tactical choice. In the 1960s, one small group of British practitioners began to develop the concept of what they termed "total communication" which referred to the concept of multiple, concurrent messaging that would provide blanket reinforcements of concepts in audiences – clearly based on stimulus-response models of communication.

Eminent British practitioner, Tim Traverse Healy, argued that, "professionals" needed to understand the differences between PR and propaganda and that it was important for "a consensus view to be formulated and promulgated" (Traverse-Healy, 1988, p. 4).

The terms "propaganda" and "public relations" are both used pejoratively in the UK, often in association with the term "spin doctoring," which emerged first in the political sphere. One consequence of this has been the usage of different terminology to describe public relations in an apparent effort to sanitise the image. Thus, "corporate communications" is a popular euphemism for public relations. "Corporate communications" seems a rather vague term, which could suggest private sector positioning, although in practice it is used throughout the economy in public and private sectors in the UK. It could also suggest an organizational and potentially more managerial and strategic focus on "corporate affairs." The terms "management" and "corporate" themselves, of course, are euphemisms for organizational power and political control, though that is not always acknowledged. By contrast, "public relations" can connote "publicity" or "media relations," which in turn are inevitably linked to efforts to influence, and sometimes manipulate the media. Such tasks inevitably raise spectres of distorted communication, falsehoods and even (based on the assumptions of stimulus-response models) "brainwashing." More recently, the term "media management" has also become more popular in the UK as a synonym for "media relations" even though it is also the term used for a sub-discipline of media studies, which focuses on the management (processes and skills) of the media industries. An occupation (public relations) whose designated function is to influence or subvert the functions of another (journalism) is inevitably and properly to be faced with questions of propriety, ethics and regulation. Occupational bodies with aspiration for professional status possess codes that are so broad as to be meaningless; do not control the boundaries of the practice either in terms of entrants, or in terms of discipline and punishment; and in any case, the vast majority of public relations practitioners in the UK are not members.

The term "communications management" is apparently another effort to separate public relations from propaganda as well as to gain organizational status for the practice. This gained academic support from the dominant paradigm in public relations academia in the early 1990s, notably in the landmark volume *Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management*, in which its editor, James E. Grunig, clearly explained the functional reasons for terminological change,

> Although public relations is probably the oldest concept used to describe the communication activities of organizations, many organizations now use such terms as business communication and public affairs to describe these activities – in part because of the negative connotations of public relations. Many practitioners define communication more broadly than public relations. They see communication as the management of the organization's communication functions. They see public relations as one of several more narrow functions, especially as publicity, promotion, media relations or marketing support. Others, in contrast, see public relations as the broader term and apply communication narrowly to techniques used to produce such products as press releases…[some] see public relations as a policy-making function [and often] these practitioners use the term public affairs to broaden public relations to include the interaction with groups and government that leads to public policy. (Grunig, 1992, p. 4)

Since managerial discourse and ideology has become so prevalent, the assumptions that lie behind the term "communication management" may well remain unquestioned. However, it is surely quite reasonable to ask precisely what is meant by "manage" in this respect. Surely, what is really intended here is that communications is used to enhance relationships that will benefit the organization. Both "corporate communications" and "communication

management" take on a somewhat different guise within the organization. Reporting directly to top management and working to achieve organizational goals these practitioners are in a very weak position to do anything other than service those in power.

It is interesting to note that neither Grunig (1992), nor Toth and Heath (1992) nor Botan and Hazleton (2006) index the term "propaganda." There were only four indexed references in Heath (2001), two of them were from Pieczka and L'Etang (2001) in relation to British public relations; and two from Taylor (2001) in her review of two US sources that classified public relations in Romania and China as still retaining "propagandistic practices." This illustrates that propaganda as a concept has not been given much attention considering its importance as a contrasting concept and also demonstrates the significance of political ideology upon the subject position. Toth (2007) has equally sparse references. Those present are all from Heath's (2007) discussion of advocacy. He usefully contrasts "the ethics of propaganda which centres on outcomes (the goodness of the cause)" with the rhetorical approach which "features the ethics of process, the ethical quality of the process by which outcomes can be achieved – and, one could add, mutually beneficial outcomes" (Heath, 2007, p. 48). Heath also astutely comments,

> Understanding the good, the bad, and the ugly side of management through advocacy requires acknowledging the scary and unethical as well as the pure and irreproachable forms, strategies, content, and uses of discourse, as well as the ends to which it is put. (Heath, 2007, p. 54)

A final term that is popular is that of "public affairs" often used as a cover for "lobbying." Again, it sounds important, and some of those in the public affairs business have claimed that a background in politics and law was essential for this specialist area. Underlying "public affairs" are a series of complex and interrelated networks of power into which public relations practitioners try to insert themselves on behalf of their clients. Under the cover of semi-social networking, contacts can be made and deals done in an exciting and alluring elite and semi-elite environment. Such activities thrive on their lack of transparency and some lobbying businesses benefit because their clients are ignorant of the processes of government, failing to understand the importance of the civil service, and assuming that individual politicians have more power than they actually possess. It is surely quite proper that questions be asked about governance of public affairs and its practitioners.

These questions lead us to a consideration of the public sphere – "an intermediary structure between the political system on the one hand and the private sectors of the life world and functional systems on the other" (Habermas, 1998, pp. 373–374; cited in Jensen, 2001, p. 135) and the degree to which public relations as a function interferes with or enhances the operation of civil society. It may be useful to consider the relationship between public relations and propaganda in terms of the degree to which communications (both in public spheres and in formal but private spheres) are saturated with power.

Thus far, a picture has been painted of overlapping definitions, which include some questionable and less than transparent activities, which tarnish public relations practice.

2.3   *Propaganda and Public Relations: Truth, Knowledge and Discourse*

A distinction has sometimes been made between public relations and propaganda in relation to the concept of "truth." Truthfulness has often been identified as a key difference between public relations and propaganda. Indeed, for some, it is the telling of a public lie, which defines propaganda. However, government communication that misleads the governed and which might be defined as propaganda is often more to do with building on media panics, public fear and the reinforcement or engendering of opinions, attitudes, and, ultimately, core beliefs.

The centrality of the moral concept and value of truthfulness provides a clear link to religion. Possibly one of the earliest UK sources linking public relations/propaganda with religion was the film documentarist, John Grierson, who claimed,

> The hate of the word "propaganda" goes back to its association. There is a deep inlaid, subconscious, hidden away attitude to propaganda which is associated with the protestant fear of the Roman Catholic "congregatio de propaganda fidei" which, although it was only a congregatio for the propagation of the faith came to be associated in many minds with the Counter Reformation…in Spain and burning at the stake. Propaganda has got a bad subconscious tribal history so far as Protestants are concerned.…In modern times the word has been associated with the interference of the state on the laissez-faire of private industry. This was long before the use of propaganda deliberately by the Nazis and Mussolini. In fact, propaganda had become a dirty words with every direct intervention of the state into the free flow of opinion in the eighteenth century. (Grierson, undated, "The nature of propaganda")

However, Tilson argued that all religions promote themselves in similar ways and that religious communication is not propaganda because it communicates faith and truth, a position likely to be challenged in a secularised, multi-faith and relativist post-modern context.

> Propagate meant to transmit and foster Catholic teaching, an objective no different than other present-day religious organizations, like the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association… It was not until the 20th century – largely during or after World War II – that the term assumed its modern-day negative unethical connotations…while some may argue that all religious communication should be considered "propaganda" [it is actually] communicative activity that fosters relationships between religious institutions and their publics and builds communities of faith…propaganda and persuasive communication are not synonymous…the Church has always maintained that such efforts [of persuasion and evangelism] are to be done in a spirit of truth. (Tilson, 2006, p. 171)

In an International Public Relations Association *Gold Paper* an eminent practitioner argued that, in relation to propaganda,

> It is quite clear that, in early times emphasis was placed upon the unquestioned "rightness" of the doctrine being propagated…and the concomitant necessity to mankind or society of the belief being accepted by its numbers without question. In addition, Belief without question indicates Faith; and Faith is the Truth. Down the years this unswerving belief in the rightness of their particular brand of truth distinguishes the instigator of propaganda. (Traverse-Healy, 1988, p. 5)

A number of meanings and issues can be derived from this text:

- religious PR or *devotional-promotional communication* (Tilson, 2006) is seen as a form of propaganda;
- belief in a cause (religious, corporate or activist) is a significant determinant in classifying subsequent promotional communication as propaganda;
- however, beliefs may be true or false regardless of the amount of faith placed in them;
- PR practitioners who happen to believe in the cause they are promoting, are, on this account, propagandists – this opposes a view commonly expressed by practitioners that it is unethical to work for a cause you do not believe in (commonly cited examples here are tobacco and abortion);
- it should be noted that faith can be distinguished from truth;
- it should be noted that "rightness" can be distinguished from truth;
- relativism challenges all of the above.

The fundamental fracture in relation to universal and relativist notions of knowledge is of central importance to discussions of public relations and propaganda. This issue was fully aired by Weaver et al. (2006) in their discussion of public relations as discourse based on Foucauldian perspectives of truth, knowledge and power,

> For Foucault, truth was not something that was "arrived" at through public discussion, but something that is "produced" through discourse.…Discourse structures how we know, understand and speak about the world. Discourse is both a symbolic and constitutive system that structures knowledge and social practice.…This perspective shifts the role of public relations from information management and control to the production, contestation, and transformation of ideas and meanings that circulate in society. The task for public relations practitioners is to ensure that certain ideas and practices become established and understood and thereby attempt to gain the hegemonic advantage for their clients in this discursive struggle.…From this critical discourse perspective, public relations professionals are in the business of creating particular knowledge and identity positions which then influence the types of social relationships that are possible within and outside the discourse…discourse is the vehicle through which knowledge and truth circulate, and the strategic mode by which social, political and/or economic power is maintained or transformed. Key to the acceptance of these social meanings or interpretation of types of knowledge is the strategic linking of the dominance with self- or public interest – which in turn explains their social acceptance. In these terms, public relations practitioners are involved in the strategic attempt to have particular social meanings and interpretations of events, activities or behaviours. This discursive hegemonic conceptualisation of public relations makes it difficult to argue that there is any essential and substantive difference between PR practices and propaganda. (Weaver et al., 2006, p. 21)

Thus, according to Weaver et al. truth is based on language practices, which construct our identities and subsequent relationships. On this account, public relations' power lies in its transformative potential of language that shapes common discourse. Public relations is the occupation which helps to establish ideas (obtaining "buy-in"; "selling-in" stories to the media), organizational identities ("activist," "corporately responsible organization") and organizational "vision" and "mission" – and one should not ignore the religious language employed here. Language shapes our thoughts, expectations and private and public relationships. Public relations practitioners are, as Pieczka pointed out some years ago, "discourse workers" (Pieczka, 1999). Practitioners aim to influence thinking, public agendas,

private conversations within and between organizations, among organizational stakeholders and to act as a catalyst in certain types of social change, for example in health campaigns.

Weaver et al argued that the discursive and linguistic turn in public relations was useful because,

> Discourse theory helps to move away from the notion of propaganda as deception and lying because it acknowledges the potential for competing discourses and competing truths in society: multiple discourses circulate and compete with each other for hegemonic power and therefore there is a choice of meanings, identities, and realities available to audiences, not one all-powerful construction of reality. (Weaver et al., 2006, p. 21)

This is an invaluable and fundamental insight into the purpose and context of public relations work. It connects public relations work to the wider social and realm, and engages simultaneously with organizational and social levels of public relations work. The discursive approach also makes commonsense in research terms given the focus, direction and quantity of public relations work in the field. Much academic public relations has concentrated on critiquing practitioners for their lack of science, whereas in fact it might be more useful to understand what it is that practitioners actually do. One further implication of Weaver et al.'s work is that writers in the field of public relations and propaganda should seek to write reflexively.

The language practices that classify some persuasive communication as propaganda, and others, as public relations, are dependent on context and the subject position of the speaker. Articulating a judgement that some policies, actions and speech are propagandistic, is, in itself, a rhetorical positioning that can be deconstructed. Rhetorical statements may themselves be described (and condemned) as propaganda, thus illustrating the point that the definitional discussion of the relationship between public relations and propaganda is contingent on relativist judgements that are not always transparent or reflexive.

Thus, writing about propaganda properly requires author acknowledgement of subject position, assumptions and approach. In my own case, I inhabit the culture of a former colonial power, which spent considerable time on "hearts and minds" campaigns in various parts of its empire. The Cold War dominated my youth; my religious background was Anglican (Protestant); my first two university degrees were in history (American, English and Commonwealth). The first ten years of my working life were spent at The British Council (established in 1934), the blueprint of which was written by the first President of the Institute of Public Relations (1948), Stephen Tallents in a pamphlet entitled *The Projection of England* (1932). The British Council has various aims that foster international collaboration but it is also there to promote Britain abroad. During my career, at least one senior colleague argued that the British Council was "Britain's biggest public relations agency" and lest readers should interpret that organization as purely promotional, I should cite the fact that a major policy paper was written in the 1980s entitled *Mutuality* which explored international stakeholder relationships. Employment at such an organization meant easy access to think tanks such as Chatham House and a range of speakers on international affairs and strategic studies. I was fortunate to work in the public relations and design management departments (including a junior post in the team that managed the British Council's Fiftieth Anniversary in 1984) and to be exposed to some of Britain's top corporate designers. Evening classes in psychology introduced me to theories of persuasion. These experiences are some that appear to me to have shaped my interest in, and approach to, propaganda. The

critical incident, which sparked my more mature interest, was being given the advice *not* to explore the relationship between public relations and propaganda for my Masters dissertation because "it would open a can of worms" – I took the advice but determined that I would one day return to the topic.

2.4 Analysing Propaganda: Levels of Analysis

Propaganda may be explored at a number of levels: ideology, state, organization, occupation, individual, text. Exploration might focus on purpose and intention, communication distortion, manipulation of known facts (as opposed to promotion of ideological beliefs), interpretations, impacts and apparent effects. Judgements may be driven by moral principles such as verity, fairness, or the avoidance of harm, and criteria such as authenticity and transparency. However, discussions could often be given a different dimension with clearer explanation of the moral basis of judgements, in other words, definitions of what counts as "good" and what constitutes "right" behaviour (and why). Societal power arrangements require us to examine the communication practices of interest groups, power brokers and elites (politicians and leaders, corporate financial interests, the professions, media, think tanks and some public relations practitioners). Notions of propaganda are shaped by political and cultural context. Dominant historical accounts maybe those of the victors of military, political, diplomatic, economic conflicts but presented as definitive accounts. Subaltern accounts are still only beginning to emerge from post-colonial studies and provide "…an alternative discursive space for understanding participatory communication and marginalization practices in the Third World" (Dutta-Bergman, 2005, p. 267; cited in L'Etang, 2007, p. 235).

Discussion of international level propaganda in a globalized world implies the crucial role of public relations and propaganda in discursive political, cultural and religious contests that characterise much inter-cultural communication. The histories of those that have been propagandized or suffered the effects of government propaganda should not be forgotten.

Historiography of the literature on propaganda shows that power relations, national and international conflicts, ideology, scientific and social scientific discoveries, have influenced interpretations. Thus, interest in and discussion of propaganda is situated in a variety of fields including history, politics, sociology, international relations, strategic studies, psychology and public relations. Later military propaganda literature (or "Psyops") during the Cold War made an effort "to systematize the body of knowledge" (McLaurin, 1982, p. vii) and defined psyops as a specialist field of persuasive communication. The processes described are precisely those required by linear programming recommended by dominant applied managerial techniques. This in itself demonstrates the point that it is not possible to make simple judgements about what is, or is not, public relations or propaganda. Any such judgement requires the mustering of a range of evidence: international context; national and organizational policies; morality of the intended communication effect; past and present relationships between initiator and intended communication "subject" or "participant"; the way in which the communication process is initiated, "managed" and evaluated (and in whose terms); the range of choices that are offered the reader of any communication and their ability to contribute to the future shaping of discussion and linked policy develop-

ments. Even taking these issues into account raises other problems: for example, what are we to make of our notion of "autonomy" if we take on board Ellul's pessimistic vision that intellectuals are the most likely to be propagandised as a consequence of their ability to process and synthesise large amounts of second-hand information? (Ellul, 1965)

2.5 PR and Power Elites

Ellul was one of a number of theorists (Lippman and Grierson were others) who thought that society needed *men* of vision (this term might be politically incorrect but it is an accurate historical presentation of their views) who would act as specialist communication-educators to enable democratic processes to work. In other words, for Ellul, propaganda was *not* limited to totalitarian regimes (which are often cited as examples of propaganda in practice) but was intrinsic to mass society and as important (functionally) for democratic regimes as for others.

Grierson remarked upon the fact that the terms "public relations" and "propaganda" were used interchangeably rather than oppositionally in the context of a discussion of the film documentarists' mission to teach citizenship through the use of mass media. In this public relations was placed strategically, and quite similarly to Lippman's special class of elite communicators who would service the decision and policy making class with "the art so variously called 'cultural relations', 'public relations' and 'propaganda'" (Grierson, undated, "The nature of propaganda").

Critical conceptions of propaganda have tackled the subject from a focus on power and its implementation through communication and media control, either explicit (censorship) or implicit (complicity). Such approaches may be linked to an overall critique of capitalism and its associated corporatism and the military-industrial complex. The power-elite approach (Mills, 1956) has been influential in media sociology with prominent intellectuals exploring the extent to which consent has been manufactured through mass media (Herman & Chomsky, 1988). Mills' analysis highlighted the role of public relations in relation to the military elite:

> Since World War II, in fact, the warlords have caused a large-scale and intensive public-relations program to be carried out. They have spent millions of dollars and they have employed thousands of skilled publicists, in and out of uniform in order to sell their ideas and themselves to the public and to Congress. The content of this great effort reveals its fundamental purpose: to define the reality of international relations in a military way, to portray the armed forces in a manner attractive to civilians and thus to emphasize the need for the expansion of military facilities. The aim is to build the prestige of the military establishment and to create respect for its personnel, and thus to prepare the public for military-approved policies and to make Congress ready and willing to pay for them. There is also, of course, the intention of readying the public for the advent of war…. (Wright Mills, 1956, p. 220)

One might well ask: what has changed in the last fifty years in the US since this was written? One might also ask: how is it that this part of public relations history does not seem to get into introductory public relations texts? It might appear that public relations academia has its own public relations-propaganda. Mills went on to highlight the discursive aspects of public relations work in the military sphere and to argue that,

> The extent of the military publicity, and the absence of opposition to it, also means that it is not merely this proposal or that point of view that is being pushed. In the absence of contrasting views, the very highest form of propaganda warfare can be fought: the propaganda for a definition of reality within which only certain limited viewpoints are possible. What is being promulgated and reinforced is the military metaphysics – the cast of mind that defines international reality as basically military. The publicists of the military ascendancy need not really work to indoctrinate with this metaphysics those who count: they have already accepted it. (Mills, 1956, p. 222)

Mills' interpretation seems quite close to Ellul's in the sense that "pre-propaganda" basically establishes world-views or paradigms, which limit scope. Dominant discourses function in a similar way. What seems "natural" or "commonsense" becomes a question of faith – hence public relations practitioners not only as discourse-workers but also as a form of faith worker. Mills also criticised the underpinning notions of "balance of power" and natural equilibrium and compromise. He argued that,

> When it is said that a "balance of power" exists, it maybe meant that no one interest can impose its will or its terms upon others; or that any one interest can create a stalemate; of that in the course of time, first one and then another interest gets itself realized, in a kind of symmetrical taking of turns; of that all policies are the results of compromises, that no one wins all they want to win, but each gets something…[but] the goals for which interests struggle are not merely given; they reflect the current state of expectation and acceptance. Accordingly to say that various interests are "balanced" is generally to evaluate the status quo as satisfactory or even good….The notion that social change proceeds by a tolerant give and take, by compromise and a network of vetoes of one interest balanced by another assumes that all this goes on within a more or less stable framework that does not itself change; that all issues are subject to compromise, and are thus naturally harmonious or can be made such…checks and balances may thus be understood as an alternative statement of "divide and rule", and as a way of hampering the more direct expression of popular aspiration. For the theory of balance often rests upon the natural harmony of interests…. (Mills, 1956, p. 247)

It is clear that much public relations theory has been built on these shared and evidently flawed assumptions. If we fast-forward Mill's critique to the present day and a globalized world, we can see that such presumptions for public relations theory are not based on empirical evidence: the world is not stable, many interests and values are irreconcilable. In the context of global power imbalance and inequities, and it is sometimes difficult to see how public relations operates in any other way that what might reasonably also be defined as propaganda, or indeed as diplomacy, a view held in elite British circles in the 1930s,

> I once heard Diplomacy defined, by a famous international civil servant, as the art of putting your point of view in such a way that it would be acceptable to the other man, would wear the colour of his mind and adjust itself to his circumstances. This will serve well as a description of the art of Propaganda. (Grierson, undated, "The nature of propaganda")

Grierson himself accepted propaganda as an inevitable part of functional government, but also of economic enterprise, arguing that,

> There are many perspectives to the history of propaganda. We must accept it as a real aspect of government. Of course, as government has more and more joined with private enterprise in the management of the economics of these states, the more it has had to consider co-operation with private industry in the management of opinion. (Grierson, undated, "The nature of propaganda")

On this account, propaganda is not the sole preserve of government but, through private-public partnerships, becomes the strategy of elites.

Thus, it is impossible to discuss whether something is or is not propaganda without fully understanding social context and practices, the public sphere and public opinion, not in its technocratic quantitative conception, but in its Rousseauian "general will" or collective unconscious sense, which may, through hidden, influence those small accommodations and resistances, which are the unexamined aspects of propaganda. Noelle-Neumann's powerful concept of the "spiral of silence" is eloquently appropriate here (Noelle-Neumann, 1984) as is Burrin's (1996) answer of French life under the German occupation.

2.6 Propaganda and the "PR of PR": Conversion, Activism, Emotion

It may be argued that propaganda is about communicating untruths to generate or foster certain beliefs – in contrast with public relations, which is supposed to communicate factual accurate information. The emergence of a professionalizing (but not yet professional) occupation that has formally positioned itself ideologically in opposition to "propaganda" raises a number of interesting questions about occupational affiliation; connections to power, privilege and under-privilege; and occupational ideology, self-identity and self-understanding about its social role. It also raises questions about the role and positioning of PR academics in the debate, and whether they function partially as scholastic back-ups for PR's campaign for PR. The construction of an occupational ideology is necessary as part of public relations' professional project. In particular, public relations has to demonstrate its social legitimacy and public service values. It also needs to have a story that explains how public relations is a useful addition to existing mass media structures. Public relations and journalism have a competitive relationship because they both sell stories and seek to define media and public agendas. Journalists have questioned public relations' technical competencies and challenged the function on ethical grounds. In fact, PR and journalism declare similar values in relation to truth, accuracy and freedom of information, even though both may experience constraints in practice.

The relationship between the individual practitioner and the organization and cause they are representing is also relevant to considerations of propaganda and professionalism. Is a truly professional practitioner one who will work for a variety of clients regardless of their personal affiliations? However, is there also a difference between PR for an organization that operates in the commercial market producing goods and services and PR for a cause? For one highly regarded and influential British practitioner, Alan Campbell-Johnson, this difference is crucial in distinguishing between PR and propaganda. He argued that,

> Propaganda is a religious term actually…it's propagation of the faith….that' s how the word came into being….Propaganda is actually apart from the religious side of things….Greenpeace is a propagandist body. It may be a good cause but it uses propagandistic methods ruth-

lessly…Shell is a body that is responsible for providing its publics with oil…that is what it does.. That isn't a propagandist activity. Whereas Greenpeace is a propagandist organization. It is the sole judge of what that [social] responsibility is. This is where it is morally weak. It doesn't submit its activities to such a limitation. It will do that which it sees fit to do. It behaves in a propagandist way. (personal communication, 1995, August 22)

The religious comparison has been invoked more recently as reported in Pieczka's ethnographic research,

> The comparison, couched in loaded terms, sets emotion (pressure groups) against reason and science (companies)…practitioners recognise a fundamental difference; in the words of one of the trainers "I find that when I'm describing pressure groups, I could be describing one of the more extreme religions"….It seems that to PR professionals, pressure groups are in some ways twisted, frightening reflections of themselves. (Pieczka, 2006a, pp. 286–287)

On these accounts there is a distinction to be made between public relations for activist groups, religious organizations, think tanks and politicians because such work focuses on fundamental beliefs – in other words, work is aimed directly and primarily at the central core of individual's belief systems rather than attitudes in relation to consumer goods and services. (Of course, it is also the case that consumer public relations messages may also carry values that relate to economic production, markets and underpinning ideologies). For Campbell-Johnson, activists were classified as those who sought to "convert others to their causes." The second quote from the trainer seems partly as a re-working of the public relations/propaganda divide based on relativist concepts and conservative conventions, but presented as universal realities or truths.

Reflection on the role of belief in PR and propaganda raises some interesting issues. Beliefs can only be inferred from outwardly expressed opinions or associated attitudes. Thus, it is hard to be clear about what exactly is being aimed at by the propagandist or public relations practitioner. Rational and irrational or emotional elements may be distinguished although their relationship to each other may not be clear. It seems to be assumed that the rational can be by-passed. In evidence-based market cultures, the rational is based upon a deep belief in enlightenment values and contemporary science. This is a contrast to relativist post-modern conceptions, which give credence to a variety of alternative and concurrent interpretations. The role of superstition, stereotyping and emotional communication might be regarded as propaganda, conversion or even "brainwashing" partly because it appears to try and engage with deep processes and the definition of truths and belief systems in which faith is placed.

2.7 Public Relations Identity & Ideology: Evangelism, Proselytism and Religion

At this point, it will be helpful to reflect on the ways in which public relations engages with spiritual dimensions of organisational life. Spirituality might connect public relations with notions of vocation and public service, but the concept of conversion appears to connect public relations with propaganda. I present some evidence from the UK that shows that early practitioners explained their occupation in spiritual and religious terms and sought religious institutional approval. There has been debate about the linguistic connection

between religion and propaganda. Religions have always promoted their belief systems and values. Religious media is increasingly diverse. The emergence of spiritual discourse in managerial contexts may be seen as a secularised revival of Protestant work ethic (Bell & Taylor, 2003, pp. 329-349).

In Britain, the post Second World War period was crucial in formulating occupational mythology, culture and ideals and the professional bodies played a crucial role in this process. They provided a forum and a publication, and both of these encouraged members to express their views about the role of public relations in the world. Public relations practitioners were portrayed as evangelists for their organizations and also for their own occupational cause. Public relations was regarded as a vocation and the quotes displayed in Figure 1 exemplify some of the ideals and aspirations of the time, some of which ran counter to technocratic scientism of training and education espoused by others keen to see public relations progress as a business practice.

Think of it [public relations]…as helping to lighten the darkness which envelops men's minds, getting rid of ignorance, misunderstanding, bias and fears which have been born in him for centuries. (England, 1958, p. 44; cited in L'Etang, 2004, p. 199)

If we do not believe in the worthwhileness of the organizations whose gospel we set out to deliver, then not only shall we fail in our mission but we shall be unworthy of our craft. (Hess, 1950, p. 6; cited in L'Etang, 2006, p. 35)

Although studying methods and ways and means is absolutely indispensable for mastering a profession, this line of study may only create experts and not apostles. Yet it is apostles that public relations need. Apostles again need a philosophy. (Anema 1954, p. 15; cited in L'Etang, 2006, p. 35)

In our work we are in fact today taking sides in the perpetual war for the Soul of Man. (Wimbush, 1953; cited in L'Etang, 2006, p. 34)

If one might without levity define Almighty God as the Prime Organization, then parsons have been public relations officers ever since Our Lord sent out the first apostles. One might even go further back and say that Moses was applying a special public relations technique when he displayed the Ten Commandments. (Rev Morgan, 1952, p. 16; cited in L'Etang, 2006, p. 35)

Figure 1: Spiritual and religious discourse in early British public relations

The overtly religious discourse in Figure 1 might suggest the need for ethical acceptance and social approval. The PR occupation sought religious alignments and approval as part of its efforts to sanctify its status. In 1965, members presented the Code of Athens to Pope Paul VI (Editorial, *Public relations*, 1956, p. 1; cited in L'Etang, 2004, p. 79), and the original blueprint for the International Public Relations Association (IPRA), drafted by Hans Hermans and Odd Medboe and subsequently revised by Hermans in *The Hermans Memorandum* described the public relations practitioner in almost Nietzschean terms as, "…the welfare officer within management…preaching the gospel of social behaviour…the voice of the social conscience…a kind of superman, constantly throwing the light of the general interest in and on the enterprise on which he wholly depends" (Fife-Clark, 1952, p. 11; cited in L'Etang, 2004, p. 76).

Hermans argued that the public relations occupation was "noble" because by serving the interests of large modern enterprises, it helped them to operate smoothly in a way that benefited the social community as a whole (Fife-Clark, op.cit., p. 11). But public relations practitioners who were in government (then often known as "information officers") should not, "…preach a gospel of government propaganda. His task is to give information on the facts and motives of government policy, to avoid misunderstanding and to promote general understanding; not to kill criticism, but to further discussion" (op.cit., p. 11; cited in L'Etang, 2004, p. 77).

Although religious and spiritual concepts have been used by practitioners to justify their existence and motivate those with aspiration to professional status, it seems that some areas of public relations practice such as, political and religious communication and employee communications, are particularly vulnerable to accusations of propaganda.

3 Conclusions and Implications

In this chapter, I have sought to clarify the methodological (conceptual and terminological) challenges entailed in analysing the relationship between PR and propaganda. I have suggested that an inter-disciplinary, multi-level approach is necessary that combines reflexivity with discursive, political, sociological and historical analysis, grounded in empirical data. Furthermore, I have argued that exploring spiritual features of PR and its more mystical approaches sheds a different light on the relation between PR, propaganda, and processes of conversion, highlighting the fact that PR seeks to define a reality from a particular perspective through discursive practices. The role and balance of power is clearly significant, but not always obvious given opaque networked elites including think tanks and behind-the-scenes advisers to which some organizations may have more access than others. Discursive practices may "other" less conventional positions occupied by those described pejoratively as "activists" (Demetrious, 2006).

The relationship between public relations and propaganda and associated terms such as "spin doctor," "corporate communications," "public affairs" and so on is a consequence of discursive processes in society that are relativist, differential and conflictual (Jensen, 2001, p. 136). The practice of public relations shares with that of propaganda a necessarily problematic status in societies that make claim to democratic discourses. Sophists and rhetors have been the subject of critique since Plato's *Gorgias* (L'Etang, 1996, pp. 106–124; 2006, pp. 359–373). Public relations in itself is a matter for common concern because it is a discursive structuring device. Such public relations formations should be central, not peripheral to public relations studies and research. However, practitioner concerns, rather than those of the public sphere have shaped much academic discourse. In the UK, the industrialization of higher education requires recruitment to vocational courses that teach vocational discourses.

Public relations academia and education has been heavily scientised with much emphasis on "rational" processes and procedures, "metrics" and other technocratic terms. The effect of this has been that less time has been spent reflecting on public relations as "the ghost in the machine," a mystical force in organizations and society – and clearly seen as such by some practitioners.

Critics have taken the view that public relations is an evil force in itself, a term that is interchangeable with propaganda. Public relations practitioners tell stories inside and outside organizations. As such they are meaning-makers who do some sort of magic for organizational chiefs to help construct and maintain organisational cults. Their gift lies in making the cults appear humane, engaging in discussions about the organizational conscience and obligations for social responsibility and to convert others to their respective causes.

In considering the themes of religion and spirituality, we come perhaps a little closer to addressing the role of persuasion in public relations and its relationship to propaganda. Many fear public relations' power, but cannot define what it is, what it does, how it does it, or exactly where it is done. Perhaps this is because public relations takes place in the interstices between beliefs, values, and cultural mythologies.

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Public Relations and Power: How Hard is Soft Power?

Dejan Verčič

Public relations is about soft power that operates through influence and attraction. As different social domains inter-penetrate, media of communication are partly (but not completely) exchangeable: power induces money, influence and/or attraction; money buys power, influence and/or attraction; influence impacts power, money and/or attraction; and attraction draws power, money and/or influence. Public relations is therefore at least theoretically on an equal footing with politics and economics as one of the three fundamental social concepts.

1   Prolegomenon

> The basic concept of power is the ability to influence others to get them to do what you want. There are three mayor ways to that: one is to threaten them with sticks; the second is to pay them with carrots; the third is to attract them or co-opt them, so that they want what you want. If you can get others to be attracted, to want what you want, it costs you much less in carrots and sticks. (Nye & Myers, 2004)

The notion of "soft power" was originally introduced in international relations to distinguish it from political (military) and economic power. Its author, Joseph Nye, the Sultan of Oman Professor of International Relations at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, himself transferred the term also to other social realms, including business and economy (Nye, 2004). However, what I intend to demonstrate in this text is that soft power is nothing but public relations.

2   Argument

> PR is public behaviour of "display-for-attention-and-advantage". (Maloney, 2000, p.3)

Social systems are systems of communication and the most important media of communication are money in an economic domain, power in a political domain, influence in a societal community domain and attraction in a cultural domain (Luhmann, 1979; Luhmann, 1982; Turner, 1991). Power or force belongs to politics as a functional domain, practical realm or a social subsystem, and academically to political science. Money belongs to the economy as a functional domain, practical realm or a social subsystem, and academically to economics as economic science. Influence and attraction or commitment belong to societal community and culture as functional domains and social subsystems, but these exist as practical realms in the form of public opinions, and academically they belong to public relations as a scientific discipline. Public relations stands here as a synonym for applied

communication science, communication management, corporate communication, organisational communication, strategic communication, total communication, and other denominations that can be individually defined and differentiated from each other, but which have a common underlying idea: that by combining knowledge of social sciences and developing experience through training, one can produce better results in inducing influence and attraction or commitment: managed communication, *ceteris paribus*, exceeds spontaneous communication.

Influence is a "constitutive" (Miller, 1989), intrinsic function of public relations (Pfau & Wan, 2006), as is attraction or commitment (Ledingham, 2006; Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002). Public relations as communication management is "about maximizing, optimizing or satisfying the process of meaning creation using informational, persuasive, relational, and discursive interventions to solve managerial problems by co-producing societal (public) legitimation" (Van Ruler & Verčič, 2005, p. 263).

These are therefore the four key strategies public relations as soft power has on its disposal (Van Ruler & Verčič, 2002a, 2002b, 2004, 2005):

The *informational model* is fundamental for normative approaches to public relations and is explicit in the legislation of all democratic societies (Gramberger, 2001; OECD, 2001). Contemporary democracies assume citizens are informed and therefore that a transparent and public government exists. The informational model is the core of government communication (Katus & Volmer, 2000) and it is also assumed in environmental and risk communication (Heath & Abel, 1996; Heath, Seshadri, & Lee, 1998). Lastly, the informational model is present also in strategic uses of public media in building awareness or generalized knowledge (Hallahan, 2001).

The *persuasive model* forms the basis for "corporate public persuasion" (Cheney & Vibbert, 1987; Miller, 1989; Moloney, 2000), "reputation management" (Fombrun, 1996) and "corporate communication," as envisioned by van Riel (1995). It is also fundamental for political public relations (McNair, 1999) and marketing public relations (Weiner, 2006).

The *relational model* is the mainstream model in much academic literature and has many followers (Broom, Casey, & Richey, 1997; Dozier with L. Grunig & J. Grunig, 1995; J. Grunig, 1992b; J. Grunig, 1993; L. Grunig, J. Grunig, & Dozier, 2002; Hutton, 1999; Ledingham & Bruning, 2000, 2001; Starck & Kruckberg, 2001).

Finally, the *discursive model* is available in Cheney and Christensen (2001, p. 241: "organizational communication is essentially a process through which meaning is created, negotiated, and managed") and Heath (1994, p. 20). The development of this model can be logically derived from work of German philosopher J. Habermas (see Hassard, 1993, p. 5; Mayhew, 1997, pp. 35-48). It seems to be in the focus of interest of several European authors (e.g. Burkart, 1993; Holmström, 1996; Jensen, 2000) and has also gained practical applications (Bains, 2007).
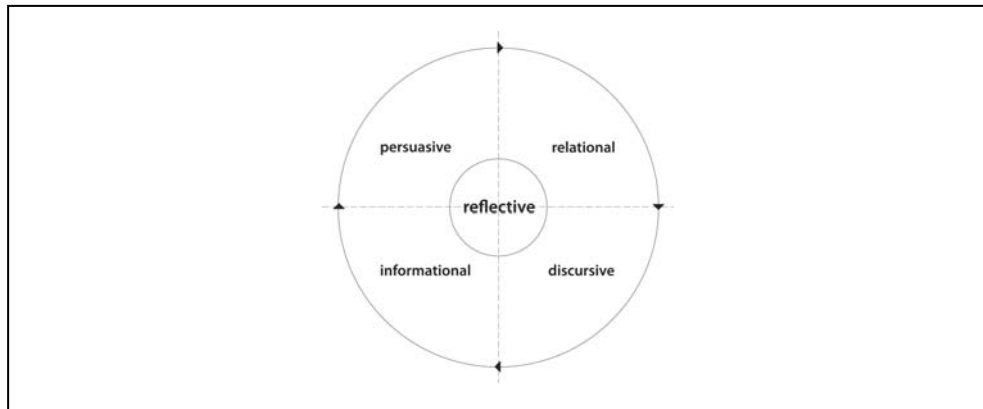
Figure 1: The wheel of communication management

Reflection at the centre of the Figure 1 marks self-referentiality of public relations, its ability to observe itself as an object of investigation, practical improvement and scientific study.

Communicative problems of knowledge/truth, influence, relationships and meaning dictate the direction of soft power. By viewing public relations as communication management (Grunig, 1992; Van Ruler & Verčič, 2002), we can see that all organized (social) action roots in public relations. Not only is public relations a function of management (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 1994; Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Hutton, 1999; Van Ruler & Verčič, 2002; Theaker, 2001; Verčič & Grunig, 2000; Verčič, Van Ruler, Bütschi & Flodin, 2001; White & Mazur, 1995); but management is also a function of communication.

One impetus for the growth of public relations as communication management throughout the twentieth century can be said to be linked to the growth of the intangibles in the economy (Verčič, 2002). Valuation of companies is directly linked to their reputations. As Dasgupta says: "Reputation is a capital asset. One can build it up by pursuing certain courses of action, or destroy it by pursuing certain others" (Dasgupta, 1988, p. 62). Nevertheless, reputations are nothing but publicly formed and held opinions (ibid.; see also Bromley, 1993). The other impetus for the growth of public relations as communication management is linked to the globalisation of democracy and its underlying principles of legitimacy. Elections objectify and sanction public opinions into political realm (Newman & Verčič, 2002; see also Fukuyama, 1995), while contemporary political theories have put "support" in the place of "trust" (Luhmann, 1979).

Political power can be economized (that is exactly what Machiavelli has highlighted, see Masters, 1996 on his "economy of power"), money politicised (see Mazlish, 1989 on the "cash nexus" and its role in the political economy of Karl Marx). Both are directly related to the underlying notions of confidence in social order – in its economic and political realms – and trust in actors (Misztal, 1996; Toennies, 1971). Nowhere is this more obvious than in the USA.

2.1 Arnold Schwarzenegger

Arnold Alois Schwarzenegger was born in 1947 in an Austrian village Thal. When he was 15 he started practicing bodybuilding and at the age of 20 became the youngest-ever Mr. Universe. Why? This is his response: "The Mr. Universe title was my ticket to America – the land of opportunity where I could become a star and get rich." (Schwarzenegger, 2001). Indeed, he duly moved to America, and in 1970 made his acting debut and leading to the realisation of both dreams – to become a movie star and very rich. In 2003, he transferred his star attraction and his money into political office by being elected as the 38th Governor of California.

2.2 Bill Clinton

The former American president is a different example: as the 42nd President of the USA, he built his attraction, which he successfully transferred in money. Since leaving the office in 2001, Clinton makes a sum of US$ 100,000 to 300,000 per speech he gives to a corporation or any other paying organisation. *The Independent* (2007, February 24) estimated that to date, he has amassed around US$ 40 million from public speaking. American presidents are by office attractive ("Power is the ultimate aphrodisiac," said Henry Kissinger in 1973, who at the height of his power was seen as a kind of a sex symbol) and influential power is the essence of the office. An American president can order the use of ultimate military force. However, they do not need to steel from public coffers as banana-republic dictators to become rich. When leaving the office they can transform their attractiveness and influence into money completely legally.

2.3 Transferability

From the above examples, we can see how attraction and persuasiveness, money and power transform from one to another as water freezes to ice or evaporates in gaseous state. Attraction and persuasiveness are at the core of public relations. They are concerned with "the ability to shape preferences of others," which is exactly how Nye (2002) defines soft power. (Communication science theories of framing and agenda-setting perfectly fit in here.) If force and money equal hard power, and attraction and influence equal soft power, they are interchangeable. There are probably some transaction costs involved in these exchanges which progressively diminishes the amounts involved, but this is the same as with changing money: you always pay provision, this way or another and every time you change money, you have less of it.

2.4 Meaning

The fundamental question of the 21st century is becoming meaning (Bains, 2007, p. vii): do things we do make sense? However, this is exactly the same question that was posed at the beginning of the previous century and stands at the start of social scientific investigations:

> Among the questions included in the as yet relatively unformulated field of social science (without reference to logical order) are: immigration; racial prejudice; cultural assimilation; the comparative mental and moral worth of races and nationalities; crime, alcoholism, vagabondage, and other forms of anti-social behavior; nationalism and internationalism; democracy and class-hierarchization; efficiency and happiness, particularly as functions of the relation of the individual to the social framework containing his activities; the rate of individualization possible without disorganization; the difference between unreflective social cohesion brought about by tradition, and reflective social co-operation brought about by rational selection of common end and means; the introduction of new and desirable attitudes and values without recourse to the way of revolution; and, more generally, the determination of the most general and particular laws of social reality, preliminary to the introduction of a social control as satisfactory, or as increasingly satisfactory, as is our control of the material world, resulting from the study of the laws of physical reality. (Thomas & Zaniecki, 1918-1920/1958, p. vii)

These questions were addressed by Bernays in his early writings and proposed as the central problem for public relations. The world turned differently and these issues were addressed primarily through sticks and carrots, but these questions can now be addressed with soft power. Hard power is becoming simply too expensive.

Problems with meaning in the contemporary world highlight how under-used public relations is. This seems to be a subversive statement since there appears to be an uneasiness regarding the transparent use of public relations in contemporary societies. In part, this uneasiness is internal to public relations culture, which has been trying for nearly a century to expel propaganda out of its ranks. This is a mission impossible. Without persuasion, there is no public relations: propaganda is a constitutive part of public relations operation. The uneasiness is also external to public relations in a general fear that soft power is invisible and in that respect more dangerous than overt hard power (force and money). If one observes closely to how governments communicate their own communication, it is obvious that soft power is something for the privileged, not for outsiders: force (prohibited behaviours sanctioned with laws and police) and money (economic incentives) are good enough for citizens. (Governments organise their persuasive and discursive efforts in different "cultural" centres to be located in foreign countries, while they claim that internal communication is limited to information and relationship management.) This is, of course, a clear and present doubletalk, which is exposed in popular exhibitions about "spin doctoring."

3   Conclusion

> Communication media are symbolically generalized codes for transmission of selections. (Luhmann, 1982, p. 361)

We have argued that the most important are power, money, influence and attraction. We have illustrated how they can be (partially) exchanged and that public relations stands on an equal footing with economy and politics, economics and political science. When businessmen and politicians have trouble understanding that, we get major events of international interest such as Brent Spar (Shell) and the wars in Iraq. It seems that public relations is too important to be left to public relations practitioners.

4   Epilogue

> The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is
> an important element in democratic society. Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of
> society constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power of our country. (Ber-
> nays, 1923, p. 9)

In his lectures first in Bordeaux (1890-1900) and in Sorbonne (1904 and 1912), one of the founding fathers of sociology addressed the importance of public opinion for the constitution of modern society. This is characterised with "a real decentralization of the moral life" (Durkheim, 1957, p. 7), with public opinion "at the base of common morality" (ibid.). This idea was elaborated by Lippmann (1922) in his work, *Public Opinion,* taken further in Bernays' *Crystallizing Public Opinion* (1923) and even further in *Propaganda* (1928b) – with many interesting insights that seem nearly post-modern: "Propaganda is the executive arm of the invisible government" (p. 20); "Modern propaganda is a consistent, enduring effort to create or shape events to influence the relations of the public to an enterprise, idea or group." (p. 25); "Present-day politics places emphasis on personality" (p. 101); "People today are largely uninterested in politics" (p. 102); "Good government can be sold to a community just as any other commodity can be sold" (p. 105). In an article to *The American Journal of Sociology*, Bernays (1928a, p. 959) wrote: "Today the privilege of attempting to sway public opinion is everyone's. It is one of the manifestations of democracy that anyone may try to convince others and to assume leadership on behalf of his own thesis."

A philosopher and a Nobel Prize winner in economics, Friedrich Hayek (1993) addressed the same problem: all power rests on, and is limited by, (public) opinion:

> This power of opinion does not rest on the capacity of the holders to take any course of con-
> certed action, but is merely a negative power of witholding that support on which the power of
> the legislator ultimately rests…This ultimate power is thus a negative power, but as a power of
> witholding allegiance it limits all positive power. (p. 93)

What all this means is that soft power is needed for hard power to exist: there is no hard power without prior soft power. Societal (public) legitimation is crucial for any economic or political enterprise to succeed: biotechnology and European Constitution (-al Treaty) are cases to be studied. "In short, public opinion processes allow social groups to change and adapt over time; to alter and create consensual ideas, theories, or schemata, if you will; and to determine collective action based upon these ideas" (Price, 1988, p. 663).

As public opinion emerges out of processes of influence and attraction, public opinion forms as "harder" power than force or money. The social technology for dealing with public opinion is public relations (Verčič, Razpet, Dekleva, & Šlenc, 2000). Money and force, economic and political power rest on (public) opinions as soft power.

What is soft power? Soft power needs to be understood as an exercise of public relations in the meaning of communication management:

> Communication management is engaged in constructing society by making sense of situations,
> creating appropriate meanings out of them, and looking for acceptable frameworks and enact-
> ments. This reflective communication management approach sees communication management
> concerning itself with maximizing, optimizing, or satisfying the process of meaning creation,

using informational, persuasive, relational, and discursive interventions to solve managerial problems by coproducing societal (public) legitimation. (Van Ruler & Verčič, 2005, p. 266)

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Intangible Assets and Communication

Peggy Simcic Brønn

The premise of the chapter is that there needs to be greater focus by organizations on intangible assets and their application to communication and the communication function. The discussion relies heavily on the work of the IABC 2003 Study on Intangible Assets and Communication, which concluded that human capital provides the basis for competitive advantage through building relational capital. The proposition that communication itself can be an intangible asset is also explored within the following outline.

1   Introduction

Lev and Zambon stated in a special edition of European Accounting Review in 2003 that intangible assets are the major drivers of a company's growth. There is no doubt that intangible assets have become increasingly important as a source of competitive advantage. Argenti (2006) cites James (2004) who makes the point that between 1982 and 1999 the percentage of value attributable to intangible assets in S&P 500 firms increased from 40% to 84%.

In 2003, the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) released their study on intangible assets and communication (Roberts, Brønn, & Breunig, 2003). The purpose of the study was to answer a number of questions dealing with how communication can be merged with accounting procedures for performance measurement and disclosure and how this merger can be instrumentally applied by an organization. More importantly, the authors have been interested in the bottom-line effect of communication activities.

Defining intangible assets based on the model of intellectual capital proposed by Bontis (1998), the IABC report concluded that human capital must be mobilized into creating relational capital, which is the basis for building an organization's reputation among various stakeholders. This requires organizations to invest in their structural capital, the one element of the model that the organization has control over. Communication managers need to understand how they can aid organizations and their members in building relationships that contribute to positive reputations, arguably one of an organization's most valuable intangible assets. They must encourage systematic boundary-spanning behaviour by everyone in the organization and allocate financial resources to ensure that this occurs.

2   Defining Intangible Assets

The term "intangible assets" is used in financial accounting to denote those production factors a firm can claim ownership for, but which are not physical properties. Often referred to as intellectual capital, they can be viewed as intangible goods and intangible competencies (Eustace et al., 1999). Intangible goods can be bought, sold, and stocked in a

disembodied form and to a certain extent can be objectively valued. Competencies are often defined through intellect, leadership, risk taking, individual beliefs, ethics and knowledge. Intangible assets are also sometimes referred to as invisible assets and can be broken down into categories comprising internal and external assets. External intangible assets may include an organization's brand, customer loyalty, reputation, third-party relationships and record of accomplishment. Internal assets may comprise values, culture, processes, behaviours, and internal communication.

Together, these "soft" assets comprise what is known as the knowledge resource of the organization, i.e. what the organization in totality "owns" that, together with its financial resources, provide it with competitive advantage. Incorporating intangible assets in financial valuation gives firms the ability to capture a wider definition of the organization's resources than just the financial one. This has become increasingly important as more and more value creation stems precisely from intangible assets, most of which are not represented on the balance sheet (OECD, 1992). Furthermore, even when these "hidden assets" show up on the financial statement, they are expressed as costs and not as assets – possibly resulting in an underinvestment.

From a communication point of view, intangible assets have become important due to the general higher level of knowledge in society. Stakeholders such as consumers, political authorities, interest organisations and potential employees are more conscious about where they stand and what they want. The relationship between an organisation and its environment is based on expectations of a certain standard of behaviour and a documented reason for its existence. For example, potential employees want documented evidence of the company's work climate and the opportunities for challenging and interesting tasks. Similarly, official authorities and unions seek documentation of healthy work environments and responsible behaviour.

Bontis (1998) divides intellectual capital into three elements – human capital, relational capital and structural capital (see Figure 1):

Human capital in the form of individual competences, skills, and experience of people cannot be owned by the firm, but only rented. This asset is not valued on the balance sheet but is rather represented as a cost through wage expenses on the income statement.

Relational capital combines and relates people to each other and allows them to exchange their knowledge, skills and insights. It is what makes human capital succeed. Relational capital is built internally in the organization as well as externally. Firms need relationships with many stakeholders in order to be successful. Getting people together to exchange their knowledge and build key contacts is the first driver of value creation. Thus, relationship building can affect reputation as an image of trustworthiness has been produced, and participants are willing to come back and exchange again.

Structural capital enables the relation-building process. It is also the only part of intellectual capital that the organization owns. These "hard assets" of organizational routines (procedures, manuals, leadership) and organizational infrastructure (databases, IT systems, licenses) allow people to connect. It is traditionally represented in formal management systems and financial statements.

The IABC study on intangible assets concluded that relational capital is what makes human capital succeed; it combines and relates people to each other and allows them to exchange their knowledge, skills and insights in business situations. Accordingly, this relational capital then produces reputation and image. The IABC study's results suggest that the

quality of relationships determines reputation. Other researchers who see reputation as the relational history with multiple stakeholders (Coombs, 2000) have seconded this.

Of the three elements comprising intellectual capital, relational capital is the most relevant for professional communicators. Relational capital is based on a network way of thinking; it produces reputation and image when parties successfully exchange insights, experiences and information.
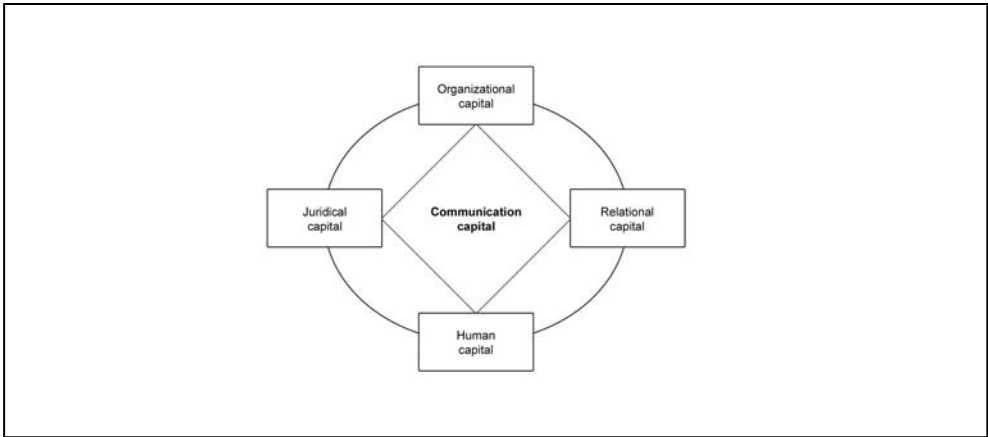
Figure 1: Linking human capital, relational capital and structural capital (Bontis, 1998)

3   Reputation Capital and Communication

Low and Kalafut (2000) state that reputation is an organization's ultimate intangible asset. Its importance is reflected by Kay (1993), who classifies reputation as one of four distinctive capabilities that he claims give an organization competitive advantage. It is simply the perception that people have of an organization. However, it is also a channel of communication. Kay defines reputation as the "most important commercial mechanism for conveying information to customers" (p. 87).

Reputation building, according to van Riel and Fombrun (2007), is one of the objectives of corporate communication. Fombrun and van Riel (2004) identify five principles associated with communication that are correlated with firms having high reputation rankings. The five principles are visibility, distinctiveness, authenticity, transparency, and consistency. They added the principle of responsiveness in their in 2007 published book *Essentials of Corporate Communication*.

The drivers of visibility are public prominence and market prominence. Public prominence occurs when an organization has high street exposure, when it proclaims its national heritage or when it has a strong media presence. Market prominence occurs when there is powerful brand equity, it is listed on a public stock exchange and/or has highly publicized corporate citizenship. An organization's distinctiveness are the communication elements that expresses what makes every organization unique, what it stands for as evidenced in slogans, trademarks and logos, and corporate stories. Communications should be stake-

holder-relevant, realistic and memorable. Building authenticity starts with organizational identity, that "beating heart of the organization" (van Riel & Fombrun, 2007, p. 165); what makes the organization real, genuine, reliable and trustworthy. Transparent organizations allow stakeholders access to information that confirms (or disconfirms) their perceptions of the organization. Areas in which stakeholders want information include products and services, financial performance, vision and leadership, social responsibility, and workplace environment. A successful reputation platform is recognized by having consistency in all of an organization's communications, starting with the dialogue with its stakeholders. Lastly, organizations must be responsive. This is in the spirit of two-way symmetrical communications, which is built on the premise that the organization will adjust its stance or behaviour based on feedback from the environment. Organizations need to demonstrate their willingness to be open for input.

3.1   Relational and Social Capital

Reputation capital can be defined as the difference between an organization's book value and its market valuation. It can also be viewed as the value to an organization of its brands and relationships or even as the sum total of impressions derived from every single source of an organization's communication, including employees, i.e. human capital. Martin and Hedrick (2006) make the point that it is not only the corporate communication activities that support building the intangible asset of reputation that is important. Increasingly, organizations are recognizing that managers and employees in their day-to-day work create informal impressions. This occurs through their interaction with persons internal and external to the organization. Thus the human resources, through relational and social capital, are creating reputation capital.

Social capital comprises internal and external interpersonal networks, trust and knowledge sharing, and shared mental models and mindsets, including sense of organizational identity (Martin & Hedrick, 2006). It also includes the ability to develop these interpersonal relationships (Hartman & Lenk, 2001). According to Tushman and Scanlan (1981) the development of relational capital is dependent on people (human capital) who have the ability to:

- obtain information from outside units *to* their own unit and
- disseminate the information to internal users *within* their own unit.

These people are referred to as "boundary spanners." They are organizational members who link their organization with the external environment. Boundary spanners are sometimes referred to as "communication stars" in the communication field (Tushman & Scanlan, 1981). Such "stars" are able not only to connect, but also to translate information into a format that is material and matching with the decision-making processes going on within an organization or unit. Their co-workers see internal communication stars as being technically competent and to have work-related expertise. These stars communicate significantly more often than non-stars with other areas in their closer work environment, in the organization as a whole and with areas outside the organization. Cross and Prusak (2002) refer to them as the people who make organizations go – or stop. Some characteristics of these communication stars include:

- have more unit experience
- located at higher levels on the hierarchy, but job status not generally a factor
- have more unit transfers
- more externally oriented – strong and diverse external orientation
- more professionally and operationally oriented
- have more formal status (associated with internal consultation)
- in a research setting, have higher degrees and publish more
- years in the unit and professional orientation strongest determinants for being consulted
- supervisory status is not a necessary condition to be a star
- highly linked to other departments.

Qualifications of boundary spanners, some of which are of a personal nature, include technical skills, economic skills, legal skills, and network knowledge. Social qualifications may include the extent to which a person can exhibit autonomous, prudent and useful behaviour in a social setting. Communication abilities include extraversion, conflict management, empathy, emotional stability, self-reflectiveness, sense of justice, and cooperativeness.

4 Structural Capital

As mentioned previously, in order for the organization to build relational capital it needs to invest in structural capital. This is the ability to achieve a network of relationships. According to Ritter (1999), as reported in the IABC study, two things are necessary. The first are the qualifications of people within the organization to "behave properly," including their specialist and social skills. The second is task execution on the part of the organization, including relationship-specific and cross-relational tasks. Further, in order to stimulate boundary-spanning activities by employees and thus facilitate the development of internal and external communication networks, organizations must pay attention to at least four issues (Tushman & Scanlan, 1981; Ritter, 1993). These are: (1) the availability of internal resources, (2) the network orientation of human resource management, (3) integration of the communication structure and (4) openness of corporate culture.

Internal resources comprise the financial resources needed for gathering information, paying for communication technology, travelling and so on. It also includes the physical resources such as buildings and equipment; personnel resources for managing tasks and providing qualifications; and informational resources to support those handling relationships. Human resource management involves selecting personnel that are network oriented. Networking abilities and experiences should be part of job announcements and job descriptions. Current personnel should also be assessed for these traits. An integrated communication structure is the key for information exchange between different departments. This includes both formal (company-driven) and informal (social) structures. This ensures that cross-departmental communication is common and that individuals cannot stand in the way of interaction.

The IABC study further quotes Ritter when defining openness of corporate culture. There should be an emphasis on flexibility, spontaneity and individuality. It also emphasizes competition and differentiation. By creating an entrepreneurial spirit, openness can

motivate employees, in particular when it comes to making decisions and taking responsibility. Ritter considers this as particularly important for relationship and network management as both tend to be dynamic. He also stresses the need for an external orientation on the part of the organization:

- selecting subset of organization's technically competent staff (potential boundary spanners)
- giving them the opportunity to develop contacts and broaden their exposure
- transfers, work assignments and in-house training
- encouraging more extensive external communication
- work assignments, travel allowances, special education programs
- recognizing and reward boundary spanning individuals
- creating a climate where it is possible to ask for assistance
- where providing expertise is recognized, valued and rewarded
- revolving around norms
- a communication system that facilitates shared experience (Turner et al., 1996)
- allows for increased intensity, time of acquaintance and frequency of dialogue.

Hartman and Lenk (2001) propose a "strategic communication capital model" and suggest that those organizations with effective strategic communication could signal this "intangible value" and gain competitive advantage. The model highlights the intangible value of the communication system, what we have defined as structural capital. Tucker et al. (1996) support this as they recognize that it is the knowledge base and the organization's communication systems that are the core foundation of interactive exchanges. The system drives "efficient and effective use of people and other resources in business processes that in turn lead to desired business results" (Hartman & Lenk, 2001, p. 151). Feedback is also included between people in the organization and its stakeholders (see Figure 2).
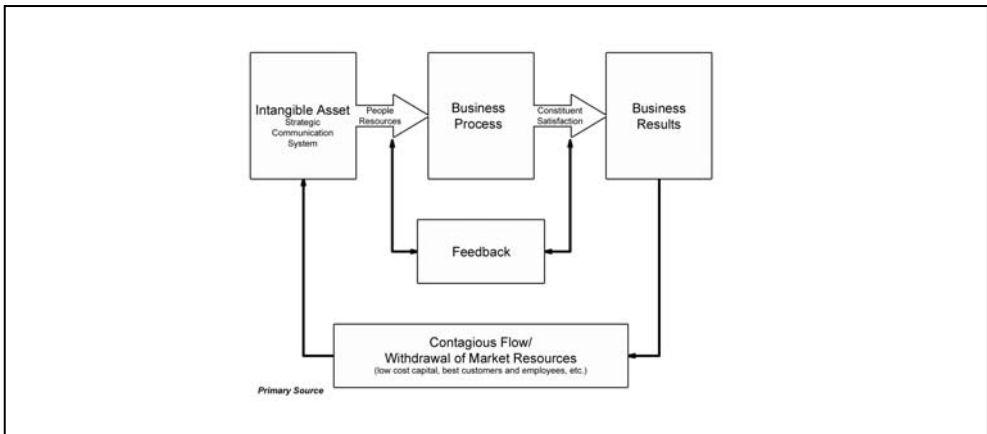
Figure 2: Strategic communication capital model (Hartman & Lenk, 2001)

5   Communication as an Intangible Asset

As we saw from the work of Fombrun and van Riel (2004), communication is critical for building reputation. Further, as noted by Flynn (2006), reputation follows relationships, and relationships are an outcome of communication. Thus, it is not a stretch to assert that communication itself is an intangible asset. Malmelin (2007) captures this thinking in the communication capital model, which views communication as an organizational asset and resource, including both internal and external communication. This model considers communication capital as consisting of juridical capital, organizational capital, human capital and relational capital (see Figure 3).
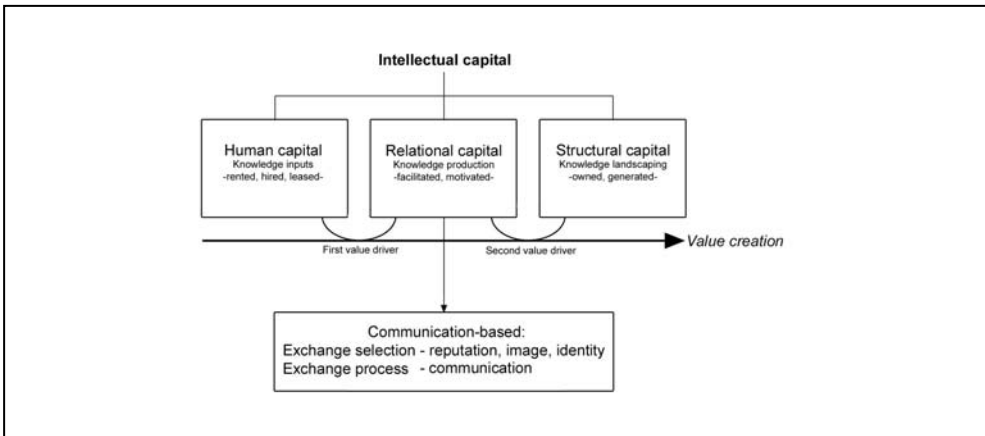
Figure 3: Model for communication capital (Malmelin, 2007)

Juridical capital, according to Malmelin, is normally described as structural capital. It is the capital owned by the organization and includes legally protected rights and information, such as patents and copyrights. It can also include information systems, software and technologies. This capital is important as it provides the basis for the organization's ability to do business. Organizational capital consists of those "communications practices and procedures that are not dependent on individual people" (Malmelin, 2007, p. 303). These include organizational culture, communication systems and management styles. The organization and management of communication are also components of organizational capital in this model.

Malmelin's definition of human capital is similar to previous definitions in this chapter. It includes the competence and expertise of staff, including knowledge, skills, experiences, characteristics, and so on. Like Martin and Hedrik (2006), Malmelin recognizes the role of human capital in building reputation. This asset must be viewed as part of the corporate communication process, and emphasis must be placed on communication competencies as part of human capital. The last factor comprising communication capital in Malmelin's model is relational capital, defined here as the "relations of the company and its representatives with customers, partners and other outside stakeholders" (p. 306). With the growing

demand for transparency and emphasis on networks, communications with and between stakeholders will be growing.

The author believes that communication competence is on the brink of being recognized as a key success factor for organizational success. If so, then this model adds the tools that make it capable for quantifying the value of communication capital through investment in the various components comprising this asset.

6   Communication Management and Intangible Assets

The discussion of intangible assets and communication has implications for the definition of public relations/communication. Today the function has moved from seeing itself as managing communication between an organization and its publics (Grunig & Hunt, 1984) to, among other things, building positive relationships with an organization's publics (Lattimore et al., 2005). This is referred to in the field as organization-public relationships (OPR). Heath and Coombs (2006) state that today's practice of public relations is helping organizations to build relationships. Grunig (2006) believes that public relations researchers have studied relationships more than any other topic in the discipline in the last two decades (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000). Grunig also believes that the ROI of public relations will develop through the intangible asset that relationships provide to organizations. Lan (2006), in a study of public relations and strategy, found that relationships can lead to competitive advantage because they are valuable, rare, difficult to imitate and hard to be substituted.

However, research suggests that it is the quality of the organization's business processes that contribute to communication competence and influence business outcomes. This is captured in the organization's ability to mobilize human capital through the structural capital necessary to make it happen.

Even though public relations or communication professionals are often described as boundary spanners themselves (Coombs & Holladay, 2006), we get a different picture if we look at (1) how organizations communicate, (2) who within the organization is communicating, (3) who is actually building relationships with stakeholders, and (4) what systems are necessary for stimulating communications. It seems everybody in the organization is capable of boundary spanning and indeed should be encouraged to do so. We thus have to redefine the way we view the role of public relations managers and the public relations function. The definitions where public relations are responsible for the management of communication and relations between the organization and its stakeholders need to be reviewed. A more accurate definition, and one that more accurately describes today's organization, is that the role of the communication manager is to stimulate and sustain conditions within the organization for boundary spanning activities by employees (communication stars). A large part of this new role is helping organizational members relate to each other and to the world outside the organization.

Relational capital is based on communication. Managing communication, thus, becomes vital to creating value. According to the IABC report, this requires that communication management acquire elaborate tooling and instrumentation on a similar level of specification and detail as the management of financials.

7   Measuring Communication ROI

A major concern preoccupying public relations practitioners and academics is that of measurement. As Argenti (2006) laments, the profession is still trying to find ways to measure the outcomes of their efforts. Argenti and his colleagues have been searching for a statistical methodology to link communication and business value, i.e. the causal relationship between business outcomes and communication activities. As opposed to the traditional definition of outcomes discussed in the public relations literature, changes in attitudes or behaviour for example, Argenti rather defines outcomes in terms of market share, revenue and earnings. This is extremely useful and moves the profession away from the reliance on output measurements and their dependence on counting.

Argenti (2006, p. 33) contends that the IABC study found a "strong anecdotal link" when connecting intangible assets to market evaluation. The IABC study did not address this issue but rather provided the framework for valuing communication efforts through structural and human capital that can be reflected in the balance sheet of an organization and thus in its overall valuation. Demonstrating causality is different from placing a value on communication efforts that can be reflected in the balance sheet. However, work such as that done by the IABC study, coupled with further statistical studies as undertaken by Argenti and his colleagues will certainly add to demonstrating the importance of the communication function and its impact on organizational success.

Grunig (2006) believes that the true ROI for public relations develops through relationships, which he views as the most important of an organization's intangible assets. Much of the work on measuring relationships, however, has been confined to academic research (Huang, 1997; Hon & Bruner, 2002). This area has not received very much attention from the practitioner community. One exception is reported on by Brønn (2007) in which a Norwegian consulting firm used Hon and Grunig's (1999) work (available at www.instituteforpr.org) to measure relationships of an outsourcing firm with satisfactory results. Another interesting source in this area is the new book by Paine (2007) titled *Measuring Public Relationships*, which this author was able to download from the web. The book demonstrates the use of Grunig's relationship measure for evaluating relationships with a number of stakeholder groups.

It is clear that communication is being recognized in many circles as providing value to organizations that can be measured in financial terms. A *Business Week* article asked the question "What Price Reputation?" (Engardio & Arnt, 2007). The article made the point that firms are starting to realize the financial benefit of reputation as an intangible asset. This is in large part due to the plethora of reputation measurements on the market that are reported constantly in the media. We have argued that reputation follows relationships and relationships follow communication. They are inextricably linked meaning that paying attention to one and neglecting the others is not a sustainable strategy. Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1995) identified three intangible assets that help people and institutions become world class: concepts, competence and connections. By connections, she meant having "the best relationships, which provide access to the resources of other people and organizations around the world." Gayeski (2007) even suggests that it is time for organizations to get recognition for their investments in intangible assets by reporting them in annual reports and press releases. She proposes that perhaps it is even time for communication directors to start referring to themselves as managers of intangible assets.

We end this chapter with a quote by Max DePree, executive and author of books on leadership (Paine 2007): "We talk about the quality of product and service. What about the quality of our relationships, and the quality of our communications and the quality of our promises to each other?" (Max De Pree).

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Glocalising Public Relations and Crisis Communication: Bridging Gaps of Trust in Multicultural Societies

Jesper Falkheimer

The main question in this chapter is in what way globalization and the development of multicultural publics in national social systems may affect one of the main fields of public relations theory and practice: crisis communication. After an introduction into relevant theories of globalization, ethnicity, crisis communication and public relations, representatives of a local micro-public with five Arabic women is making their voice heard. The qualitative example is based on an ethnographic study conducted during 2006-2007 in an immigrant neighbourhood, Rosengård, in the city of Malmö in Sweden.

1   Introduction

To claim that we live in an era of globalization is not very radical anymore. In a broad sense globalization is one of the main features of modernity and something that has been going on for at least 200 years. However, before the 1990s almost no debate or scientific thought was using the concept or frame of globalization. Instead, the common concept was internationalization that focused upon national relations. According to the same framework, public relations research interest has predominantly been focused upon national differences, not global processes interacting with social systems at intra- or transnational levels. There are exceptions, though, such as Banks (2000) book on multicultural public relations. However, the modern nation-state, characterized by stability and power, has been the paradigmatic norm and cultural frame. Multicultural publics have as a consequence been viewed as anomalies, from this modernist perspective.

In this chapter, the premise is that increasing cultural heterogeneity is a dominant feature of late modern societies (e.g. Giddens, 1990). This premise stands in contrast to the national-cultural determinism that still dominates public relations research and practice. When one speaks of culture in a public relations context, most of us link this concept to mainstream intercultural national communication. One of the most cited studies is the one originally presented by Hofstede (e.g. 1980). By quantifying cultural dimensions of power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism-collectivism and masculinity-femininity, Hofstede sets the scene for intercultural communication for many years. According to these studies, Swedes, such as me, are individualists and have equal relations between men and women. The problem with this kind of conclusions is that Sweden, just as other countries, are not homogenous in any way. New generations communicate through new media technology that takes no interest in old national traditional media borders. They increasingly adopt global lifestyles and associate themselves with transnational brands. In addition, approximately 22% of the Swedish population consists of persons of foreign origin. These persons, and an increasing number of diverse cultures with other backgrounds and life-

styles, construct their cultural identities in a dialectic relation to the society at all levels (locally, regionally, nationally as well as globally). The mobility and liquidity of late modern societies question our belief in national stereotypes. This development towards an increasing diversity also challenges the mass communication paradigm which public relations as a discipline is founded upon. It is dangerous to relate this change to a certain decade, but it was probably during the 1990s that this transformation took off. One may blame new communication technology, from television to cellular phones, even though this is just one of the reasons in the complex development. All together mobility and individualization has led to an increasing chaos for mass communicators. Target groups become lifestyles and change faster than ever. Late modern media systems are being increasingly diversified and citizens are transformed from consumers to producers, or at least co-producers. From a cultural perspective, the globalization is probably better interpreted as processes of glocalization. In other words, local identities are not at all replaced by *one* global identity (even though the elite public in late modern societies may fit into this model). Instead, the globalization seems to multiply micro-publics with different identities at all levels. The sociologist Anthony Giddens concludes:

> Globalization is the reason for the revival of local cultural identities in different parts of the world. If one asks, for example, why the Scots want more independence in the UK, or why there is a strong separatist movement in Quebec, the answer is not to be found only in their cultural history. Local nationalisms spring up as a response to globalizing tendencies, as the hold of older nation-states weakens. (Giddens, 2002, p. 13)

The introducing question in this chapter is in what way this social transformation has affected one of the main fields of public relations theory and practice: crisis communication. We live in an "era of crises" (Lerbinger, 1997) that easily may be linked to the social development. But bear in mind that the statement does not have to mean that societies, organizations and individuals directly experience more physical crises, such as natural disasters or accidents, than before. Instead, the statement is founded upon the notion that we experience them indirectly, as distant but affective spectators, more often. There are several well-known reasons for this crisis acceleration such as globalization and the medialization of societies, which will be further discussed. The chapter starts with a wide discussion about public relations, crises and culture. In the final part, it presents an empirical example of the theoretical reasoning. The empirical material has been collected during focus groups with multicultural publics in Sweden focusing attitudes towards authorities and behaviour during crises, primarily from a public relations angle. This study as well as the perspective in this chapter has an agency-oriented and cultural approach that may be illustrated with a recent statement by the communication scholar James Lull (2007, p. xi):

> Whether speeding along in the fast lanes of the information highway, or meandering slowly along the winding paths of the cultural countryside, people never function simply as passive objects, mere victims of their increasingly diverse and interconnected social and cultural worlds. They actively engage those words as subjective agents who struggle on their own behalf, and on behalf of their various partnerships, communities, and causes to bring meaning, dignity, influence, and pleasure into their lives.

2   Public Relations and Crisis Communication

Public relations history may be told in many ways. The common denominator of most histories is that the development of the practice is linked to the expanding role of modern journalism and the development of the information or media society. In a more narrow sense, public relations have been developed as a technique or strategy for handling issues of legitimacy in different social systems. Without doubt, modern journalism must be viewed as one of the prime reasons behind the historical development of public relations. Public relations have developed far beyond just focusing media relations, if one thinks of traditional mass media, but all together the reliance on different media technologies for communicating is increasing for all institutions and organizations. The development of blogs, different ICT-networks and other social media creates new challenges for public relations.

Public relations history may also be told in an international perspective. While the original story in the USA primarily is focused on press agents and reactive damage control, the story in several European nations is more related to governments and their aim to inform their citizens. The national differences are founded in structural rather than individual factors, as L'Etang (2004) concludes in her study of the public relations industry in Britain. Despite these differences, there is no doubt that the public opinion in most countries views public relations as something sleazy. From a critical theoretical perspective, using Habermas theory of strategic communicative action (1984), public relations has basically been viewed as a tool used by elites dominating the public sphere. There are several reasons for the bad public image, e.g. parts of historical and contemporary practice, mass media framing and a sound public scepticism towards persuaders of all kinds. Another possible reason may be that public relations is mainly visible, through rhetorical spokespersons, during threatening disorders in normal systems, in other words during crises. If something goes wrong, public relations is often given the blame. If everything works out fine, public relations is seldom praised. On the other hand, it is during crises that public relations have its main functional role.

Crisis management, in this chapter including issues management, is the core of public relations practice (Falkheimer & Heide, 2006). This does not mean that reactive damage control is what defines practice, even though image restoration strategy (Benoit, 1995) is an important practice and theory. Putting crisis management in centre may lead some scholars to protest, saying that everyday communication processes under normal circumstances are more important. It may be so, but these processes may also be linked to the constant change and crisis contingencies in late modern organizations and societies. The main reason for developing organizational communication systems (functions, channels, strategies) may be that they are crucial for avoiding that organizations get fatally hurt during radical changes and crises.

Crises have traditionally been viewed as objective explanative events that may be managed using different methods. The objective approach is based on linear thinking, searching for one simple grand cause and one great solution to crises (Boin et al., 2005, p. 5). Crisis communication has, as a consequence, been viewed mainly as tactical transmission of information. "Much of the extant writings consist of what 'to do' or what 'not to do' drawn from case studies," according to Coombs (2007, p. 135). Most of us know the advice given to crisis communicators: be fast, transparent, do not speculate and only tell the truth. The focus on post-crisis has dominated practice as well as theory even though issues

management is in some ways an exception. The lack of theoretical development may be explained as a consequence of how crisis communication has been defined. By tearing down the constructed borders between risk and crisis as well as between the different phases (pre, during and post) the field becomes more relevant and fertile. In contemporary crisis management (e.g. Boin et al., 2005) scholars analyze crises from five relevant perspectives, integrating all phases: (1) sense making (risk and issues analysis, grasping the potential crises), (2) decision making (executive management), (3) meaning making (communication and mediation), (4) end games (termination) and (5) learning (improving capability).

Another weakness of traditional crisis communication is, linked to the earlier discussion, the neglect of cultural dimensions. The emphasis on senders and transmission of fast information during or after crises has led to the dominant view that publics are viewed as passive receivers of messages. Relationship building and creation of trust pre-crisis are not viewed as an important part of the crisis process even though this phase is crucial for the results. The lack of interest in how publics interpret and construct meaning is indeed not only a weakness of crisis communication research (and practice); it is also prevalent in other sub-fields of public relations. There are numerous attempts to explain what and how professional practitioners do and think, as well as analyses of public relations messages and media texts, but not very many studies of what happens in the construction processes among different interpretative publics.

3 Multicultural Publics, Ethnicity and Intercultural Communication[1]

As mentioned above, crisis communication has traditionally been based on a mass communication paradigm. Sender-oriented perspectives and rational message transmission have dominated. One way to challenge this paradigm is to focus on the contemporary cultural and ethnic diversity in society. In Sweden, as an empirical example, approximately 22% of the population consists of persons with a foreign background, which means that they were born in either another country or that at least one parent was born abroad, according to Statistics Sweden (Nilsson, 2004).

Multicultural communication as a concept has links to different research fields and traditions. In social and cultural science, the main fields are anthropology and intercultural communication. In this section, I try to summarize some of the central communication issues, perspectives and dichotomies.

Intercultural communication is defined as the study of heterophilous interpersonal communication between individuals from different cultures (Rogers & Hart, 2002). The scholars of the field mainly focus on dyads and interpersonal communication, in contrast to the field of international communication that tends to work on a macro level with a focus on power, politics, and processes of influence over national borders. The founding father of intercultural communication as a research field in the 1950s was the social anthropologist Edward T. Hall. Among several issues, Hall focused upon the importance of context and how much explicit or implicit information different cultures use in their communication, defining high or low context cultures. According to this theory, a context embraces information not included in the message that often is more important than the message itself.

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[1]   Thanks to Dr. Mats Heide, Lund University, Sweden for contributing to this part.

The significance of a context varies from different languages and the use of the context to produce a meaning differs from culture to culture (Lim, 2002). According to Hall (1976), high-context communication either occurs when most of the information is in the physical context or internalized in the person. Low-context communication takes place when the larger part of the communication is explicit coded in the message. The obvious conclusion is that to acquire a correct understanding one requires profound knowledge on different group's culture and language.

Halualani (2000) has stated that intercultural communication has been researched from two main perspectives and one complementary critical approach. First, there is the traditional social science perspective that is based on functionalism and positivist epistemology. This approach has dominated intercultural communication. In practice, it usually means using quantitative (and sometimes experimental) methods trying to classify differences between national cultures. The risk of national cultural determinism is obvious. Another problem is that: "… there exists the assumption that to possess a strong identification with one's ethnic group means that a set of distinct meanings and symbols is invoked in the same way and to the same degree (i.e. salience) by all members" (Halualani, 2000, p. 584). In other words, these studies objectify cultural subjects and neglects identity creation as dynamic sense making processes. The lack of theoretical criticism is another problem.

Second, intercultural communication has been studied from interpretative perspectives. However, these anthropological studies do seldom use the concept of intercultural communication, since it is mainly associated with traditional social science. Instead, one more often uses the concept ethnicity to describe and understand cultural group identities. Ethnicity is in this sense defined in social constructionist sense, as something that is dynamic, situational and depending upon the social context, and something that everyone in one way or another is a part of. Ethnicity, according to the anthropologist Eriksen (1993) becomes meaningful when it is experienced as being threatened. This means that ethnicity as a social formation is relational – it develops as a reaction to social pressure. If one accepts this conclusion there is a direct link to crisis communication. There are case studies that have shown that ethnic differences seem to escalate during crises (even though the mass media tend to overestimate them). This seems as an example to have been the case during the 1998 Gothenburg Fire in Sweden that killed 63 young people and injured 213, most of them with a foreign origin. According to an interview study with 34 young people of different ethnic backgrounds: "A relatively wide gap between 'the immigrant group' and Swedish society was traceable, as was an implicit fear of severe conflicts between immigrants and racists in connection with the fire" (Olausson, 2000, p. 258).

Ethnicity may also be used as a strategy to reach certain political or commercial objectives. Ethnicity is used in this way both in political combats where history or language is used as arguments for increasing independence, and in tourism where ethnic stereotypes are marketed. Typical interpretative research methods are participating observations and ethnographies. The empirical focus is upon local traditions, codes, rituals and other expressions that may gain understanding of institutional differences. The main problem with these studies is that "culture" is taken for granted and that the "context" is to narrow and micro-oriented. There is a risk that macro structures (social, economical, political) are neglected.

> This suggests that identities reside in contexts, or already out there, as opposed to meanings and their relations continually constitute that very context. Cultural identities, then, become fully apprehend able as a readable, consistent, and coherent assemblage of meanings and subjectivities. (Halualani, 2000, p. 584)

Finally, there is a critical approach linked to the interpretative perspective that binds micro processes to a critical macro power analysis. The socio-economic, political and historical contexts are put in the centre through the use of critical theory, post-structuralism and post-colonial theory. The problem here is methodological since these critical studies tend to prioritize representations and texts and neglect everyday interaction and identity formation. Conclusions are made through "arm-chair thinking."

In the discussion of intercultural communication issues, different dimensions of cultural variability are used to explain and predict differences and similarities. Besides the high and low context dimension that was introduced earlier, the most common dimension is individualism–collectivism, which exists on both a cultural level and an individual level (Gudykunst & Lee, 2002). A distinguishing factor is "in-groups" that are important for the members and for which they make sacrifices. In-groups have the power to influence the member's behaviour in different situations. In individualistic cultures members have many in-groups (e.g. family, friends, profession and associations), and consequently they have relative little influence on the members. In collectivistic cultures, the logic is vice versa. Cultural individualism and collectivism influence the communication in a culture through the norms and laws that are associated with the dominated cultural tendency (Gudykunst & Lee, 2002). Low-context communication tends to dominate in individualistic cultures and high-context communication is predominant in collectivistic cultures (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988).

Hall's use of high and low context dimensions have links to Hofstede's (1980) macro-analytical indexes for classifying national differences, that has dominated the intercultural field for several years. Hofstede's analytical dimensions are originally based on a large data base study of employee values in approximately 56 countries, collected at IBM. Through analysis of this database, Hofstede found four primary dimensions that differentiated cultures at national levels: power distance, individualism – pluralism, masculinity – femininity and uncertainty – avoidance. He later supplied one more dimension: long-term orientation.

There are obvious limitations with Hofstede's theory. Despite the large amounts of survey data, one may question if employees at IBM represent national cultures. The concept of nationality is quite difficult to handle. Cultural identity is complex, situational and dynamic and may not be able at all to define through quantitative surveys. One may also – and this is the main problem with the whole idea of thought – question the national cultural determinism that Hofstede's research is based upon. Explaining organizational behaviour as based on national cultural differences may be a simplification. Hofstede (2002) has answered some of these arguments and means that surveys do have limitations but that he and other scholars have validated the study of IBM employees during the years. Still, the criticism remains (e.g. McSweeney, 2002, p. 113): Hofstede's theory is static, not taking into account social changes, power, diversity or situational contexts and may enforce national cultural stereotypes.

All together, intercultural communication appears to be a rather traditional field viewing culture from a Western-biased perspective. A majority of the studies are quantitative, comparative and conducted by Western scholars (Barnett & Lee, 2002). The quantitative

bias in the traditional research fails to grip the complex and intertwined relation of context, including economic, educational and political factors, and communication in an intercultural setting.

4   An Empirical Example: Glocal Communities in the Neighbourhoods of Malmö, Sweden

The following excerpt from a case study works as an example for several of the issues that are raised above. It is based on an ethnographic study conducted during 2006-2007 in an immigrant neighbourhood, Rosengård, in the city of Malmö in Sweden. The excerpt below is based on one group interview with five Arabic women. It is, obviously, not a representative study but gives the reader a close qualitative notion of the problem raised in this chapter. Quite different from traditional public relations research that focuses upon communication managers or messages, we try to give some often-unheard voices space. All together, we made around eight group interviews, besides several expert interviews with communication strategists and practitioners. The aim of the study was to gain new insights and develop multicultural communication strategies from a governmental perspective. There were and are several problematic issues that communication professionals have to deal with in everyday work, which during a severe physical societal crisis may be a question of life and death. One concrete issue regards the choice of language during the process of crisis. Should the governmental institutions translate risk messages before and during crises? Another issue is what these institutions may do to build relationships with different cultural publics that will be crucial, based on the premise that without legitimacy no organization can communicate with anyone, during crises? How do the institutions face the fact that several persons of a foreign origin do not take any interest of the mainstream mass media, such as public service broadcasting, which are preferred by crisis communicators? How do governmental institutions handle that among some publics dominated by persons of foreign origin, the trust in actors such as the police service, government, health-care and mass media is lower than among average native Swedes? A communication strategy that may be optimal for one public, such as the one represented by educated mainstream Swedes may insult or be inefficient for other publics. All together professionals face a more and more complex and difficult task, which in several ways are based on an increasing cultural and social diversity in the environment where local systems are connected with global social formations. With these issues and questions, formulated behind our desks, in our minds, we made the group interviews with persons of foreign origin living in the housing area Rosengård in the third largest city in Sweden, Malmö. Rosengård was planned and built during the 1960s and 1970s as part of the so-called Swedish Million Home Program, which aimed to build functional rental apartment buildings for the labour and middle classes. Today, mainly persons of diverse foreign origins inhabit Rosengård, similar to other housing areas built in the suburbs of Sweden during this period. In Rosengård, there live about 20,000 people. Seventy-five percent of them are born in another country or have at least one parent born in another country. The main ethnic minorities are coming from Iraq, Lebanon, former Yugoslavia, Poland, Turkey and Somalia. Fifty percent of the inhabitants live on social welfare and the employment rate is approximately 30%. The population in Rosengård is a lot younger than in other areas in Malmö.

5   Public Relations in a Basement in Rosengård, Malmö

The first interview took place in a basement in the neighbourhood and was arranged through an interpreter. The group consisted of five low-educated women, originating from Palestine and Lebanon. Two of them spoke some Swedish but the other three women only spoke Arabic, and therefore used the interpreter. All five women had lived in Sweden for approximately 14-15 years. All of them were unemployed, living isolated from the Swedish society but close to their relatives and the social network around these relatives. We had decided to meet at 10 a.m. but the only ones who were in time have been we. The women arrived one by one and the last woman entered the cellar room about one hour after the scheduled time. Three of the women wore Muslim veils; two of them (the oldest women) nodded friendly to us when they entered the room since hand shaking with un-known persons is considered wrong according to their cultural-religious belief. All five women were dressed in traditional clothes.

We introduced the theme of the discussion and very soon, one of the women asked what they had to do during a crisis. They obviously saw us as representatives of the government, which we in one way were, and they were not at all used to group interviews. From a methodological standpoint, the whole situation was very difficult and complex. On the other hand, we soon came to the conclusion that these direct meetings were the only possible way to make the voices of these women heard. Surveys would be useless. One of the difficulties that our interpreter explained to us before the interview is that these women would find it hard to give individual opinions. Instead, there would be collective answers representing the whole group. Following this logic, our questions were discussed in the group intensely but the final interpreted answer was often just a collective one.

Initially, we tried to find out some basic facts about our respondents social relations. They explained that they mainly spent time with persons originating from their home country and more specifically with their relatives. Two of them had friends who came from Iraq and Kosovo, but otherwise they did not have any contacts outside their community. Asking why they did not have such contacts and relations the answers were that it was because of language and the fact that one related to the one whom one had interpersonal contact with. None of the women was member of any association, except for this loosely arranged group that was linked to the rental housing company.

We then gave some examples of typical crises and asked if they had any experience of crises such as these in Sweden. They spontaneously mentioned the Gothenburg fire in 1998 where 63 young persons of foreign origin were killed in a discotheque. None of them had any relation to someone that was killed or hurt but they had heard a lot about the accident. One of the women actually lived in Gothenburg then and her son was supposed to have gone to the discotheque, but fortunately, something prevented him. They also mentioned the snow chaos that struck the South of Sweden a short time before the interview.

Their collective answer was that they did not know very much about what happened in Sweden. The information they have about problems and accidents are mainly originating from local talk with their families and related persons in the neighbourhood. They have heard through these talks that there had been several fires in the area they live in. One of the women told us that last year she discovered a fire in the kitchen of her son's family and she ran there to put out it. She got smoke in her lungs and had to spend weeks in hospital.

When we asked about in which ways the women got risk or crisis information from the municipality, government and so on they mainly related to direct interpersonal communication, e.g. when firefighters had been in the area. They concluded that the firefighters had only spoken Swedish but that their younger relatives had helped to translate their messages into Arabic. We asked what they would do if the major emergency alarm (an alarm that sounds all over town) went off. None of the women knew that this alarm was tested the third Monday every month at 3 p.m. One woman explained that she would run out of the apartment and try to find a relative or neighbour to talk to. The husband or sons would probably know what was going on, she meant. We then asked if someone knew what phone number to call if one needed emergency help. Two of the women had no idea and said that they would call their husband or sons if there were an emergency. The other three women had learned the phone number (112) from school or from their children, but they were unsure of how it worked.

Asking the women if they would prefer to get risk and crisis information translated into their native language was obviously a bit redundant since some of them spoke no Swedish. They all meant that language was a major problem for them to understand, and insisted that they where very interested about what was going on in society, even though they had limited contacts with their surroundings. This question led us to a discussion about media access and media use.

There are few empirical studies focusing on media access and use among persons of foreign origin. The main reason is that it is very hard to make valid and reliable surveys covering persons of foreign origin. In Sweden, one aggregated survey study has been done (Andersson, 2005) but, since it was conducted in Swedish, it obviously does not include persons that do not speak Swedish. All together, the persons who answered the surveys reflected the immigrant population in Sweden rather well: they were younger than average Swedes, had lower incomes and more often lived in urban environments. The survey shows minor differences in media access between persons with a foreign background and native Swedes. There is one exception: newspapers. About 75% of Swedish households subscribe to a newspaper. However, among first-generation immigrants from countries outside Europe, hardly one-third of households subscribe to a newspaper and there is also a gap in relation to other groups. Otherwise, there is almost no difference when it comes to access to Internet, which is of increasing importance in crisis communication. In first-generation immigrants' households, there is in fact a higher access to Internet than in native Swedish households. When it comes to what media content persons of foreign origin use, the differences are as one may guess huge. Mainstream news media does not play an important role for the persons answering these surveys. In addition, as was mentioned earlier, persons not speaking Swedish were not included in the study population.

The media use in the group differed a bit. The women who spoke some Swedish said that they did watch Swedish television news now and then, especially from TV4 (a commercial channel). Among popular TV shows, these women mentioned the Swedish version of "Cop." However, similar to the women that spoke no Swedish, the most watched television channels from their native country. In school, they got in contact with free papers since these have been used during class for orientation. All together, none of the women spent very much time with different media. In the families, it was the husbands that spent most time watching television. We asked if they used any minority media, e.g. local Arabic radio channels or newsletters. According to a Swedish study (Camauer, 2005) there are approxi-

mately 370 minority media in the country targeted to different ethnic publics. However, the women said that they hardly listened to any of these channels and did not read any of the newsletters. The reason was that these channels were too religious-political and propagandistic, they said.

Talking about trust in other persons and society, research in Sweden (Rothstein, 2005) shows that persons of foreign origin have lower trust towards other persons as well as governmental authorities. A possible explanation is that this gap has nothing to do with cultural origin, but is a result of the social situation in Sweden. Unemployment leads to isolation from society. With these arguments in our heads, we were a bit surprised to hear that the five women meant that they had high trust in the local police as well as different authorities. As a comparison, in another group interview with eight high educated Swedish-spoken women of mainly Iran and Iraq origin who all had work, the trust in authorities was very low.

Finally, we tried to make the five women reflect upon their communication networks. The women said that the main communication node is the surrounding next to the house they live in. Alternatively, inside, e.g. the common laundry room. When something happens, such as an emergency situation, people call each other fast, and the younger relatives run out to get more information. The women explained that if something happened they would not sit still in their apartments but run out and try to act. This explanation fits well with the experiences of emergency rescuers who have had several conflicts at Rosengård when persons interfere at emergency sites. These persons actually want to assist and help, but their actions may lead to severe damage.

6   Glocal Identities and New Publics to Relate to

With reference to the interview done with five women of foreign origin, Eriksen's (1993) conclusion that ethnicity is relational and develops as a reaction to social pressure, is qualitatively confirmed. It is not some kind of cultural origin that explains the difference between these five women and other citizens: it is the lack of communication with mainstream society and the local social network that constitutes this micro-public. The micro-empirical data questions how professional communicators view the publics they are supposed to relate to. The concept of public, as well as stakeholder or target-group, in public relations research is often constructed on a macro-level and from a sender-oriented perspective. Viewing the communication process from the other way around, focusing how meaning is created and constructed among tiny publics out there, makes one understand how complex and glocal social systems are today. National cultural models, such as Hofstede's (1980), do not really take into account the liquidity and multicultural changes in contemporary society. Still, the five intercultural dimensions (power, distance etc.) may be valuable as tools for understanding differences between publics as long as we do not make the mistake to generalize cultural differences as mainly nationally dependent. As an example, the five women does have a more collectivistic and relational framework of understanding, which may explained both as a consequence of the social situation and context they live in, and as a consequence of their former social-cultural experiences and socialization.

The example, as well as seven other group interviews we have done, does support some qualitative conclusions that may be of interest to public relations and crisis communi-

cation. First, that national origin is not the only of foremost explanations to their attitudes towards crisis or authorities. Education, age, social network and language skills might be more important. Second, that mass communication channels does not have the same importance for them as for average Swedes. Interpersonal communication and local social networks are more important. Referring to the quantitative media access and use, the survey also shows the importance of interpersonal media technologies such as phones, mobile phones or Internet. Third, the qualitative study shows that local opinion leaders, e.g. children or ethnic leaders are of high importance. Strategically, crisis communicators must focus more on identifying and relating to these opinion leaders. They need to redirect their information from traditional channels to interpersonal ones. The local housing hosts are probably more effective and trust-worthy as risk and crisis communicators than the mass media. Fourth, the whole study enhances how important the relational aspect is during pre-crisis. Without local legitimacy, crisis communicators have no chance to influence attitudes or behaviour in multicultural publics.

The increasing diversity among publics also must lead to consequences for the organizational structures. Decentralization is, according to the logic of this chapter, a more communicative organizational structure than centralization. It is also a conclusion that diversity outside organizations increases the need of diversity inside organizations, since complex problems only may be solved through complex systems. In other words, public relations departments need to think about the diversity of their strategists and communicators. Diversity should not be understood as only ethnic diversity, but regards all kinds of social-cultural backgrounds.

All together, the theoretical discussion as well as the minor example hopefully shows the need for public relations and crisis communication to be adapted to the glocal development and to move on to a new multicultural and late modern paradigm.

The critique towards mainstream public relations that has been emphasized in this chapter must be understood as primarily focused towards Anglo-American based research since the theoretical development and approach in other language areas often is very different. There are in other words several scholars over the world that agree with a more society-centric approach, well illustrated by the statement of Bentele and Wehmeier (2007, p. 299): "Although public relations always takes place on an organizational, i.e., a meso level, public relations does have functions for society in general."

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Risks and Crises in Virtual Publicity – Can Publicity Crises Be Prevented by Public Relations in the Cyberspace?

Jaakko Lehtonen

The absolute amount of Internet users is growing dramatically, and the cyberspace has become the privileged domain of counter-publicity. Weblogs have already consolidated their position as a communication channel alongside the traditional established media. Weblogs and the blogosphere also offer a new arena for corporate communication. However, the standing of the blogosphere is different compared to the traditional information exchange relationship between corporate communication and the traditional mass media. This chapter is about the new communication sphere, which implies revision of the traditional schemes of public relations and new ethical guidelines for communication.

1   Introduction

Today, the new electronic communication media is having a significant impact on the practices of corporate communication. It has become an irreplaceable instrument for all enterprises in their dialogue with their various stakeholders. The public sphere in which the PR of an organization is working today and will work in the future is changing dramatically. The internet and weblogs as a forum for journalism have added a new dimension to corporate communication: cyberspace, or the forum where internet communications take place.

Adverse publicity in the internet is a new challenge for public relations. No organisation is anxious to see or hear negative news about itself or its products and services. Adverse publicity may threaten an organization's good reputation, and it has the potential to affect consumer confidence in the corporation, which in turn may affect the business of the corporation. For many, the initial enthusiasm about the opportunities the internet seemed to offer for corporate communication has turned into desperation.

The importance of a corporate website is recognized by all, but majority businesses may still be unaware of the threats and opportunities of the blogosphere and do not see it as a mainstream PR practice yet. Black (2006) refers to a study according to which nearly two thirds of businesses in Great Britain were unaware of the threat disgruntled bloggers pose to their organizations, and only 6% actively engaged and interacted with blogs on behalf of their organization.

To decide at what point an incident or a critical statement in the media is likely to grow into a crisis has always been one of the big problems for PR; the blogosphere, however, multiplies the risk.

2   The Concepts "Publics" and "Publicity"

The concept of publicity is ambiguous because on one hand it refers to public notice resulting from mention in the media or any other means of communication, or simply "the state of being public, or open to general observation or knowledge," and on the other "information, articles etc. issued to secure public notice or attention" or "business of securing public notice" (see Webster, 1989). The Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary gives the same two meanings: (1) the quality or state of being public, and (2) an act or device designed to attract public interest, while Wikipedia knows only the latter: Publicity is the deliberate attempt to manage the public perception of a subject. A web page (www.publicity-insider.com) reduces the concept publicity to exchanges between the corporate's communication and the media: "Publicity is the simple act of making a suggestion to a journalist that leads to the inclusion of a company or product in a story."

Wilcox and Cameron (2005, p. 11) follow the latter definition: "Publicity means disseminating planned messages through selected media to further the organization's interests." They connect the concept with news media reporting information about an event, such as where an individual or group or a product appears for consideration to the news department as a news item or feature story (ibid., p.17). Grunig and Hunt (1984, p. 144) define the concept of "public" referring to the sociologist Herbert Blumer who in the 1940's clarified the difference between the concept "publics" and "mass." Public is a group of people who are confronted by an issue and face similar problems, are divided in their ideas as to how to meet the issue, and engage in the discussion over the issue and may organize to do something about the problem.

Webster's definition of community as a social group of any size whose members reside in a specific locality, share the same government, and have a common cultural and historical heritage, needs some revision. Burke (1999) identifies six different communities for corporate involvement: (1) the site community, which is defined by geographical boundaries; (2) the employee community, which is the community where many employees live, (3) the fenceline community, which includes the immediate neighbours surrounding the property of the company; (4) the impact community, which is the community through which, for instance, the materials and products of a factory are transported; (5) the functional or common interest community, which may be made up of various special interest groups, such as religious, ethnic, environmental or educational groups; and (6) the cyber community, so named by Burke, which is a new emerging community which shares few of the characteristics of the other communities. For instance, a cyber community may be formed by a group of activists that are making use of the internet to publicize and comment on the corporation's practices. The internet has brought with it de-territorialized forms of publicity. As Downey and Fenton (2003) state, local and global have become irreversibly entwined in people's experience.

Now, the question of the title of this article could be reformulated as follows: Are there situations – or communication environments such as the cyberspace – where the traditional means available for corporate communications to manage the perception of a given public might prove to be scarce or insufficient?

3   The Internet

The absolute amount of internet users worldwide is growing dramatically. According to the Internet World Stats (2007) more than 400 million Asians, over 300 million Europeans and over 230 million North Americans use the Internet. The penetration of the whole population, however, is only 12% in Asia, and around 40% in Europe, while in North America it is around 70%. However, there are regional differences in internet use within Europe. The amount of internet users is in Northern Europe above the European average. According to statistics, in Finland, for instance, practically all the citizens of the country between 15 and 29 years used the Internet in 2006 on a regular basis, the average across all age groups being close to 80%.

The changing importance of different media can also be seen in the advertising behaviour of companies. The Advertising Barometer, an extensive survey on the future plans of 149 Finnish advertisers conducted by the Association of Finnish Advertisers in 2007, demonstrates a fall in the expected use of all print media, a slight rise in TV advertising but an absolute rise in web, e-mail and mobile phone advertising.

4   Public Sphere and Counter-Public Sphere

During the last five years or so cyberspace has become the privileged domain of counter-publicity. The counter-public sphere seeks to challenge the dominant public sphere rather than simply be independent of it (Downey & Fenton, 2003, p. 193).

Aftab (2005) calls cyber attacks real or imagined good or bad faith attacks on an organization's reputation, products, services or brands in cyberspace or in other digital communication, such as text messages. Often the party being targeted is hurt irreparably. A cyber attack may falsely accuse a company or an individual of a crime; anonymous hate e-mails may be sent and websites created that threaten the company's credibility.

In a dramatically short time the blogosphere has became the world's largest and most influential communication arena. Its growth has been remarkably rapid: In 1999 the number of blogs was less than one hundred, while in 2005 it had risen to more than 17 million (Terpin 2005). The blogosphere keeps on growing: in the year 2006 there were 47 million blogs worldwide, which were 60 times more than three years before. The number of blogs seemed to be doubling every six months! In July 2007, 70 million blogs were listed and over 120,000 blogs were created every day, 1.4 blogs every second (Mastermedia, 2007). At the same time, the popularity of blogs is also growing. If in the year 2006, only 12 blogs were found among the most popular websites, a year later the figure was 22. The statistics also reveal an interesting detail: during significant world crises there are spikes in the user frequency of blog posts, which reveals that citizens actively use blogs as a news source worldwide.

There is a good reason to claim that the blogs already have consolidated their position as a serious communication channel alongside the traditional established media. The bloggers can be seen as media watchdogs but also as sources for the news broadcast of the old media. For organizations, the bloggers are a new communication partner and a new kind of early warning system of a potential crisis.

5   PR and Traditional Mass Media – a Cracking Symbiosis?

In the German speaking literature, the interrelations between PR and media are often connected with the work of Barbara Baerns who, in her determination model (1979), drew attention to the fact that in a great part the news items published in the media relied on information supplied by the PR departments of organizations. The data presented by Baerns are continually repeated in the textbooks. *Journalismus. Das Hand- und Lehrbuch* [A Guide to Journalism] (in German) by Russ-Mohl (2003), for instance, reprints the findings of Baerns, among others that more than 60% of the reports in newspapers, radio and TV is based on PR put out by organizations.

Bentele and his colleagues have in several articles criticised the unidirectional model of Baerns and emphasized the bidirectionality of the PR-media relationship (see, e.g. Bentele, 2002; Bentele & Nothhaft, 2008). According to the intereffication model of Bentele, the exchange between the PR and the media includes communicative inductions and adaptations in both directions. By inductions, the model refers to intended and directed communicative offers. Adaptation in the model refers to the fact that both parties tend to adapt to mutual exchange, although adaptation as such does not imply a balanced or symmetrical pattern.

Based on several partial studies carried out at the University of Leipzig, Bentele is ready to partly confirm the percentages presented by Baerns. A large number of articles in the media are based on information sent by organizations, although the percentage of articles in the media definitely induced by press releases is much smaller. Overall, the percentage of articles not induced by PR was only less than one third of all the articles examined in the Leipzig study (see Bentele & Nothhaft, 2008).

6   PR in Cyberspace

The revolution of technology has resulted in new kinds of communities with no sense of place – thus exceeding the locally constructed publicity. According to Appadurai (here according to Matei, 2005, p, 4) globalization is as much a process of differentiation and disjuncture as one of interconnection. He sees the globalized world as a collection of partially overlapping layers or landscapes: these are the technoscapes or telecommunication networks; mediascapes, which mean the flow of content and symbols in the form of movies, books, songs, etc.; financescapes or the exchange of capital; ethnoscapes or the flow of people as tourists, refugees, immigrants or colonizers; and ideoscapes which mean the flow of various ideologies such as environmentalism, neo-liberalism, or fundamentalism. Lehtonen and Petkova (2005) added one new landscape: the "PR-scape," a composite of the techno-, media- and ideoscapes; in this landscape two tendencies are constantly contending for supremacy: the local culture and the more-or-less universal communication conventions of the globalizing business culture. One tends to ignore local circumstances, the other wants to make the most of national cultures in order to optimize the impact of the PR messages on the target audience. The PR-sphere added by Lehtonen and Petkova to the cultural landscapes can, in turn, be set against the concept of blogosphere. Further on, if we add the blogosphere to the Bentele model of interplay between PR and the media we obtain an interesting new pattern in which the PR and the media serve as sources of discussion themes for

bloggers and blogs. Blogs, in turn, may give rise to comments in the media. It is not unusual that a politician will give his comments in his blog, which is then referred to in the media. For organisations, weblogs are still more useful because they often serve as a channel for dialogue with consumers and other publics. Weblogs change the communication from one-way informing of the public into a real dialogue in which the organization can receive feedback and in which both parties have the same power and same opportunities to open up new themes for a discussion.

Thomas Rommerskirchen (2007), editor in chief of the German *PR Magazin*, quotes a head of public relations of a German company who says: "My boss likes more to talk with bloggers (than with journalists) because they are better informed." The chief editor is worried about the low professional competence of journalists, but his comment can also be seen as an indication of an emerging new configuration of the map of corporate stakeholders in which weblogs and the blogosphere offer a new important partner for dialogue. In traditional terms, the new dialogue is at the same time top-down or corporate driven, and bottom-up or consumer-driven. In that dialogue, the partner of PR is no longer an amorphous "public" but individuals. Deuze (2006) quotes the well-known statement of Zygmunt Bauman: "We live today under conditions of permanent revolution…Revolution has become human society's normal state." Whether the revolution will continue forever or not, the truth remains that citizen journalism and weblogs are affecting not only the practices but also the theory of public relations. The weblog revolution also means fragmentation of the media and increasing importance of niche audiences. These, in turn, make it even more difficult for PR to catch up with the public. The blogosphere and the bloggers may take over the historical role of newspapers as a watchdog of the society. However, bloggers not only control industries and politicians but also the established media and their news broadcasting.
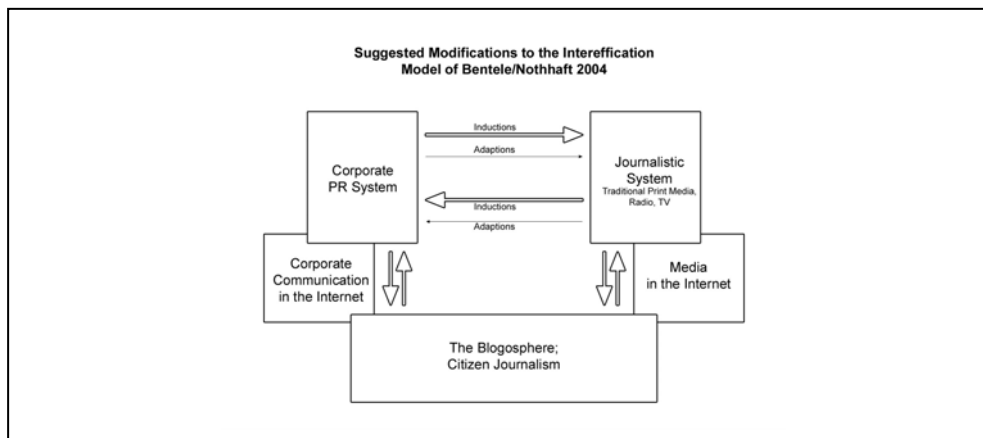

Figure 1: Suggested modification to the intereffication model by Bentele & Nothhaft, 2004

Figure 1 suggests a revision to the visualization of the intereffication model presented by Bentele and Nothhaft (2004). The insertion of the blogosphere in the figure will emphasize its different standing compared to the traditional information exchange relationships between corporate communications and the traditional mass media. For bloggers both the behaviour and communications of organizations as well as news reports in the media serve as a stimulus or provocation to commenting. Unlike the intentional feeding of information by the company to the media in a way that optimizes its communicative success, neither the organization nor the traditional news media intentionally "induce" bloggers to comment on their information. The blogosphere differs from the intereffication relationship by its asymmetry: neither organizational PR nor the media intentionally offer the information to bloggers, but both of them actively use weblog discussions for their own purposes. The news media often comment on the politicians' and celebrities' web texts in their news broadcasts, and many organizations have learnt to use the blogs as a useful feedback channel.

The blogosphere may develop into the most important communication arena for public relations. It also sets the frames to communication; it adds the demand of speed, especially in crisis situations; further on, compared to printed daily news, a text in the blogosphere is permanent – a one-day-story on TV or in a newspaper may grow in size in the blogosphere (Terpin, 2005).

How can an organization fight against attacks in cyberspace and what can the organization do if threatened by potentially damaging rumours on the blog? If yesterday the PR specialist needed trustees among the journalists to feed the company's messages to the media and to help in correcting false information, today he or she tries to find trusted bloggers who know how to put out the fire on the internet. The representatives of the organization can counter the attack themselves by blogging back with information that neutralizes the rumours pre-launched, or they can hire a PR agency to blog on behalf of their client. One of the most debatable tactics used to fight cyber attacks is to participate in the discussion on the web seeking to engineer the impression of spontaneous grassroots participation. The organization naturally has the right to counter the attacks with correct information, if this is done openly in the name of the organization, but if the agency sends anonymous comments or comments with fixed sender names the procedure is ethnically questionable. Much of the debate about the organizations and their brand is taking place in the blogosphere independent of whether they want it or not. Some decisions, typical of PR, remain unchanged in the cyber-PR: when to ignore the criticism presented in the blogosphere and when to take action. When topics emerge, the organization has to decide whether to blow them out, or clarify them, and by what means.

7   Conclusions

Public relations practices in the blogging culture are today characterized by two conflicting principles: on the one hand, the old principle of transparency and openness of corporate communication, and on the other hand the practice of many to participate in weblog communication with a fixed identity. The ethics of traditional PR is not dead, but if it does not adapt to the new communication environment there is the risk that PR will lose the trust

among the stakeholders, and significantly decline as a central managerial function of corporations.

Possibly, the scientific debate, and possibly also PR practice have suffered from a kind of tunnel vision. In focusing on media relations, PR has not seen what is taking place in the world outside: the explosion of the blogosphere has come as a surprise. However, PR must adapt by understanding the changing role of the new media channels and the power of consumers as citizen journalists on weblogs.

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Communication Management in Europe – Challenges and Opportunities

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In most European countries, communication management is a flourishing industry, sometimes with a history of at least a century, and all over Europe young people like to become educated in the field. Until recently, little had been known about crucial aspects of communication management in Europe and so far there is still hardly any debate and knowledge exchange on these aspects. The research projects we have conducted so far show that what is internationally known as public relations but in Europe more and more as communication management, is a multi-dimensional concept. These different dimensions show that communication management is not just a professional function of managers and technicians, but also or preferably a view on how to manage an organization. In this chapter we will elaborate what typifies European communication management in practice, education and research and we will propose to view it as "Reflective Communication Management" as a unifying concept to develop practice, education and research within the European cultures.

1   Introduction

In most European countries, communication management is a well-known phenomenon. However, until recently little had been known about crucial aspects of communication management in Europe and there was hardly any debate and knowledge exchange on these aspects. Therefore, the European Association for Public Relations Education and Research (EUPRERA) initiated the European Public Relations Body of Knowledge project (EBOK)[1] in 1998. The purpose of the EBOK project is to codify the existing body of the literature of European origin of what is internationally known as public relations and to enable its fuller use and recognition, which are at present restricted by linguistic, cultural and administrative barriers (Verčič, 2000). In order to be able to build a good bibliography, the first question that needed to be answered, was whether there is anything specific in European public relations, and if so, what its specific content is and what its parameters are. That is why a working group started a Delphi study to discuss current topics in public relations with public relations experts in as many countries as possible. Finally participants from 29 countries could be included in this study (Van Ruler et al., 2001). At the 9th International Public Relations Research Symposium, held in Bled, Slovenia, July, 2002, the outcomes had been discussed on the basis of the so called *"Bled Manifesto on Public Relations"* (Van Ruler & Verčič, 2002), which was in turn based on the Delphi study. In 2004 a follow up study had

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[1]   List of Participating Countries: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Yugoslavia. After we completed the Delphi, Greece, Malta and Turkey also joined the EBOK project and contributed to the Europe book.

been released via *"Public Relations and Communication Management in Europe: A Nation-by-nation Introduction of Theory and Practice"* (Van Ruler & Verčič, 2004). This chapter is a combination of different aspects of these two projects and proposes for a new unifying concept to study and practice public relations and communication management in Europe.

2   On "Public" in Public Relations

Public relations appears to be named differently across Europe. There are differences between countries, but also between sectors within countries. In many countries, when speaking in one's own language, it is even impossible to talk about public relations in the same meaning as the term has in the USA (especially in the Northern and some of the North Western and Central European countries). When the term public relations is used, it is seldom used in the North-American way. What Grunig (1992) means when using "public relations" is what in the United Kingdom is commonly named "public affairs." Moreover, the term public relations (if ever used) is more and more being replaced by terms like communication management, corporate communication or integrated communication. Many European public relations associations renamed themselves into some kind of "communication" associations (although some of these still define themselves as public relations associations in English). This has to do with bad connotations, but also with the concept of public relations itself.

Names for "public relations" in Germanic and Slavonic languages mean "relations with the public and in the public" where "public" itself denotes a different phenomenon than it is generally assumed to mean in the public relations discipline in English. Here we take the German term for "public relations" as an example, but similar explanations apply to other Germanic and Slavonic languages (and thus covering much of the Northern, Central and Eastern parts of the European continent). The German term for "public relations" is "Öffentlichkeitsarbeit," which literally means "public work" and is explained as "working in public, with the public and for the public" (Nessman, 2000). This denomination contradicts the mainstream (U.S.) understanding of public relations as management of relationships between an organization and its publics (see a.o. Bernays, 1986; Cheney & Dionispoulos, 1987; Hutton, 1999). Yet, it also needs to be recognized that Olasky (1989), inspired by the German sociologist Habermas, proposed an alternative approach to the history of public relations as being differentiated from "private relations" (and thus giving also an alternative meaning of public relations as something different from just "relations with publics"), but he had hardly any followers.

Ever since these Germanic and Slavonic equivalents of the term public relations had been introduced to these languages, it was obvious to the natives that their terms mean something else than the original (U.S. English), as Nessmann (2000) argued. However, it would be wrong just to stop here with the recognition of this terminological problem as being a matter of language(s) only. "Öffentlichkeit" does not mean "public" as in publics, audiences, etc. – it means first of all "public sphere," and to be more specific "that what is potentially known to and can be debated by all." "Öffentlichkeit" is an outcome and therefore a quality of public communication in society. By equating "public" with "Öffentlichkeit" an analytical dimension is lost, namely that an essential aspect of public relations is that it is concerned with issues and values that are considered as publicly relevant, which

means relating to the "public sphere." This line of thought is strongly developed in Germany and can be found back in many other European countries (see for example Jensen, 2000; Van Ruler & Verčič, 2005). Their reasoning is that public relations is not only about relations with the public or publics, but it also creates a platform for public debate and it creates, consequently, a public sphere itself. As Ronneberger and Rühl (1992) argued, public relations is to be measured by quality and quantity of the public sphere, it co-produces by its own activities (p. 58). Quality and quantity of the public sphere have to do with "öffentliche Meinung" – which is to be translated as "public opinion." However, this public opinion is not an aggregation of individual opinions as conceived in public opinion polling (Price, 1992). It is much more meant as a benchmark for public relations as a type of democratic political authority, and seen as the foundation on which democracy is built (Habermas, 1962). It is, therefore, more a quality than a quantity. In this view on public relations it serves the same kind of (democratic) function as journalism does, while they are both contributing to a more or lesser free flow of information and to the development of the public sphere in size ("How many people are involved?") and in level ("What is the level at which we are discussing public matters?"). For many European scholars public relations produces social reality and therefore, a certain type of society. That is why many European scholars look at public relations from a sociological perspective instead of an economic, psychological or organizational perspective. In this respect the European use of "public" and "public relations" can mean something totally different than it normally does in the United States (Van Ruler & Verčič, 2003; see also Verčič & Sriramesh, 2003).

3   On "Relations" and "Communication"

The previous point has a strong relationship with the second point of this article: the question whether public relations is all about relationships or all about communication, which used to be an issue in the United States recently. As Heath (2000) mentioned in the preface of his *Handbook of Public Relations*: "The new view of public relations assumes that markets are attracted to and kept by organizations that can create beneficial relationships" (p. 3). He argued that the paradigm of public relations is changing dramatically into the "underpinning assumption that public relations is a relationship-building professional activity that adds value to organizations because it increases the willingness of markets, audiences, and publics to support them rather than to oppose their efforts" (p. 8). For Ledingham and Bruning (2000) public relations IS relationship management. In addition, Hutton (1999) described the "new paradigm of public relations, aimed at building relationships with publics". In the concluding paragraphs of their article the proposed definition of public relations ("managing strategic relationships") was said to be breaking with "some long-standing ideas that communication is the bedrock of public relations" and that "communication is a necessary but no longer sufficient foundation for public relations; training in social psychology, anthropology, and other social sciences (not to mention new technologies) is necessary, in addition to business, management and perhaps industry-specific training."

As it will become clear in our next section, we believe that it makes no sense to differentiate between communication and relationships. From our research projects it is obvious that – at least in Europe – even public relations researchers cannot make any clear differ-

ence between communication and relationships. What one sees as communication is what another uses the word relationships for. The arguments for selecting "relationships" were: "it is managing relationships with public groups," "it is all about managing relationships by informing, persuading, dialogue, negotiating," but also "it is to influence the behavior of parts of the important relationships." These answers alerted us to the fact that relationships can refer to the relations between parties, to the process of relating, and even to the other party itself. It also showed us that relationship building is not necessarily a merely reciprocal/symmetrical concept. Relationships are obviously a broad and complex concept. The arguments in favour of opting for "communication" can be summarized as: "Communication is the most important mean of public relations and relationships are the outcome of it." Here we also encountered two views of this concept. One was: "it is the management of communication to mix the activities of the advertisement and promotional fields in the best possible way." This refers to public relations as "a tool of marketing," which was a view no one wanted to express explicitly, when asked for. The second view is diametrically opposed to the first:

> PR refers to managing communication by direct or indirect relationships, in order to gain the trust of public groups and to monitor their trust and the consequences it has for the organization. At the same time, PR is the management of information about what is going on inside and outside organizations, with the goal of anticipating future situations or to solve already established problems in a proper and less harmful way to the organization. This can only be done by establishing communication, i.e. relationships.

This statement comes close to the view that PR is "communicating about the organization within society," it also refers to "managing relationships." However, it was given as an argument for "managing communication." Some participants did not want to choose between these possibilities and, judging by the arguments put forward, it was obvious that none of the others considered this to be a natural division. It is therefore highly questionable if a debate – whether public relations is about management of communication or management of relations – is productive at all. A confrontation of communication with behaviour is in the light of the major part of the European social-scientific tradition also nonsense – communication itself being a form of (social) behaviour and at the same time being the essence of any kind of relation.

A more revealing point of discussion seems to be, however, what is meant by communication. In this light we believe that an interesting differentiation can be made between for example communication as a certain kind of behaviour of people (behaviour with signs and symbols) and communication as a process through time and space in which meanings develop and that alters public sphere, which is a cultural approach.

4   The Parameters of the Field

The third issue we want to raise has, again, a strong relationship with the former issues. In the first round of the Delphi study we found many statements about the blurring of public relations with other fields, such as integrated communication management, marketing or even the realms of corporate executives. We wondered whether this was because public relations still has to mature or whether this is simply part of its evolutionary process. Two

participants did not see any blurring, and for some participants this is purely a question of semantics. Nevertheless, others think that it is a matter of maturation, while a majority sees it as evolutionary, e.g. a broadening of public relations. This has to do with parameters.

One of our questions in the third round of the Delphi project was "Is public relations only worthwhile when organizations have problems?" The answers were very clear. Public relations is not just problem handling, it is also a preventive instrument. Arguments that were given referred to the fact that it also advises individuals within the organization on how to handle their relationships, and on how to develop programs for organizations that "*foster good behavior in communications."* Again, the arguments revealed different roles for public relations.

Analyzing the deliberations of the participants, given in the first round on the question of the relationship with (other) management disciplines, we found the following dimensions of the concept of public relations:
- a professional management function that initiates or maintains relationships between an organization and its publics
- the communication activities by which an organization can create and maintain long-term relationships with its stakeholders
- a management function to gain public trust and social consensus about the goals of the organization
- a philosophy of strategic management not being market oriented but society oriented
- a tool of marketing to gain a favourable basis for relationships with stakeholders
- a promotional activity to clarify certain goals or conduct of an organization/individual
- a promotional activity to gain public support for the corporate body as a whole
- an informational activity to keep the internal and external society informed.

Obviously, public relations is not just or not only a professional management function, separated from other functions. This shows that the concept of public relations is a complex concept itself, which cannot be seen as a uni-dimensional one.

In order to define the parameters of public relations more precisely we added five questions into the questionnaire of the second round. The answers are shown in Figure 1.

	Yes	No	Depends
Should a PR professional have influence upon the strategy of the organization	28	0	0
Must internal communication be part of public relations as a whole	26	1	1
Should a PR professional have influence upon the behavior of the employees	20	6	3
Should a PR professional be responsible for the content of the messages he communicates	17	7	4
Must marketing communication be part of public relations	13	13	2

Figure 1: The parameters of public relations

We may conclude that according to the participants, it is impossible to do public relations without influencing the strategy of the organization and without the responsibility for internal communication. Whether the influence on the behaviour of all employees belongs to public relations or not, is not clear for everyone; the same counts for responsibility for the

content of the messages. Just like in the academic communication of public relations schol-ars in the USA, there was a strong disagreement as to whether or not external communica-tion includes communication with customers.

Because of the fact that the inclusion of marketing communication within public rela-tions separated the participants, we asked them in the third round to comment on three questions on inclusion or exclusion of marketing communication. This question elicited long answers from many participants. For six participants it was very clear that public rela-tions is also aimed at commercial publics. Most of the others refused to commit themselves and stated that "it all depends."

Part of the refusal to commit on the inclusion of marketing communication has to do with the concept of persuasion, which was also included in the comments the participants gave in earlier rounds. We therefore asked in the third round how we should consider per-suasion in the case of public relations. The question was: "Public relations is clearly not to be equated with propaganda, although persuasive strategies are used. Could you please give the borderlines between a persuasive effort on the one hand and propaganda on the other hand or do you want to reject any persuasive effort as part of public relations?" (see Figure 2)

No persuasion allowed	As little persuasion as possible	All persuasion is ok	Persuasion on limited
0	2	1	18

Figure 2: The concept of persuasion

The limiting grounds have three variations: for some persuasion is only allowed when facts/arguments are used and not imagery or emotions; for some persuasion is only allowed when it is used in the public debate or in a "negotiation connection"; for some persuasion is only allowed when more sides are taken into consideration. However, some of the partici-pants who strongly reject that public relations is also aimed at commercial publics and/or that public relations has to do with persuasion, do also see "public" as "public sphere." This could, therefore, refer to another approach to public relations (Van Ruler & Verčič, 2002, 2003). It is, however, obvious, that in Europe public relations is much more seen as a con-cept of "a free flow of information" or "a free dialogue in society" than as a concept to influence publics.

The final question we proposed on the borders of public relations was the question of influence on organizational behaviour. This item was mentioned in the first round by sev-eral participants as the most important task of public relations and was also part of the bor-derline discussion in the second round. For 15 participants it remained clear that public relations should have influence on organizational behaviour. For all others public relations should co-operate with the personnel department in this matter. No one argued regarding the implementation of this co-operation; at least no one chose one of the given options or rejected any of them.

Yet, there was a strong undertone in the discussion, brought in by participants who did not want to reduce this field into a profession, but preferred to see it as a view on organization. It became very obvious in the discussion on ethics. For all participants this is an item that needs to be debated, especially while business ethics are becoming more and more important. It was felt that public relations ethics is intertwined with or perhaps even the same as business ethics. For some participants public relations goes beyond ethical behaviour as such, but must be focused on societal dialogue. One participant stated:

> Public relations is also a question of continuously adjusting the decision processes within the organization into society's changing norms and values, and therefore, public relations is to discuss in public social norms and values relevant to the organization, in order to make the organization reflect these norms and values in its decision processes, and finally communicate to the public that the organization's behaviour is legitimate.

It is obvious that public relations cannot be reduced to a professional function within or for an organization. It is – at least in Europe – also seen as a certain approach or concept of organization. This implies that public relations works outside as well as inside the organization and that it could be a professional function as well as a part of functioning of other professionals as well, and that there is a tendency to view public relations as co-creation of public sphere.

5   Public Relations as a Separate Research Field

In the first two rounds, the participants unanimously stated that public relations must be a theory-based field in order to flourish. Many expressed the view that the field has a poor theoretical base. The data that we obtained from the research and education situation in various European nations showed that public relations in these countries is not commonly studied at a scientific level. We found very few well-developed research programs, other than one or two in Germany and England and to a lesser extent some in Austria, The Netherlands, Denmark and France. Also in these countries public relations is not highly stated within their universities. In addition, scientific journals seldom contain articles by European researchers. While this will partly be due to translation problems, we believe that part of the reason is also a lack of good research. In addition, this will partly be caused by the fact that we differ in the answer of what is "good research." This has without doubt to do with the fact that the more important journals are all developed by US researchers and most of all aimed at empirical and, moreover, quantitative research. The fact that American researchers usually talk about qualitative research as "informal" research is informative in this respect.

However, it is obvious that in most of the European countries neither practice nor science is very interested in theory development in public relations. It might be because the researchers do not form a critical mass yet. It might also due to cultural/theoretical differences but also with the approach to the theoretical field. Due to the flourishing educational field and the low academic status of public relations, public relations academics are overloaded with teaching and have hardly any time to develop research projects and generate new knowledge.

6   The Definition of the Field

In the first round we have asked the participants to give their definition in use. In the second round, we asked the participants to decide which key concepts – found in the given definitions in the first round – should definitely be part of a definition of public relations. In trying to find a common view, we continually returned to familiar Anglo-American oriented concepts. This was not very helpful to find an answer to our research question. Therefore, it seemed more promising to try to overlook all the answers that were probably recited verbatim and that may have been very idealistic. Instead, we would concentrate on public relations as a phenomenon with certain distinct characteristics. In this way we could first try to find a description of this field's domain. Not until this had been done could we think about professionalization, nor could we talk about the skills, knowledge, tools or theories that needed to be developed. We forced ourselves not to spend too much time searching for common denominators, but rather to focus on different aspects, which we could connect to each other. Doing this exercise we hoped to find the "true" dimensions of the domain and find out whether or not there is a distinct entity that we could call "typical European public relations."

The first two rounds generated a wide variety of views on public relations per se as well as on certain roles for public relations within (or on behalf of) an organization and in society at large. After studying the answers and searching for a description of the characteristics of the domain, we clustered all of the statements and ideas into four characteristics:

1   *Reflective:* to analyze changing standards, values, and standpoints in society and discuss these with members of the organization, in order to adjust the standards and values/standpoints of the organization accordingly. This role is concerned with organizational standards, values and views and aimed at the development of mission and organizational strategies.
2   *Managerial*: to develop plans to communicate and maintain relationships with public groups, in order to gain public trust and/or mutual understanding. This role is concerned with commercial and other (internal and external) public groups and with public opinion as a whole and is aimed at the execution of the organizational mission and strategies.
3   *Operational:* to prepare means of communication for the organization (and its members) in order to help the organization formulate its communications. This role is concerned with services and is aimed at the execution of the communication plans developed by others.
4   *Educational:* to help all the members of the organization become communicatively competent, in order to respond to societal demands. This role is concerned with the mentality and behaviour of the members of the organization and aimed at internal public groups.

We examined these clusters in the third round discussion, in order to find out whether they can be used to define European public relations. Most participants were in favour of including these four characteristics within the scope of public relations. Furthermore, most of them regard these as definitive characteristics and perhaps even as interrelated dimensions of a European concept of public relations.

It is obvious that, within this public relations community, these characteristics were acceptable as a mean of defining the domain. According to statements from several western European countries, like Denmark, Germany, The Netherlands, Sweden, it must be questioned whether public relations can be seen as just maintaining relationships with certain public groups or is (also) to be seen as the public relationship any organization has with "society" and the "license to operate" any organization needs. This questioning stressed the attention for the reflective and educational characteristics even more, and almost all other participants accepted these additional characteristics to the well-known managerial and operational ones.

7   Discussion

After these research projects, we prefer to use the term "communication management." First of all because it seems to be a common denominator for the field in Europe in both academia and practice (Van Ruler et al., 2000; Van Ruler & Verčič, 2002b; Verčič et al., 2001), while "public relations" seems to be more common in the USA – at least in the scholarly community. Second, because we believe that public relations as a concept is not sufficient for steering future research in this field in Europe, because of its USA-based connotations of "working with and to publics." Finally, by using "communication management" as a concept, we are able to show that it is all about management of communication processes, and, therefore, dependent on the definitions of communication-in-use, and consequently of management/organization-in-use. Looking at the field as public relations, the concept of communication is often overlooked. Toth (1992, p. 9) has argued that the concept of communication remains under-defined when it is placed in a systems approach within public relations theorizing, and most current theories are conceptualized from a system approach (although not all, see for example Davis, 2002; L'Etang & Pieczka, 1996; Toth & Heath, 1992). The use of the concept of "communication management" is helpful in steering the focus on communication as the key concept. Therefore, there are practical as well as theoretical reasons for using communication management instead of public relations.

All disciplines and professions we know struggle with the multiplicity of often contradicting definitions. This multiplicity is sometimes explained away as a result of infancy and sometimes as a result of maturity of a field. In that respect, communication management is not different from any other academic social discipline or from any profession in practice. The different characteristics show that communication management is not just a professional function of managers and technicians. We, therefore, believe that we should view communication management as a multi-dimensional concept of a managerial, operational, coaching (educational) and reflective function in or for an organization. Moreover, it also shows that the mainstream approach of communication management as a professional management function needs to be expanded and that there is already a tradition in Europe to view communication management as "co-creation of public sphere."

In *The New Handbook of Organizational Communication* Deetz (2001) approached the question "What is organizational communication" by explicating three different ways that are available for conceptualization. By transposing his presentation to the question

"What is communication management?" we can do one of the following three things (Verčič et al., 2001).

First, we can focus on the development of communication management as a specialty in departments of communication management and communication management associations. As Deetz expects for his field of interest, we can also expect for communication management that adopting this approach would bring us to a classic complaint that there are as many communication management definitions as there are people practicing and teaching it: "It is not surprising that these reviews often contain laments about the disunity of the field. This may well be an artefact of the organizing principle used."

A second approach to conceptualizing communication management focuses on a phenomenon that exists out there. This was the approach adopted by both Hutton in his article and by us in our EBOK Delphi research. However, by confronting our results in the previous section, we have to admit that there is no unified phenomenon out there and that communication management "is not one phenomenon with many explanations; each form of explanation may conceptualize and explain different phenomenon. Fixed subdivisions are always a kind of theoretical hegemony" (Deetz, 2001). Communication management as a phenomenon may indeed differ between social spaces (e.g., continents) and looking for the lowest common denominator is worthless.

A third way Deetz proposes is to approach the issue of communication management as a way to describe and explain an organization. That is exactly what other managerial disciplines and professions are doing: finances describe and explain organizations from a financial perspective, lawyers from a legal perspective, marketing from a market perspective. What we need to find for communication management is "a distinct mode of explanation or way of thinking about organizations." What we need to develop is a communication management theory of organizing and organization.

What is the specific characteristic of communication management approach to organizing and organization? Relationships are not, since general management, marketing, social and organizational psychology and many other disciplines, claims them. What distinguishes the communication management manager when he sits down at the table with other managers is that he brings to the table a special concern for broader societal issues and approaches to any problem with a concern for implications of organizational behaviour towards and in the public sphere. It is precisely this concern that is implicit in definitions of communication management as "relationships management" and as "communication management," in both "image management" and "reputation management," and is fundamental for understanding of some of the fundamental concepts like "stakeholders," "public(s)" and "activists." In Europe, this is specially contained in the reflective and educational characteristics of communication management (the second one pertaining to the development of social and communicative competence of and in an organization and not to a dissemination of information in order to educate publics), but in the U.S. it has special features in situations concerned with "non-discrimination," "non-harassment" and different kind of "non-isms" (like "non-ageism"), which all seem very different to how the underlying similar problems are dealt with in Europe.

A bridge that may bring us from different approaches to communication management together is our common approach to organizing and organization. In that respect Olasky's alternative exposition of the U.S. public relations history may be a very valuable starting point – by differentiating "public" from "private" relations. Communication management

practitioners and academics approach to organizing and organizations from a "public" perspective, being concerned with phenomena of reflectivity (of organizational behaviour) and legitimacy.

Seen from this standpoint communication management is not just a phenomenon to be described and defined. It is first of all a strategic process of viewing an organization from an "outside," and more precise, a public view. Its primary concerns are organization's inclusiveness and its preservation of the "license to operate." As marketing is viewing organization from a market view, communication management is viewing organization from a public view (meant as "public sphere"). We, therefore, like to broaden the relational and communicative approaches to communication management with or into a public or reflective approach of which the relational and communicative approaches of communication management can be seen as parts.

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Part IV

International Challenges for Public Relations

Excellence Theory in Public Relations: Past, Present, and Future

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The programme of research known as the excellence theory began in the 1960s with J. Grunig's research on publics found among Colombian farmers. Research then followed on the role of public relations in organizational decision-making, the symmetrical model of public relations, public relations measurement, and how the structure and environment of organizations shape public relations behaviour. The IABC excellence project added theories of public relations roles, operations research, and gender and diversity to the paradigm. The excellence theory has evolved into a general theory of public relations as a strategic management function, and ongoing research now is adding concepts and tools that public relations professionals who serve in a strategic role can use.

1   Introduction

The "excellence theory" is the name our colleagues and we gave to an integrated collection of middle-range theories that we used in a 15-years' study sponsored by the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) Research Foundation. These integrated theories, developed in the 1970s and 1980s, helped us to explain the value of public relations to an organization and to identify the characteristics of a public relations function that increase its value (J. Grunig, 1992b; Dozier with L. Grunig & J. Grunig, 1994; L. Grunig, J. Grunig, & Dozier, 2002). Our use of the term "excellence" often has been misunderstood or misinterpreted (e.g., by McKie, 2001) as an iconic term that no one "could rationally oppose" (p. 76) or an imperialistic term suggesting that our theories were better than those of others.

In actuality, we chose the term "excellence" quite innocently during a research-planning meeting with board members of the IABC Research Foundation in 1984. At the time, Peters and Waterman's (1982) book *In Search of Excellence* had sold more than 5 million copies in 16 languages; and one board member suggested that the research we were about to conduct had a similar purpose. Everyone at the meeting agreed that we were searching for excellence in public relations and communication management, but we dropped the words "in search of" from the name of the study to avoid copying Peters and Waterman's title.

Peters and Waterman (1982) conducted their research to identify characteristics of management in companies they described as excellent. They defined "excellence" as having been continuously profitable. Peters and Waterman studied 43 continuously profitable companies and identified eight attributes of management that these companies shared. Peters and Waterman were not the only management scholars at the time to use the term "excellence" or something similar to develop indicators of best practices in management.

J. Grunig (1992d) reviewed this literature on excellence as part of our broad literature re-
view for the study and identified 12 managerial and organizational attributes of excellence
that were related to public relations. We followed Peters and Waterman's example of
searching for best practices in our excellence study, although we defined excellence differ-
ently and conducted large-scale survey research along with qualitative interviews rather
than case studies, as they did. We defined excellence as a set of characteristics of a public
relations function that were correlated with organizational effectiveness. We defined organ-
izational effectiveness as occurring when an organization achieves goals chosen in consul-
tation with stakeholders – goals that served the interests of both the organization and these
strategic constituencies. We defined excellence in public relations as a set of attributes and
practices that helped to "build quality, long-term relationships with strategic constituen-
cies" (L. Grunig, J. Grunig, & Ehling, 1992, p. 86).

We chose the term "excellence" not to suggest the superiority of our theory or its uni-
versal acceptance. Rather, we chose the term because it was fashionable; and it placed our
research in the mainstream of management research. Instead of "excellence," we could
have used terms such as "best practices in public relations;" "benchmarking public relations
practices;" or, descriptively but blandly, "characteristics of an organization's public rela-
tions function that contribute to organizational effectiveness."

To understand the excellence theory, it helps to place it into the research context that
preceded it. Before the 1970s, few theories of public relations went beyond the descriptions
of the practice found in classic textbooks such as Cutlip and Center's (1952) first edition.
These textbook descriptions could not be considered theories because they were based on
anecdotal examples rather than systematic research designed to gather evidence to support
and revise theory. Nevertheless, these textbook descriptions provided a framework for our
understanding of public relations that guided the research that preceded the excellence
study as well as the excellence study itself (see J. Grunig, 1991, for an analysis of Cutlip's
influence on the discipline).

When J. Grunig began doing public relations research in 1966, he was guided by the
descriptions of public relations practice and the normative prescriptions for improving it
found in Cutlip and Center's (1964) textbook. At the time, the little public relations re-
search that existed was based on mass communication theories of media effects, attitude
theories from social psychology (e.g., Lerbinger, 1972; Robinson, 1966), or highly practical
research such as the characteristics of press releases most often used by editors. Most re-
searchers then did not try to explain or criticize the behaviour of public relations practitio-
ners. They accepted the work of practitioners as given and looked for ways to identify the
effects of public relations work or to find ways to improve the effectiveness of public rela-
tions techniques (see J. Grunig and Hickson, 1976, for a review of this early research).

Few scholars asked, for example, what a public was or how the characteristics of an
organization influenced how public relations practitioners behaved. J. Grunig (1966) began
to construct the conceptualization that he now calls the situational theory of publics; and J.
Grunig (1976) used organizational theory to identify how an organization's structure, envi-
ronment, history, size, and technology affect the practice of public relations – research that
eventually produced his four models of public relations (e.g., J. Grunig, 2001) and ex-
plained why organizations practice one or more of these models rather than others.

Shortly after, Broom (e.g., Broom & Smith, 1978, 1979) and later Dozier (e.g., Dozier,
1984) began a programme of research on the roles of public relations practitioners; Ehling

(1975, 1984, 1985, 1992) applied operations research and management science to public relations; White (as reviewed in White and Dozier, 1992) conceptualized the role of public relations in management decision-making; and L. Grunig began research on organizational structures and environments (as reviewed in L. Grunig 1992b), power in the public relations department (as reviewed in L. Grunig 1992c), and activism (as reviewed in L. Grunig, 1992a).

These, then, were the major middle-level theories of public relations that J. Grunig (1992a) integrated into a general theory of public relations in the opening chapter of our book, *Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management*. He described the general theory in this way:

> This chapter has presented a general theory of public relations as a theory of communication management. That theory specifies how public relations makes organizations more effective, how it is organized and managed when it contributes most to organizational effectiveness (i.e., when it is excellent), the conditions in organizations and their environments that make organizations more effective, and how the monetary value of public relations can be determined. (p. 27)

Today, we often call the excellence theory a theory of public relations as a strategic management function because the excellence study established participation of public relations in strategic management as the critical component that ties together the middle-range theories we integrated into our general theory. Researchers now continue to develop that theory of public relations as a strategic management function (see, e.g., Toth, 2007). This chapter, therefore, explores the development of theories that went into the excellence theory, specific findings of the excellence study, and research conducted after the excellence study. First, however, we briefly compare our approach to public relations to another way of thinking that often produces criticism of our strategic management approach.

2   Two Approaches to Public Relations

We believe there have been, and still are, two major ways of thinking about public relations both in practice and in the academic world. We call these approaches the symbolic-interpretive paradigm and the strategic management, or behavioural, paradigm.

In her textbook on organizational theory, Hatch (1997) identified three perspectives on organizations – the modernist, symbolic-interpretive, and postmodernist perspectives. The modernist perspective is based on classic theories of management that viewed reality as objective and management as a set of activities designed to achieve organizational objectives – which could be measured objectively. The symbolic-interpretive paradigm sees reality as subjective and views concepts such as organizations themselves, their environments, and the behaviour of managers as subjective enactments of reality rather than observable and measurable reality – enactments whose meanings can be negotiated through communication. According to Hatch, postmodernism "found its way into organization theory through applications of linguistic, semiotic, and literary theory via the interest in meaning and interpretation introduced by symbolic-interpretive organization theorists" (p. 44). Postmodernists reject general theories and favour fragmentation of theorizing. They prefer to "deconstruct" theories to determine whose interests are served by the theories and whose

way of thinking has been incorporated into them. Thus, challenges to power are a major theme in post-modern thinking.

Critical scholars such as L'Etang and Pieczka (1996) and Leitch and Neilson (2001) and post-modern scholars such as Holtzhausen and Voto (2002) have derided the excellence theory as modernist, functionalist, and positivist and as a theory that serves only the interest of management or organizations and not the interests of publics or society. For the most part, these criticisms reflect a misunderstanding or misinterpretation of our work. Although the middle-range theories incorporated in the excellence study originally were based on "modernist" organizational theories, we integrated elements of both symbolic-interpretive thinking (e.g., J. Grunig, 1992d, 1993) and postmodernism (e.g., L. Grunig, J. Grunig & Dozier, 2002, p. 143) into the excellence theory. In particular, we described strategic management in post-modern terms:

> Our view of the empowerment of the public relations function also fits well with Knights and Morgan's (1991) and Knights' (1992) post-modern view of strategic management as a subjective process in which the participants from different management disciplines (such as marketing, finance, law, human resources, or public relations) assert their disciplinary identities. Public relations has value in this perspective because it brings a different set of problems and possible solutions into the strategic management area. In particular, it brings the problems of stakeholder publics into decision-making – publics who make up the environment of the organization. (p. 143)

Likewise, critical or post-modern scholars who have described the excellence theory as "organization-centered" (e.g., Leitch & Neilson, 2001) simply do not understand or have misrepresented our research on publics (e.g., J. Grunig, 1971, 1997), activism (e.g., J. Grunig & L. Grunig, 1997), or power (e.g., L. Grunig, J. Grunig, & Dozier, 2001, chap. 5). Throughout our careers, we have seen public relations as a means of giving voice to and empowering publics in organizational decision-making (a post-modern perspective), while at the same time developing explanations of why empowering publics also benefits organizations (a semi-modernist perspective).

Thus, we believe the excellence theory contains elements of both modernism and postmodernism, although we do not adhere rigorously to the assumptions of either stereotyped approach. For example, although postmodernists dismiss general theories as metanarratives or "grand narratives" (Hatch, 1997, p. 44), we believe in the importance of integrating and enlarging theories. Thus, it is not possible to characterize the excellence theory (the strategic management, behavioural paradigm) as either a modernist or a postmodernist approach to understanding public relations as a strategic management function. We also embrace the centrality of subjectivity in both theorizing and communicating – the central assumption of the symbolic-interpretive approach. However, we believe the symbolic-interpretive paradigm devotes excessive attention to the role of communication and public relations in negotiating *meaning* and not enough attention to their role in negotiating the *behaviour* of both organizations and publics.

Scholars and practitioners following the symbolic paradigm generally assume that public relations strives to influence how publics interpret the organization. These cognitive interpretations are embodied in such concepts as image, reputation, brand, impressions, and identity. The interpretive paradigm can be found in the concepts of reputation management in business schools, integrated marketing communication in advertising programmes, and

critical and rhetorical theory in communication departments. Practitioners who follow the interpretive paradigm emphasize publicity, media relations, and media effects. Although this paradigm largely relegates public relations to a tactical role, the use of these tactics does reflect an underlying theory. Communication tactics, this theory maintains, create an impression in the minds of publics that allow the organization to buffer itself from its environment – to use the words of Scott (1987) and Van den Bosch and Van Riel (1998) – which in turn allows the organization to behave in the way it wants.

In contrast, the behavioural, strategic management, paradigm focuses on the participation of public relations executives in strategic decision-making to help manage the behaviour of organizations. Van den Bosch & Van Riel (1998) defined this type of public relations as a bridging, rather than a buffering, function – again using Scott's (1987) terminology. It is designed to build relationships with stakeholders, rather than a set of messaging activities designed to buffer the organization from them. The paradigm emphasizes two-way and symmetrical communication of many kinds to provide publics a voice in management decisions and to facilitate dialogue between management and publics both before and after decisions are made. The strategic management paradigm does not exclude traditional public relations activities such as media relations and the dissemination of information. Rather, it broadens the number and types of media and communication activities and fits them into a symmetrical framework of research and listening. As a result, messages reflect the information needs of publics as well as the advocacy needs of organizations.

Critical scholars such as Weaver, Motion, and Roper (2006) tend to view the interpretive paradigm as the way public relations actually is practiced and the strategic management paradigm as "an unlikely rarity and even something of a fantastical ideal" (p. 15). We disagree. We believe the interpretive paradigm reflects the hopes of many of the clients and employers of public relations practitioners who prefer to make decisions in isolation from publics. It also represents the wishful thinking of many practitioners who still seem to believe that messages alone (and managed meaning) can protect organizations from publics and who promise clients and employers what they want to hear. Evaluation research (e.g., as reviewed by Dozier and Ehling, 1992), however, generally shows this interpretive paradigm to be ineffective because it does not deliver the effects its advocates promise or that critical scholars attribute to it. Most importantly, the interpretive approach does not provide a normative model for how public relations should be practiced – a model that can be taught to aspiring public relations professionals. The strategic management paradigm, we believe, provides such a normative model for an ethical, effective, and both organizationally and socially valued approach to public relations practice.

With this overview of the excellence theory and its evolution into the strategic management paradigm in mind, we devote the rest of this chapter to tracing the origins of the paradigm, its integration in the IABC excellence study, and the ongoing development and evolution of the paradigm.

3   Origins of the Strategic Management Paradigm

We will explain the formulation of the behavioural, strategic management, paradigm by first tracing its origins in research that we have done with many colleagues and students. The first part of the paradigm was J. Grunig's theory explaining the nature of publics and

how they develop. He has called this theory the situational theory of publics. This theory explains that people are most likely to seek information that is relevant to decision-making situations in their lives. He developed this theory in a study of how and why Colombian farmers seek information in decision situations, which became his doctoral dissertation (J. Grunig, 1968). Eventually, the situational theory developed into a tool to segment stakeholders into publics, to isolate the strategic publics with whom it is most important for organizations to develop relationships in order to be effective, and to plan different strategies for communicating with publics whose communication behaviours range from active to passive (J. Grunig, 1997). Thus, the situational theory of publics has provided a tool that strategic public relations practitioners can use to scan their environment for stakeholders.

When J. Grunig returned to the United States from Colombia in 1969, he was convinced that most of the failures in the communication programmes of agricultural agencies in Colombia resulted not from the backwardness or resistance of farmers but because of the nature of the communication programmes that organizations developed to communicate with them. Organizations that he studied were more likely to give information than to seek information. They also were unlikely to listen to or engage in dialogue with their publics. This one-way information giving typically resulted in policies and programmes of agencies that did not work well for farmers in the situations they faced.

J. Grunig believed that characteristics of organizations would explain why so many of them practice public relations in this ineffective way and why others practice it in a more excellent manner. A monograph (J. Grunig, 1976) and a great deal of subsequent research (reviewed in J. Grunig and L. Grunig, 1989) extended this research to all kinds of organizations doing public relations in the United States. First, he identified *independent variables* from organizational theory that seemed likely to explain why public relations was practiced differently by different organizations. These variables included organizational structure, environment, technology, size, age, culture, worldview, and power structures. The first *dependent* variables were simply one-way and two-way communication; but he eventually identified the now well-known four models of public relations: press agentry/publicity, public information, two-way asymmetrical, and two-way symmetrical (J. Grunig, 1984).

For the most part, this programme of research failed to identify organizational variables that explained why organizations practiced public relations as they did, although top management's worldview about the nature of public relations and organizational culture seemed to explain the most variance in public relations behavior. The knowledge of public relations practitioners also had a major effect.

The next stage of J. Grunig's research, therefore, was an intensive programme of studies on the two-way symmetrical model of public relations. The symmetrical model stated that individuals, organizations, and publics should use communication to adjust their ideas and behaviour to those of others rather than to try to control how others think and behave. Twenty years of research have produced a great deal of logical, empirical, and ethical support for the symmetrical theory (see L. Grunig, J. Grunig, and Dozier, 2002, chap. 8, for a review of the criticisms, theoretical development, and empirical evidence in support of the model).

In the late 1970s, at the same time that J. Grunig was working on the theories of publics, public relations behaviour of organizations, and the symmetrical model of communication, the AT&T Corporation asked him to work on a project to develop measures for and means of evaluating the effectiveness of public relations programmes, such as media

relations, community relations, employee relations, educational relations, and marketing communication. This research on the evaluation of public relations at the programme level provided another critical element of the theory of public relations and strategic management. Public relations could not have a role in strategic management unless its practitioners had a way to measure its effectiveness.

Schneider (aka L. Grunig, 1985) attempted to unify many of these concepts – such as roles, organizational structure, environment, and models – into a general theory of public relations. In her doctoral dissertation, she focused on how the structure and the environment of organizations, in particular, shape public relations behaviour. Her research, which found no single best way to practice public relations, did establish that two-way, balanced communication allows for systematic scanning of the environment that leads, in turn, to a sound basis for decision making. This managerial role for practitioners, she argued, becomes increasingly important in an era of intense activism.

At this point, we had developed several crucial middle-range theories that have become part of the strategic management approach to public relations: publics, the role of public relations in organizational decision-making, the symmetrical model of public relations, and concepts to define objectives of public relations programmes and measure their accomplishment. The excellence study, which began in 1985, then provided the means for unifying these concepts and adding other theoretical building blocks to the strategic management theory of public relations.

4   The IABC Excellence Study

When the IABC Research Foundation issued a request for proposals in 1984 for research on "How, Why, and to What Extent Communication Contributes to the Achievement of Organizational Objectives?," we first thought of the opportunity to move beyond the programme level of evaluation, where J. Grunig had worked in the AT&T research, to construct a theory of the overall value of the public relations function to the organization. Thus, the excellence study offered the possibility of constructing a theory of how public relations contributes to organizational effectiveness.

At the same time, L. Grunig and our collaborators on the project (David Dozier, William Ehling, Fred Repper, & Jon White) pointed out that the project also would make it possible to integrate a number of middle-range concepts that explained how the public relations function should be organized to increase its value to the organization. J. Grunig brought his concepts of publics, organizational theory and decision-making, models of public relations, evaluation of public relations, and research on employee communication to the project. Dozier contributed his and Broom's roles theory. Ehling contributed his knowledge of operations research and his views on the controversy over public relations and integrated marketing communication (IMC). L. Grunig brought her knowledge of gender, diversity, power, and activism. White contributed his ideas about public relations and strategic management. To this mix, Repper, our practitioner member, added his understanding of how our theories worked in practice. The package became what we now know as the excellence theory.

IABC's emphasis on explaining the value of public relations stimulated us to put measurement and evaluation into a broader perspective than the programme level. Although

programme evaluation remained an important component of our theory, we realized that it could not show the overall value of the public relations function to the organization. Our review of the literature on organizational effectiveness first showed that public relations has value when it helps the organization achieve its goals. However, the literature also showed that it has to develop those goals through interaction with strategic constituencies (stakeholders and publics). We theorized that public relations adds value when it helps the organization identify stakeholders and segment different kinds of publics from stakeholder categories. Second, we showed that public relations adds to this value when it uses symmetrical communication to develop and cultivate relationships with strategic publics. If it develops good relationships with strategic publics, an organization is more likely to develop goals desired by both the organization and its publics and is more likely to achieve those goals because it shares those goals and collaborates with publics.

Although we concluded that placing a monetary value on relationships with publics is difficult, our interviews with CEOs and senior public relations officers revealed numerous examples of how good relationships had reduced the *costs* of litigation, regulation, legislation, and negative publicity caused by poor relationships; reduced the *risk* of making decisions that affect different stakeholders; or increased *revenue* by providing products and services needed by stakeholders. Those examples provided powerful evidence of the value of good relationships with strategic publics.

In addition to explaining the value of public relations, the excellence study provided solid theory and empirical evidence of how the function should be organized to maximize this value. The reasoning flowed logically from our general premise about the value of public relations: Public relations must be organized in a way that makes it possible to identify strategic publics as part of the strategic management process and to build quality long-term relationships with them through symmetrical communication programmes.

Based on our research, we developed what Fleisher (1995) called a *generic benchmark* of critical success factors and best practices in communication management. In most public relations benchmarking studies, a researcher compares a communication unit with other units in its industry that are generally recognized as the best. The excellence study, by contrast, identified best practices across different types of organizations – corporations, government agencies, non-profit organizations, and associations. Generic benchmarking is more valuable than benchmarking a single case because it is unlikely that one organization will be, in Fleisher's (1995) words, "a world-class performer across the board" (p. 29). In the excellence study, we found that a few organizations exemplified most of the best practices, many exemplified some, and others had few of these characteristics. A generic benchmark does not provide an exact formula or detailed description of practices that a communication unit can copy to be excellent. Rather, it provides a set of principles that professionals can use to generate ideas for specific practices in their own organizations.

In our first book, *Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management*, Repper (1992), the practitioner member of the excellence team, explained how the theory of excellence could be used to audit communication programmes:

> One thing communicators never have been able to do is to compare our communication programs with a program that is considered the best and most effective. However, the normative theory provided in the book gives us an opportunity to measure the effectiveness of our communication programs against that of an ideal program (p. 112).

We tested the excellence theory through survey research of heads of public relations, CEOs, and employees in 327 organizations in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom. The survey research was followed by qualitative interviews with heads of public relations, other public relations practitioners, and CEOs in 25 organizations with the highest and lowest scores on a scale of excellence produced by statistical analysis of the survey data. Three books were published from the research (J. Grunig, 1992; Dozier with L. Grunig & J. Grunig, 1995; L. Grunig, J. Grunig, & Dozier, 2002).

The characteristics of an excellent public relations function can be placed into four categories, each containing several characteristics that can be audited.

4.1 Empowerment of the Public Relations Function

For public relations to contribute to organizational effectiveness, the organization must empower public relations as a critical management function. Empowerment of the public relations function covers four characteristics of excellent public relations. The first three consider the relationship of public relations to the overall management of the organization:

- *The senior public relations executive is involved with the strategic management processes of the organization, and communication programmes are developed for strategic publics identified as a part of this process.* Public relations contributes to strategic management by scanning the environment to identify publics affected by the consequences of decisions or who might affect the outcome of decisions. An excellent public relations department communicates with these publics to bring their voices into strategic management, thus making it possible for publics to participate in organizational decisions that affect them.
- *Communication programmes organized by excellent departments to communicate with strategic publics also are managed strategically.* To be managed strategically means that these programmes are based on formative research, that they have concrete and measurable objectives, that varying rather than routine techniques are used when they are implemented, and that they are evaluated either formally or informally. In addition, the public relations staff can provide evidence to show that these programmes achieve their short-term objectives and improve the long-term relationships between the organization and its publics.
- *The senior public relations executive is a member of the dominant coalition of the organization or has a direct reporting relationship to senior managers who are part of the dominant coalition.* The public relations function seldom will be involved in strategic management nor will public relations have the power to affect key organizational decisions unless the senior public relations executive is part of or has access to the group of senior managers with the greatest power in the organization.

The fourth characteristic of empowerment defines the extent to which practitioners who are not white males are empowered in the public relations function:

- *Diversity is embodied in all public relations roles.* The principle of requisite variety suggests that organizations need as much diversity inside as in their environment if they are to interact successfully with all strategic elements of their environment.

Excellent public relations departments empower both men and women in all roles and they empower practitioners of diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds.

4.2 Communicator Roles

Public relations researchers have conducted extensive research on two major roles that communicators play in organizations – the manager and technician roles. Communication technicians are essential to carry out most of the day-to-day communication activities of public relations departments, and many practitioners play both roles. In less-excellent departments, however, all of the communication practitioners – including the senior practitioner – are technicians. If the senior communicator is not a manager, public relations cannot be empowered as a management function. Three characteristics of excellence in public relations are related to the managerial role:

- *A strategic manager rather than a technician or an administrative manager heads the public relations unit*. Excellent public relations units must have at least one senior communication manager who conceptualizes and directs public relations programmes. If not, other members of the dominant coalition who have little knowledge of communication management or of relationship building will supply this direction. In addition, the results of the excellence study distinguished between two types of senior managers: a strategic manager and an administrative manager. Administrative managers typically manage day-to-day operations of the communication function, manage personnel, and manage the budget. They generally are supervisors of technicians rather than strategic managers. If the senior public relations officer is an administrative manager rather than a strategic manager, the department usually will not be excellent.
- *The senior public relations executive or others in the public relations unit must have the knowledge needed for the manager role or the communication function will not have the potential to become a managerial function*. Excellent public relations programmes are staffed by professionals – practitioners who have gained the knowledge needed to carry out the manager role through university education, continuing education, or self-study.
- *Both men and women must have equal opportunity to occupy the managerial role*. The majority of public relations professionals are women. Research also has established that female practitioners are the best educated in this field and most likely to take advantage of professional development opportunities. If women are excluded from the managerial role, the communication function may be diminished because the majority of the most-knowledgeable practitioners will be excluded from that role. When that is the case, the senior position in the public relations department typically is filled by a technician or by a practitioner from another managerial function who has little knowledge of public relations.

4.3 Organization of the Communication Function and its Relationship to other Management Functions

Many organizations have a single department devoted to all communication functions. Others have separate departments for programmes aimed at different publics such as journalists, employees, the local community, or the financial community. Still others place communication under another managerial function such as marketing, human resources, legal, or finance. Many organizations also contract with or consult with outside firms for all or some of their communication programs or for such communication techniques as annual reports or newsletters. Two characteristics are related to the organization of the function:

- *Public relations should be an integrated communication function.* An excellent public relations function integrates all public relations programmes into a single department or provides a mechanism for coordinating programmes managed by different departments. Only in an integrated system is it possible for public relations to develop new communication programmes for changing strategic publics and to move resources from outdated programmes designed for formerly strategic publics to the new programmes.
- *Public relations should be a management function separate from other functions.* Even though the public relations function is integrated in an excellent organization, the function should not be placed in another department whose primary responsibility is a management function other than communication. Many organizations splinter the public relations function by making communication a supporting tool for other departments such as marketing or human resources. When the public relations function is sublimated to other functions, it cannot be managed strategically because it cannot move communication resources from one strategic public to another—as an integrated public relations function can.

4.4 Models of Public Relations

Public relations scholars have conducted extensive research on the extent to which organizations practice four models of public relations—four typical ways of conceptualizing and conducting the communication function—and to identify which of these models provides a normative framework for effective and ethical public relations. This research suggests that excellent departments design more of their communication programmes on the two-way symmetrical model of collaboration and public participation than on three other typical models: press agentry (emphasizing only favourable publicity), public information (disclosing accurate information but engaging in no research or other form of two-way communication), or two-way asymmetrical (emphasizing only the interests of the organization and not the interests of publics).

Two-way symmetrical public relations is based on research and uses communication to enhance public participation and to manage conflict with strategic publics. As a result, two-way symmetrical communication produces better long-term relationships with publics than do the other models of public relations. Symmetrical programmes generally are conducted more ethically than are other models and, as a result, produce effects that balance

the interests of organizations and the publics in society. Four characteristics of excellence are related to models of public relations:

- *The public relations department and the dominant coalition share the worldview that the communication department should base its goals and its communication activities on the two-way symmetrical model of public relations.*
- *Communication programmes developed for specific publics are based on two-way symmetrical strategies for building and maintaining relationships.*
- *The senior public relations executive or others in the public relations unit must have the professional knowledge needed to practice the two-way symmetrical model.*
- *The organization should have a symmetrical system of internal communication.*

A symmetrical system of internal communication is based on the principles of employee empowerment and participation in decision-making. Managers and other employees engage in dialogue and listen to each other. Internal publications disclose relevant information needed by employees to understand their role in the organization and to provide employees a voice in management. Symmetrical communication within an organization fosters a participative rather than an authoritarian culture as well as improved relationships with employees – greater employee satisfaction, control mutuality, commitment, and trust.

5   Extending the Excellence Theory to a Global Theory

In several studies conducted around the world, our colleagues and we have extended the excellence theory into a global public relations theory based on what we call "generic principles and specific applications." This theory is a middle-ground theory that falls between an ethnocentric and a polycentric theory. An ethnocentric theory would suggest that an organization should practice public relations in exactly the same way in every country – usually the way it is practiced in the country where the headquarters of the multinational organization is located. A polycentric theory would suggest that public relations must be practiced differently in every country because of overwhelming cultural and other contextual conditions. "Generic principles" means that in an abstract sense, the principles of public relations are the same worldwide. "Specific applications" means that these abstract principles must be applied differently in different settings.

As a starting point for research, we proposed that the principles identified in the excellence study are generic. We also proposed that public relations professionals must consider six contextual conditions when they apply the principles:

- culture, including language.
- the political system.
- the economic system.
- the media system.
- the level of economic development.
- the extent and nature of activism.

Our research to date has provided evidence supporting this theory of generic principles and specific applications. The most extensive test of the theory came in Slovenia. We replicated the quantitative portion of the excellence study by surveying 30 Slovenian firms that had

public relations departments. We found that the principles of excellence clustered into the same excellence factor in Slovenia as they did in the United States, Canada, and the UK in spite of a different cultural, political, and economic context (L. Grunig, J. Grunig, & Verčič, 1998).

To deal with differences in contextual conditions, public relations practitioners in Slovenia found it necessary to apply the generic principles differently than in the Anglo countries. For example, we learned that they needed to counsel CEOs to support and empower public relations managers. They also developed continuing education in public relations to deal with the lack of public relations knowledge, and they had to emphasize employee relations because of the negative context inside Slovenian organizations.

6   More About the Strategic Management Role of Public Relations

Although the excellence theory is a general theory that incorporates a number of middle-range theories, its most important component is the contribution of public relations to strategic management. This component, in turn, points to the value of the behavioural, strategic management, approach to public relations. Since the completion of the excellence study, scholars working in this research tradition have continued to conduct research for the profession that has resulted in concepts and ideas that public relations professionals can use to participate in strategic decision processes. To conclude this chapter, therefore, we will elaborate on what the strategic management role for public relations includes and then briefly describe recent research that has been done to provide new tools for carrying out this role.

To contribute to strategic management, public relations should be an integral part of the management of every organization. The public relations function helps the organization interact with the stakeholders in its environment both to accomplish its mission and to behave in a socially responsible manner. In a strategic management role, public relations people manage *communication* with *top managers* and with *publics* to contribute to the strategic decision processes of organizations. They manage communication between management and publics to build *relationships* with the publics that are most likely to affect the behaviour of the organization or that are most affected by the behaviour of the organization. Communication processes can be managed, and processes that facilitate dialogue among managers and publics also can contribute to managing *organizational behaviours* – although public relations people cannot manage organizational behaviours by themselves. Dialogue among managers and publics, in turn, can produce long-term relationships described by characteristics J. Grunig and his students (e.g., J. Grunig & Huang, 2000; J. Grunig & Hung, 2002) have identified and defined – trust, mutuality of control, commitment, and satisfaction. Relationships also are affected much more by the behaviour of management than by one-way messages sent out by public relations or advertising people. Relationships also can be measured and evaluated to determine the long-term effectiveness and value of public relations (Hon & J. Grunig, 1999; J. Grunig, 2002; Scott, 2007).

An excellent public relations staff cannot serve in this role, however, unless research and measurement are an integral part of the function. Formative research is necessary to identify strategic publics with which an organization needs a relationship and to determine how to cultivate relationships with those publics. Public relations practitioners can use the

situational theory to segment stakeholders into publics. The excellence study showed that the most common categories of stakeholders are employees, customers, investors, the community, government, members of associations and non-profit organizations, the media, and donors to non-profit organizations. The situational theory can be used to segment each of these categories of stakeholders into publics that engage in different levels of activity that affect an organization. This range of activity includes activist (such as belonging to nongovernmental organizations), active, passive, or no communication behaviour. The more active the public, the more likely it is that communication programmes will have an effect. For example, the probability of an effect of communication on behaviour can be increased from 0.5% to about 50% by selecting an active public rather than a non-public (J. Grunig & Hunt, 1984, p. 156).

Evaluative research then is necessary to establish the effectiveness of public relations programmes and their contribution to organizational effectiveness. Evaluative research can be conducted to both measure the short-term effects of communication programmes on the cognitions, attitudes, and behaviours of both publics and management and the long-term effects of communication on the quality of relationships between organizations and publics (J. Grunig, 2008).

7   Recent Research to Enhance the Strategic Role of Public Relations

Although research-based knowledge on publics and the evaluation of public relations has been available for years, other concepts and tools related to the strategic management role of public relations have been developed only recently. Research to develop these new concepts and tools includes:

- *Environmental scanning.* Research to identify publics and issues and to evaluate information sources that can be used to bring information into the organization (e.g., Chang, 2000; J. Grunig & L. Grunig, 2000).
- *Publics.* Research to develop the situational theory of publics and to explain the social nature of publics (e.g., Aldoory, 2001; Aldoory & Sha, 2007; Kim, 2006; Sha, 1995; Sriramesh, Moghan, & Wei, 2007; Tkalac, 2007).
- *Scenario building*. Research to develop this technique for explaining the consequences of the behaviour of publics to management and the issues created by the behaviour of publics (e.g., Sung, 2004, 2007).
- *Relationship cultivation strategies.* Research to expand the concepts of symmetrical and asymmetrical communication to include a number of strategies to manage conflict and cultivate relationships that are most effective in producing high-quality relationships with stakeholder publics (e.g., Huang, 2007; Hung, 2002, 2004, 2007; Plowman, 2007; and Rhee, 2004, 2007).
- *Interactions of relationships and reputation.* Public relations practitioners and management scholars have paid a great deal of attention to an organization's reputation in recent years, in the belief that reputation is an intangible asset that adds both monetary and non-monetary value to an organization. The research of J. Grunig and his colleagues (J. Grunig & Hung, 2002; Yang, 2005; Yang & J. Grunig, 2005) has shown, however, that public relations has a greater long-term effect on relationships than on reputation and that reputations are largely a by-product of management behaviour and

the quality of organization-public relationships. Thus, attending to relationships will ultimately improve an organization's reputation. Reputation, however, cannot be managed directly; it is managed through the cultivation of relationships.

- *Development of an ethical framework for public relations practitioners to use as they participate in strategic management* (e. g., Bowen, 2000, 2004, 2007; J. Grunig & L. Grunig, 1996).
- *Empowerment of the public relations function.* Research to clarify the nature of the dominant coalition in an organization and how public relations practitioners become part of or gain access to empowered coalitions (e. g., Berger, 2005, 2007).
- *Specialized areas of public relations.* Research to extend the generic principles of excellence to specialized areas of public relations, such as fund raising (Kelly, 1991), investor relations (Shickinger, 1998), employee relations (Kim, 2005, 2007), community relations (Rhee, 2004, 2007), and government relations (Chen, 2005, 2007a, 2007b).
- *Global public relations and global strategy*. Research to develop the global theory of generic principles that can be applied in many cultures and political-economic settings and specific applications to adapt them to different contexts (e.g., L. Grunig, J. Grunig, & Verčič, 1998; Verčič, L. Grunig, & J. Grunig, 1996; Sriramesh & Verčič, 2003; Sriramesh, 2007; Wakefield, 1997, 2000, 2007). Recent research has applied this theory to a multinational military organization (NATO) (Van Dyke, 2005), public diplomacy programmes of governments in other countries (Yun, 2005, 2006), and globalized and localized strategies of multinational organizations (Ni, 2006).

8 Moving to the Future

The programme of research that began with research on publics among Colombian farmers in the late 1960s, that built on the skeleton of a general theory explored in 1985, that was integrated into the excellence theory in the 1980s and 1990s, and that now includes research on the details of strategic public relations conducted around the world has produced an elaborated, general theory of public relations. This general theory has provided concepts to teach to future public relations practitioners, tools that professionals can use in practice, principles and rules that will make public relations more acceptable to society and understood by both organizations and publics, and a conceptual framework that continues to generate research.

Throughout the world, however, public relations too often is understood as a symbolic, interpretive, function rather than as a strategic management function – an understanding of the profession that we believe reduces its effectiveness, both for organizations and publics, and limits its acceptance by society. In sociological terms, public relations has become institutionalized, i.e., commonly understood and practiced, as an interpretive function. Yi (2005) has made a compelling argument that research is needed to learn how to re-institutionalize public relations as a strategic management function so that organizations come to understand and accept public relations in this way rather than solely as a messaging, publicity, and media relations function.

We believe that a primary research challenge, therefore, is to learn how to convert public relations from a buffering role into the bridging role that modern organizations need

to be effective and that societies around the world need to become more harmonious. At the same time, institutionalizing public relations as a strategic management function can ossify its practice as much as its institutionalization as an interpretive function has frozen and limited the practice. We believe future research should be developed to help public relations *evolve* (L. Grunig, 2007) as a strategic management function and continually re-institutionalize itself to adjust to changes in organizations, communication technologies, and societal expectations. Thus, we believe the future of the excellence theory should be evolutionary change.

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Rhetorical Perspective and Public Relations: Meaning Matters

Robert L. Heath & Finn Frandsen

Rhetorical theory features how the public relations process becomes enriched through the role co-created, shared meaning plays in society as a blend of mind and self. The rhetorical heritage features the potent role of fact (as interpreted information), judgment, and identification as discourse themes enacted in public arenas. Public relations can add value to society by assuring that choices become enlightened, risks are ethically managed, and relationships are mutually developed. Through ethical rhetorical practice that results from the reflective character of organizations, public relations helps society to be more fully functioning.

1 Introduction

What is public relations and what does it contribute to society? Does it help establish the rationale for how each society creates and enacts meaning? Can we answer the first question without answering the second one? Does the rhetorical heritage offer insights useful for this venture? This chapter addresses these broad questions and reasons that public relations serves the societal rhetorical process to create and enact shared meaning that can make society fully functioning.

Imagine the following scenario. A collection of people has assembled. Their thoughts, preferences, evaluations, and actions differ on various matters but not so much that they are independent of one another. Each person engages in various conversations, some public and others private. The individuals have varying power resources that privilege them to make decisions that affect others. Members of this assembly have different reward expectations, views of reality, and sense of the political economy.

The conversation is held together by shared purposes and interconnecting zones of meaning. Meanings often vary and even clash, as do interests. Decision priorities and ethical views differ, as do various individuals' views on key issues. The individuals (and groups that they form for various purposes) are often known to one another by their position on various issues (Springston & Keyton, 2001; see also Leitch & Neilson, 2001), and choices. Some want to sell products and services (even non-profit activists and government agencies) and therefore promote them by pressing the qualitative advantage of buying or otherwise supporting their products and services. Some individuals are loosely identified with one another; others are closely identified. Their identities reflect what they think others think of them. Some are in government, others in business. A number belong to activist groups and other kinds of non-profit organizations.

They are trying to determine how to make enlightened choices, what choices are better, and how meaning can influence such judgments. They wear their meaning like glasses,

which give them compatible as well as contrary views of reality, society, choices, and one another. They have an incentive to communicate and cooperate, even as they may compete. To varying degrees they realize that how well their collectivity works predicts the degree to which they collectively manage risks. This grand dialogue is structured (structuration) by what each does and says and how others react to those statement and actions. We recognize that each such assembly is seeking to manage relationships, decisions, and resources in varying degrees of concert.

One can imagine that this scenario is exactly the same as the societal context, the public arena, that gives reason for the need for public relations to engage in and foster dialogue that brings people together as well as pits some against others. Reflection (reflexivity) – the ability to reflect on others' positions and ones own positions as well as ones relationships to others – is a key ingredient in how participants engage in the dialogue, the strategies used and the ends sought. Those that would influence others are wise to listen, understand, and appreciate the views of others, even when they disagree. Such reflexivity is a foundation for collaboration and offers awareness of the public arena in which dialogue occurs.

Regardless of the individual or organization, each needs to understand various perspectives and decision options to make decisions in the face of a choice. Especially in terms of management challenges, meeting them successfully and responsibly entails making choices that depend on qualitatively different processes of communication and its content as argumentative claims. This process cannot escape the virtue and pitfalls of advocacy, argument, persuasion, and the co-creation or mutual shaping of shared meaning. Cutlip (1994) focused attention on this reality:

> …only through the expertise of public relations can causes, industries, individuals, and institutions make their voice heard in the public forum where thousands of shrill, competing voices daily re-create the Tower of Babel. I did not and do not deny the harm done by the incompetent, the charlatan, and those who serve dubious causes. (p. ix)

Through the lens of history, Cutlip saw public relations as an "unseen power." This profession can achieve good and bad ends, but it is a social influence. "Public relations strategies and tactics are increasingly used as weapons of power in our no-holds-barred political, economic, and cause competition in the public opinion marketplace, and thus deserve more scholarly scrutiny than they have had" (Cutlip, 1994, p. xi).

At its best,

> public relations is the management function that entails planning, research, publicity, promotion, and collaborative decision making to help any organization's ability to listen to, appreciate, and respond appropriately to those persons and groups whose mutually beneficial relationships the organization needs to foster as it strives to achieve its mission and vision. (Heath & Coombs, 2006, p. 7)

All of these choices and influences gain their rationale for collective efforts to manage risks (Douglas, 1992, see also Tansey & Rayner, in press). Such decisions are made in the face of varying degrees of uncertainty and based on operating premises that are variously shared and contested across society. At the extreme of such risky decisions, the precautionary principle has been developed, invoked, and debated as a constructive decision-making heuristic (Maguire & Ellis, in press).

For a discipline that has meaning-making as a substantial part of its professional raison d'etre, the academic literature on public relations tends to focus more on process and structure/function than the role and strategic options for meaning creation and management. Even those discussions that stress relationship building, co-creation of meaning, and negotiation tend to emphasize these functions more than the dynamic role that meaning plays. If we think broadly that public relations theory rests on social science and humanities perspectives, one of those can ignore meaning, and the other can slight the role of functional process. Thus, the literature should define the relationship of process/function and meaning: east is east, west is west, and shall the twain meet?

This chapter champions not only the role of strategic and systematic meaning-making as a rationale for public relations, but it does so by also connecting that logic to the aspects of the discipline that draw on systems theory (structural functionalism), relationship management, and attribution. It stresses how public relations as mutually beneficial relationship building cannot wisely ignore the salient role of meaning.

1.1 A Rhetorical Perspective: Meaning Drives Society

Central to personal and organizational management is a joint assumption that each organization needs successfully to position itself comfortably within an opinion field (various shared zones of meaning) that support its operations and give them rationale, legitimacy in power resource management. Rather than being the product of singular influence, this field is co-created, forged through multiple voices in cooperative competition (Burke, 1969a, 1973). It is shaped and bent, bolstered and destroyed to the advantage of one or more interests through the presentation and consideration of various facts, evaluations, policies, and identifications. Each voice is likely to state (implicitly or explicitly) the ethical or moral superiority of its case. Thus, if society is the product and substance of dialogue/discourse, each organization seeking its legitimate viability must enact as well as work to refine this substance to balance its interests with those interests relevant to each informed and enlightened choice. "Enlightened choice assumes that people must have information – facts – and the interpretative frames needed to appropriately understand how well the information informs various conclusions. Facts do not come prepackaged into conclusions" (Heath, 2008, p. 209).

This dynamic sense of society presumes discourse: argument, advocacy, persuasion, statement and counter statement that create, shape, and apply various premises as justification for the collective management of risk. This presentation of facts and forging of premises gives the operating rationale for each political economy; captured as narratives and counter narratives, society consists of multiple layers ranging from the total narrative of the society, down to those (for instance) that define business activity, industries, individual companies, employees of such companies, and the individuals who support or oppose such organizations (Heath, 1994). Such narratives reflect the expectations of stakeholders and stake seekers who in various ways form the bases for organizations' standards of corporate responsibility. Such observations stress the essential nature of information, its connection with uncertainty reduction, and the inherent perplexities of differing interpretations of the data that result when different premises are used to interpret and evaluate the same information.

To bring meaning and organizational process and function together, Heath (1994) worked to blend structural functional interpretations of organizational and societal processes by using a narrative explanation of the sorts of value-laden interpretations that guide and frustrate coordinated activity. Central to those activities is the importance of shared narratives as lived (enacted) and liveable experiences, but in ways that foster as well as frustrate the sorts of constraints and cooperation traditionally assumed as a prerequisite for collective behaviour.

Rhetoric gives life to information. The last decades of the 20th Century witnessed the unfortunate marginalization of rhetoric as "mere rhetoric" or "nothing but rhetoric." In part that outcome came from anti-establishment blasts against political and corporate statements of policy that were decoupled from action. Thus, students of rhetoric realized the virtue of rhetorical enactment: All of what an individual or organization does and says has communicative value, which can and does constitute statement of position on choices relevant to individuals, collectivities, and society. Such views demanded a realization that discourse has a few primary functions: to address questions of fact, value, and policy, as well as identifications (Heath, 2001). If it is vacuous (or spin), one assumes that it is devoid of fact, or that actions do not prove statements

Fact is the essential nature of information. Alternatively, one might argue, information becomes fact (or fails to do so) as it is given life through discourse. Thus, fact is information evaluated, judged, and applied. It lacks relevance to decisions until it enters into dialogue. The voices of public relations are essential to this dialogue. To assume that information is purely neutral and yet relevant to decisions is fundamentally naive. The key is not neutrality, but how well any information advances the quality of the dialogue. This claim is supported by Burke's (1973) argument that words serve as terministic screens. They impose judgement on reality because reality cannot speak in a purely neutral way. This logic is vital given the voices, which reason that human experience is eternally a balance between the known and the fundamental chaos of the universe.

Stressing the interpretive role of language, Campbell (1996) compared scientists for whom "the most important concern is the discovery and testing of certain kinds of truths" to what rhetoricians (who study rhetoric and take a rhetorical perspective) would say, "Truths cannot walk on their own legs. People to other people must carry them. They must be explained, defended, and spread through language, argument, and appeal" (p. 3). Rhetoricians take the position "that unacknowledged and unaccepted truths are of no use at all" (p. 3). The rhetorical tradition is founded on fact because rhetors are required to assert and demonstrate their propositions, the essence of the scientific method.

Challenging a view of public relations that presumes that merely sharing or knowing information suffices to resolve differences, Gaudino, Fritsch, and Haynes (1989) argued that an "if you only knew what I know" mentality is dysfunctional as the rationale of public relations. Information, as fact, has a vital role in communication, but only becomes useful as it is known *and* interpreted, subjected to scrutiny that is likely to reveal conflicting narratives. Knowing information, holding it collectively in cognition, is a fraction of the rationale for public relations. That model can ignore other aspects of cognition, such as evaluation and behavioural preferences seeking rewards and avoiding negative outcomes – as well as identifications among one another. The important question is what does the information mean and what is its importance for some decision at hand – individually and collectively.

The rhetorical tradition has championed the role of facts since the age of Aristotle. Rhetoric is relevant to any context in which humans are compelled to make enlightened choice (Nichols, 1963). In addition, in this sense, rhetoric has an epistemic dimension (Cherwitz & Hikins, 1986; Scott, 1976). Such interpretations yield to analysis that interpretation, response, and use of information is bounded by various frames (Hallahan, 1999).

Since the Golden Age of Greece, rhetorical study has never abandoned conviction to the need for a strong connection between strategies of persuasive influence, the constructive role of such discourse in society, and the ethics of such discourse. To wit, discourse provided by various participants in social dialogue (individual or organizational) suffices for the good of society and therefore assumes as foundational the role of ethical judgment of the worth of each statement as well as the collective voices on some matter.

Words count. Humans are "wordy people" (Burke, 1973), who decide matters through statements (words, discourse, actions, and all other forms of meaning creation). Looking as he did so often and well for the chinks in the armour of communication, he warned: "If language is the fundamental instrument of human cooperation, and if there is an 'organic flaw' in the nature of language, we may well expect to find this organic flaw revealing itself through the texture of society" (Burke, 1934, p. 330).

In sum, public relations practice and theory explicitly or implicitly include judgments about the quality of discourse and its effects on decisions in the face of uncertainty and enlightenment. In all of this discussion, the authors assume that rhetoric is a universal human experience insofar as it is the rationale for dialogue, which can be variously propositional and non-propositional. Such dialogue is inseparable from the naming and attitudinizing functions of language (Burke, 1973). It takes its character from the fact that it exists in private as well as public, joining the two realms. It is a means by which individuals invite one another to evaluate and accept interpretations of fact, value and policy and to form identifications of various kinds. There is an invitational quality to rhetoric (Foss & Griffin, 1995). As such, it can be a form of courtship (or courtship is rhetorical). Burke (1969b) defined rhetoric as the "use of suasive devices for the transcending of social estrangement" (p. 208).

1.2   Rhetoric: Foundations and Challenges of a Fully Functioning Society

Public relations' origins suggest that it was created, perhaps beyond any sense of recorded history, to make leaders more effective and clans powerful and responsive to one another. What predicts how and why some statement will succeed and others will fail, as well as which are responsible, ethical, and in the public interest? As Burke (1946) mused in a letter to his friend Malcolm Cowley: "How can a world with rhetoric stay decent, how a world without it can exist at all?" We ask this parallel question: How can a world with public relations stay decent, how can a world without it exist at all? In public relations, an organization or spokesperson suffers opposition based on what it does or says: "the dialectical (agonistic) approach to knowledge is through the act of assertion, whereby one 'suffers' the kind of knowledge that is the reciprocal of this act" (Burke, 1969a, pp. 39-40).

In the battle waged to achieve some collective outcome, each statement is not independent of others but gains its meaning and importance by how it agrees, disagrees, or otherwise responds to other statements. "Rhetoric is thus made from fragments of dialectic"

(Burke, 1969b, p. 207). Dialectic, the cooperative use of competition, progresses from division through merger to identification.

> A rhetorician, I take it, is like one voice in a dialogue. Put several such voices together, with each voicing its own special assertion, let them act upon one another in cooperative competition, and you get a dialectic that, properly developed can lead to views transcending the limitations of each. (Burke, 1951, p. 203)

Fundamental to the various competing theories of public relations is the question of interest and service. Does public relations only serve the interest of its "employer"? If so, does the interest of the non-profit activist counter balance the interest of companies as each seeks to justify their preferred interpretations, evaluations, policy positions, and identifications? Can the dialogue, consisting of statement and counter statement, make society more fully functioning? Is the role of ethical public relations to strive for collaboration and enlightened choices inside and about organizations that seek and perhaps achieve the level of being truly in the "public interest" or the larger interest of many? This position assumes that rather than merely creating harmony between an organization and one or more market, audience, or public that the more important challenge is to foster a functional dialogue so that collectively the best decisions can be made, problems solved, challenges met, harmony achieved, and legitimacy earned.

At least since the mid-point of the 20th Century, academics and practitioners of public relations have focused attention on relationship development, often suggesting that the quality of the relationships between organizations, and between them and their key publics predict the likelihood they will achieve sufficient social capital to acquire the resources they need. Thus, we find countless claims that public relations serves best when it helps create, maintain, and repair relationships that ultimately serve the interest of a target organization by balancing those interests with views, preferences, and interests of key publics. Academics persistently advocate that public relations should help build relationships favourable to the organization (or mutually beneficial) with individuals and groups (stakeholder publics) whose good will is needed because these stakeholders can affect the organization's ability to achieve its mission. Such efforts have profound rhetorical implications. Ever attentive to the role of language, rhetoric, and community, Burke (1965) cautioned, "Let the system of cooperation become impaired, and the communicative equipment is correspondingly impaired, while this impairment of the communicative medium in turn threatens the structure of rationality itself" (p. 163).

Fundamental to rhetorical analysis is the "word-thing" tension as a universal challenge to researchers and practitioners. It is central to the relationship between encountered "facts" and interpreted "facts." In his review of the referential theory of language, Burke (1966) argued that nothing could be further from reality than the words that are assumed to refer to it. This critique helped support and reflected Burke's views on linguistic relativism, which posits support for this revision, as Burke (1966) reasoned: "things are the signs of words" (p. 363). Instead of reflecting meaning, language defines and attitudinizes it. Such is the case, Burke argued, because "there will be as many different worldviews in history as there are people" (p. 52). Words are human's instruments for knowing; knowing (especially as discussed by chaos theorists) is nothing but structures of terms made manifest by the character of each terminology, vocabulary (Burke, 1969a). The essence, as well as perceptual outcome, of this logic supports the fact that language, each idiom or vocabulary, is a

reflection, selection, and deflection of how people see and act toward the world they name and experience.

Such is the case because words create terministic screens through which people perceive reality. Those perceptions distort, include, exclude, shade, enhance, diminish, and such, depending on each word and the larger vocabulary and culture of the users of the word. Words constitute "a kind of photographic 'screen' which will 'let through' some perceptions and 'filter out' others" (p. 105). Perhaps no more brilliant statement exists on this theory than that articulated by the linguistic anthropologist, Sapir (1956):

> Human beings do not live in the objective world along, not alone in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood, but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society. We see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation. (quoted by Whorf, 1956, p. 134)

Following this line of reasoning, Burke (1966) asserted that the verification of truth is problematic because the conclusions humans make imply "the particular terminology in terms of which the observations are made" (p. 46). Perception is connected to language to such an extent that contacts with reality "reveals only such reality as is capable of being revealed by this particular kind of terminology" (Burke, 1969a, p. 313).

Once such terms translate into action, they are likely to guide, motivate, and frame views and actions. Such is especially the case as they become expressed in narratives (shared narratives and counter narratives) (Fisher, 1987). As they tend to point to or away from attributes of perceived reality, words suffering the paradox of the positive may become more understandable but also more problematic. In marketing communication, purveyors of goods feature positive elements and dissociate from negative ones. This sort of verbal positioning establishes part of the rationale for crisis and risk management as well. When public relations practitioners battle over issues, seek to resolve conflict, and foster collaborative decision making, they are prone to stress the positive side of their case and play down negative themes fundamental to the controversy. To avoid such terministic flaws, cooperating and competing members of society must have the appropriate rationale for enlightened decisions in the face of the various rhetorical problems that arise through the collective management of risks.

1.3 Rhetorical Problems: Perspectives, Rationale, Mind, Self and Society

As individuals and members of organizations, we see ourselves (mind) as an interested part (self) of a collective (society) that may or may not be fully functioning. As Mead (1934) reasoned:

> Our society is built up out of our social interests. Our social relations go to constitute the self. However, when the immediate interests come in conflict with others we had not recognized, we tend to ignore the others and take into account only those which are immediate. The difficulty is to make ourselves recognize the other and wider interests, and then to bring them into some sort of rational relationship with the more immediate ones. (pp. 388-389)

A society – people and organizations – learns from mistakes. As a profession, public relations can serve society by solving mistakes. Public relations can serve organizations by making them good as a prerequisite for their being articulate. Thus, public relations can assist organizations' structurative narrative enactments (Heath, 1994; Weick, 1987) as undirected plays (Pearce & Cronen, 1980).

A first step toward being an excellent organization is to adopt standards of corporate responsibility that serve as the character required to be an effective communicator. Aristotle reasoned that character, what we might call corporate responsibility, is the foundation of effective communication. Persons with more credibility are more believable and trustworthy because they associate their lives, arguments, and purposes with higher order values: Truth, morality and virtue. What distinguishes a speaker's character? Aristotle (1952c) answered: "good sense, good moral character, and goodwill" (p. 623). Standards of the "good" are basic to rhetoric that "exists to affect the giving of decisions" (p. 622).

Aristotle thought the openness of public discourse in and of itself motivated communicators to seek the best – strongest and ethically best points of view – because ideas were contested in public where they received penetrating analysis. Aristotle believed the process entailed the seeking of truth through public advocacy rather than leaving truth to be known (in the Platonic sense) by the singular analytic efforts of a "philosopher king." Thus, Aristotle took a stand 2,500 years ago that is comfortable with the contemporary preference for ethical symmetry. As Aristotle would argue, neither side is inherently correct or morally right, but the process of exchange can reveal the interests of both sides so they may achieve a win-win, integrative outcome based on collaborative decision making.

With rhetoric, people collectively make decisions and form policy for the public good. In the opinion of Aristotle (1952b) regarding politics, "if all communities aim at some good," the best are those that aspire to "the highest good" (p. 445). Thus, rhetoric is judged by the quality of the process and its outcomes: "Every state is a community of some kind, and every community is established with a view of some good; for mankind always acts in order to obtain that which they think 'good'" (p. 445).

For Aristotle (1952c), rhetoric serves to give counsel "on matters about which people deliberate; matters, namely, that ultimately depend on ourselves, and which we have it in our power to set going" (p. 599). Aristotle thought bad character undoes persuasion:

> False statements and bad advice are due to one or more of the following three causes. Men [or women] either form a false opinion through want of good sense; or they form a true opinion, but because of their moral badness do not say what they really think; or finally, they are both sensible and upright, but not well disposed to their hearers, and may fail in consequence to recommend what they know to be the best course. (p. 623)

Is rhetorical dialogue, engaged in by ethical people, the best means for discovering truth and making sound judgment?

When a rhetor recommends a conclusion or action, he or she does so "on the ground that it will do good; if he [or she] urges its rejection, he [or she] does so on the ground that it will do harm" (Aristotle, 1952c, p. 598). People and societies are evaluated by the ends to which they aspire (Aristotle, 1952c, p. 608). Rhetoric is used to explore ways of achieving happiness by making choices that will do well and prevent or at least minimize harm.

Centring attention on the connection between communication and ethics, Aristotle (1952a) began his *Nichomachean Ethics*: "Every art and every inquiry, and similarly every

action and pursuit, is thought to aim at some good; and for this reason the good has rightly been declared to be that at which all things aim" (p. 339). Thus, ethics in theory and application must recognize

> that moral virtue is a mean, then, and in what sense it is so, and that it is a mean between two vices, the one involving excess and the other deficiency, and that is such because its character is to aim at what is intermediate in passions and in actions. (p. 354)

For Aristotle (1952a), "it is no easy task to be good. For in everything it is no easy task to find the middle" (p. 376). For him ethics is a balance between excess and deficit – something learned through thoughts and actions that pit extremes against one another. The search is for the middle between the extremes, a win-win midpoint. In his *Rhetoric* (1952c), he argued that

> Rhetoric is useful (1) because things that are true and things that are just have a natural tendency to prevail over their opposites, so that if the decisions of judges are not what they ought to be, the defeat must be due to the speakers themselves, and they must be blamed accordingly. (p. 594)

This statement blended advocacy and symmetry. However narrow or incorrect one instance of advocacy might be, each statement is likely to suffer counter-statement in search for the truth. Aristotle's view, similar to symmetrical public relations, assumes that each voice deserves to be heard and judged for the merits of what is said. The voice of a big business, an activist group, a non-profit or government agency is not inherently superior to others. The strength of each case is its demonstration. Through demonstration the target of messages determines which is best.

Character is a demonstration of the kind of person or organization that would espouse a specific claim (Aristotle, 1952c); discourse can achieve a shared sense of society. From that, people derive their sense of self. All of this, following Mead's (1934) logic, eventually becomes the foundation of how we reason, how we make decisions, and with whom we associate. As we think about the ways in which organizations use public relations to define and rationalize their role in society, we realize the individual and collective standards of legitimacy, the connections between mind, self, and society.

1.4 Risk as Rationale

One central challenge of contemporary public relations literature is academics' desire to justify public relations as part of management. Risk connects management and public relations, as well as the people inside and outside of each organization. It is as we are all afloat together in a boat in turbulent or chaotic waters. In that sense, interests are interconnected, not separable. Public relations as collective risk management suggests to senior managements of organizations that they not only need to manage their risks but do so through the effective management of others risks.

The essence of management is the management of risk. Management has the mission of helping others to manage various individual risks collectively. This challenge can range from the risk of solving a problem by buying a product to the management of the

organization's finances so that employees (or benefactors in the case of non-profits) can manage various personal risks, such as making house payments. We have workplace risks, product and service safety risks, and the rationale for governments is the collective management of health, safety, and the public welfare. This gives public relations a rationale for being effective, ranging from marketing communication (purchases bear risk and are made to manage risks) as well as solving the risks relevant to issues management, crisis, and organizations' engagement with the power resource challenges of the public policy arena. A risk perspective also helps define the "public interest."

Following the intellectual lead of Mary Douglas (1992), we believe that the collective management of risk is the singular and compelling rationale for society. It poses a balance between expert opinion based on sound science critiqued by the culture or cultures that constitute the glue of the collectivity. This glue is the meaning that develops through scientific method and cultural interpretations of risks to give the means for working toward collective and mutually beneficial solutions (Latour, 2005). To that end, the challenge is to understand how chaos and complexity are made manageable through discourse that is at heart attitudinizing through naming,

Such challenges pose a variety of rhetorical problems (Bitzer, 1968, 1987; Heath, 1992) as a fundamental public relations challenge. These rhetorical problems arise in, are defined in, and are resolved in public spheres and public arenas.

2   From Public Sphere to Public Arenas: A Rhetorical "Sense of Place"

Rhetoric has always been linked to specific places, which, on one hand, represent some of the socio-cultural conditions that form the physical and symbolic framework for specific rhetorical practices defined as creation of meaning, but which, on the other hand, also have changed historically under the influence of that very same practice.

In Greek and Roman Antiquity, these places were first represented by the courtrooms where the lawsuits against the overthrown tyrants of Greek cities like Agrigent and Syracuse in Sicily, concerning the recovery of seized land property, took place in the fifth century BC; then, at the same time or later on, by the Greek *agora* or the Roman *forum*, the political, legal, religious and commercial centre in the city where citizens gathered together in order to listen or to practice themselves the art of speaking well. Thus, rhetoric is closely linked to the rise of democracy as a form of government and to the places where democratic discourse is practiced to create shared meaning.

During the 18th and 19th century, rhetoric was linked to a new democratic place: *the public sphere*, or *"die Öffentlichkeit"*; a place which in a very broad sense, some hundred years later, contributed to the naming of public relations as both a practice and a discipline in some European countries. In Germany, for example, public relations has been spoken of as *"Öffentlickkeitsarbeit"* since the beginning of the 1950s (Nessman, 2000).

> It is the only term which has managed to assert ifself in German. In the meantime, the term "public relations" has become an acceptable word in colloquial speech and is used as a synonym for "Öffentlickkeitsarbeit". It is no longer regarded as a threat to German culture. (p. 220)

Jürgen Habermas plays, or ought to play, an important role within international public relations research. In his seminal work, *The structural transformation of the public sphere*

(1962), he proposed a historical account of the appearance of the public sphere in the 18th and 19th centuries and a normative theory of the "randeur," and especially "fall," of public opinion in the 20th century. In his historical account, Habermas demonstrated how a bourgeois literary "public sphere" assumed a more important political role in the evaluation of social conditions and the policies produced and implemented by the State, and how coffee houses, clubs, and salons in first England and then France and Germany were transformed into a critical forum, supported by a growing free press, giving birth to public opinion.

Habermas' normative theory of the "grandeur and fall" of the public sphere in general, and public opinion in particular, contained the embryo of the theory of communication that he developed, inspired by linguistics and speech act theory, during the 1970s. In important articles and books like *What is universal pragmatics?* (1976) and one of his major theoretical works *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1981), Habermas developed a theory of the necessary universal conditions for reaching an understanding between human beings through verbal communication. These necessary conditions come in the form of four universal validity conditions which communicators are expected to observe: comprehensibility (the expression level of the message), truth (the content level or propositional level of the message), sincerity (the intention behind the message), and rightness (the normative background for the interpersonal relations). These four validity conditions constitute the basis for a new discourse ethics.

Habermas' theory of the public sphere has been the subject of both debate and elaboration, in the wake of translations of *The structural transformation of the public sphere* (1962) into first French (1978) and then English (1989) (see Frandsen & Kolstrup, 1996 for a theoretical account of the new French and Anglo-Saxon interpretations of Habermas). Are we talking about historical reality, or is the public sphere an ideal philosophical model? Is there only one public sphere, or is it fragmented into a multitude of smaller "arenas"? Must the evolution of the public sphere necessarily be described as a process of disintegration, or has the public sphere, for the last decade or so, experienced an important communicative revival by virtue of the Internet and the new social media used by everybody, from government and companies to consumers, citizens and activists?

Bentele (2005) contrasted two versions of the public sphere: a *discourse* model, proposed by Habermas, focusing on the universal and rational dimensions of the citizen's public debate with each other, outside the private sphere and detached from private interests, in order to produce a public opinion, and a *mirror* model, proposed by the German sociologist and social systems theorist Niklas Luhmann, emphasizing the "mirror" function of the public sphere where communicators are able to observe both themselves and others (including their observations). Bentele regarded both models as normative criticizing them because of the "difficulty of linking them with empirical studies that could generate arguments for testing the strength of one model or the other" (p. 708). Among the alternatives to both Habermas' and Luhmann's approaches, Bentele mentioned new theories of political communication, public opinion and public arenas developed in Germany since the beginning of the 1990s allowing a more empirical approach to the field.

So far, Habermas' theory of the public sphere, his universal pragmatics and theory of communicative action have only been applied to a moderate degree within American public relations research. One of the few exceptions is Leitch and Neilson's (2001) attempt to bring publics into public relations, whereas his theories have played an important role on the European continent, especially in Germany and Scandinavia.

What is the importance of all this theorizing about the public sphere for a rhetorical perspective on public relations, and for a theory about how society creates and enacts meaning? It is without doubt too simplified, as Habermas (1962) did, to work with a normative theory of the public sphere based on a strong distinction between "glory and fall." It makes it difficult empirically to describe, explain and understand the many small and concrete historical transformations undergone by the public sphere in general, and public opinion in particular; they are all just reduced to one big, negative "structural transformation." A description of the disintegration of the bourgeois public sphere (including a very short "history of public relations" or "opinion-management," pp. 193-194) will not suffice.

Advocacy is everywhere, even when it comes to mutual understanding or sharing zones of meaning. A rhetorical perspective on public relations needs a theory about the places where specific forms of rhetorical practice take place, and a theory of the public sphere. Such discussion needs to analyze place, not only in the sense of Habermas. However, especially in the sense of the new ideas about public arenas where a multitude of voices meet and compete. This analysis, fully developed, may contribute to a sharpening of our rhetorical "sense of place."

2.1 Systems, Relationships, and Attributions

Given the dynamics of systems, we postulate that the relationships between organizations and stakeseeking/stakeholding publics are adjustive and strategic, defined by preferences and expectations, and struggling to balance symmetry and asymmetry. One element crucial to the nature of systems is the chaos or entropy (connected to probability theory) that may be reduced by processes and interpretations. This theme is inherent in risks. We know, for instance, that approximately 42,000 people will die in automobile accidents each year in the United States. What is unpredictable is who and when they will die. Thus, risk management arises from the desire to manage uncertainty and the consequences of risk events.

One of the basic challenges is getting and sharing information that truly makes a difference in terms of the health of a system and its relationship to other systems (Krippendorff, 1977). Input, processing, and output require, among other factors, interpretation because information constitutes the amount of uncertainty surrounding the message and the impact each message has on the prevailing uncertainty (Krippendorff, 1975). This definition is consonant with Krippendorf's (1977) contention that "information is equated with making choices" (p. 157). According to cognitive schema theory, an individual's knowledge of the world can be described as a complex set of schemata for interpreting perception and for initiating action (Ritchie, 1991, p. 414). Such schemas are both the product and substance of rhetorical because they involve terministic screens, frames, perspectives, and other aspects of enlightened choice.

At a dyadic and collective level, the dynamics of conversation, relationship development (including dissolution), and systems (structures and functions) presumes the role of interpretation (even critical interpretivism) through language. Interpersonal communication (IPC) has long been predicated on the assumption that one entity (A) can only know another (B) by what B does and says and what is said and done about B. We assume, for the theory of public relations, that the degree of strategy is similar to that of IPC and the structural/function of systems (within systems and with their subsuming systems). IPC is

predicated on rule-based behaviour with positive and negative relational rewards as the goal and operating assumption.

In fact, "Mutual influence is the defining characteristic of interpersonal communication" (Cappella, 1994, p. 409). By various communication message design logics, relational partners persuade one another that a relationship is worth maintaining because it is rewarding (Duck, 1990). In this sense, one purpose of interpersonal communication is to understand and be understood. Another is to move from independence to dependence or interdependence as individuals and organizations co-define and negotiate relationships by using communication styles, content, and strategies that become personally meaningful in their attempts to reduce uncertainty (about themselves, their partners, and their relationships), to be self-efficacious, and to maximize rewards from creating, sustaining, or ending the relationship. Such thinking offers foundation for public relations by acknowledging the rhetorical elements of negotiation, collaboration, strategic engagement, definition, attribution, and conversation.

Discourse (including the meaningfulness of nonverbal enactments) is essential to relationship development. To enact a relationship, individuals need a shared symbol system, shared sense of how the symbol system works, and goals. According to Jacobs (1994),

> A code is a system of rules that specifies derivational relations between the elements at various structural levels (thus connecting meanings with public signs, or signals) and combinatorial relations among the elements at any given structural level (thus providing coherent configurations in the arrangement of signs). (p. 212)

Interpretative processes help relational partners solve, manage, define, and co-create control dimensions (such as power, redundancy, and dominance), trust, and liking (Millar & Rogers, 1976). Such dimensions, captured in social exchange theory, offer a substantial underpinning for public relations (Prior-Miller, 1989).

As Coombs (2007, 2008) has reasoned, a crisis (and by extension other events in the life of an organization) inspires attributions by those who want to make sense of the event. Thus, Coombs has invoked attribution theory literature to explain interpretative processes from the audiences' views that they use to make sense of a crisis. Since attribution is an interpretative process, one can argue that how various individuals make attributions is likely to result from prior and current statements and counter-statements that lead them systematically to various conclusions. As such, two or more quite different sets of attributions may well arise and persist concerning any crisis.

Each crisis features the traditional issue of blame (and perhaps praise), timeless rhetorical problems that Aristotle (1952b) featured among the ends/functions of rhetoric. In this regard, Coombs (2007) has wisely focused on the link between crisis and attribution by noting, "that people need to assign responsibility for events" (p. 136). Individuals, and this line of reasoning informs interpersonal communication theory, co-create attributional heuristics as part of their collective ability and need to bring certainty to uncertain conditions. Attributions guided by premises shape interpretations of facts, evaluations, policy positions, and identifications (even narrative explanations). Such is the stuff of rhetoric as people work together and at odds to co-create meaning and manage risks.

3   Conclusions

Rhetoric and public relations are inseparable topics. The cynic will say, "Yes, because public relations is merely 'rhetoric' and spin." A more knowledgeable view is that both respond to conditions that call for choice through discussion, dialogue, and other forms of communication that seek information, bring it to bear on choices, make evaluations, recommend and resolve choices, and seek as well as recommend identifications. Rhetoric is the central requirement for collective choice, a substantial rationale for public relations. The challenge for academics and practitioners is to help managers engage in ongoing dialogues in ways that make society more fully functional by fostering effective processes of enlightened choice. As we focus on functional aspects of public relations, we are remiss if we ignore the role meaning plays in these processes. Such is the stuff of public relations and the physical and symbolic place where it occurs.

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Reconsidering Strategic Corporate Social Responsibility: Public Relations and Ethical Engagement of Employees in a Global Economy

Steve May

This chapter explores the range of ethical dilemmas common to public relations practitioners in an era that increasingly focuses on corporate social responsibility. I argue that, ironically, rather than reducing ethical challenges for public relations, recent iterations of CSR – such as strategic CSR – further complicate the roles and responsibilities of practitioners toward a greater range of stakeholders. In particular, I explain how strategic CSR rearticulates the common economics/ethics bind that has plagued public relations practitioners for years. Finally, I propose that scholars and practitioners focus less on the external stakeholders emphasized in strategic CSR and more on the ethical engagement of employees, including practices of alignment, dialogic communication, transparency, participation, courage, and accountability.

1 Public Relations, Ethical Dilemmas, and Professional Codes

At multiple points in their careers, public relations practitioners are likely to face decisions that are ethical in nature. Such decisions may reflect a range of ethical dilemmas between, for example, truth vs. loyalty, justice vs. mercy, short-term vs. long-term consequences, and the individual vs. the collective (Kidder, 1995; Stacks & Wright, 1989). Public relations practitioners, by nature of their position and job responsibilities, are often located at the nexus of a range of competing interests. Often, the tension may be between the practitioner's own values and the culture of the organization. In other cases, it may be a conflict between the practitioner's professional code of ethics and organizational norms and expectations. In yet other circumstances, they may be faced with competing interests between the organization and its various publics. At the very least, practitioners will frequently confront contradictions between business demands for economic performance and public expectations for ethical conduct.

Not surprisingly, then, public relations, as a profession, has a long and contested relationship with ethics, in general, and corporate social responsibility, more recently (McBride, 1989). Public relations has been decried as a profession that lacks core principles to guide ethical, responsible practices that cut across organizational and cultural boundaries (Olasky, 1985; Rampton & Stauber, 2001; Stauber & Rampton, 1995). As a result, it has been the target of regular attacks on its credibility and legitimacy, both within and outside organizations. Within organizations, leaders lament public relations practitioners' desire to be a part of important operational and strategic decision-making processes. Outside organizations, publics seeking greater corporate accountability view practitioners as key gatekeepers that occasionally – if not frequently – limit access to full, comprehensive informa-

tion about products and services. In fact, a recent credibility index in the United States ranks public relations specialists 42nd out of 44 occupations (Budd, 1999).

As such, members of the public relations field find themselves in an awkward and ambivalent place, betwixt and between the "internal" and "external" dimensions of their work (Cheney & Christensen, 2001). A range of practices have been implemented to help employees in public relations address these work-related challenges, including books (e.g., Baker, 1993), seminars, and articles (see Curtin & Boynton, 2001 for a summary). Historically, public relations has also drawn on the concept of professionalism to assert its commitment to the public and to reinforce a credible image. As with other occupations, public relations practitioners have sought to institutionalize agreed-upon standards via professional codes (notably, the Public Relations Society of America and the International Association of Business Communicators) that address questions of ethics and responsibility. Designed to guide professionals through day-to-day decision-making, codes, when effective, can promote expectations for new members of the profession and, ultimately, deter government intervention. Despite efforts to formalize standards of behaviour in public relations, however, codes are known to be ambiguous, limited in scope and application, and difficult to enforce (e.g., Kruckeberg, 1993). For example, the public relations code used in the United States asks practitioners to pledge, "to conduct myself professionally, with truth, accuracy, fairness, and responsibility to the public," but provides little guidance regarding specific practices related to responsibility, for example.

Ethics codes in public relations have done little to alleviate publics' concern over misconduct (May, 2006) and they have had limited impact in regulating members' behaviour (Labacqz, 1985). In fact, the professional codes themselves, when combined with company codes of ethics, may communicate conflicting and competing messages to practitioners. As Willmott (1998) explains, codes assert that the professional "must be sufficiently ethical not to act in ways that are damaging to a firm's operations…but not so ethical as to challenge or reject the morality of its basic principles of economic performance" (p. 83). Ethics is *instrumentalized* when codes not only prescribe behaviour but also when the adoption of the code is made conditional upon meeting business objectives. Although many employees may find themselves in the ethics/economics bind, it is the public relations practitioner who is often the public representative and "voice" of the organization and, as a result, s/he must negotiate the inherent contradiction of her/his competing responsibilities.

Concerns over these competing responsibilities and the ethical dilemmas they produce for public relations forms the basis of this chapter. In it, I explore a range of challenges faced by public relations practitioners through multiple iterations of corporate social responsibility, including the most recent version, *strategic* corporate social responsibility. I argue that the historical forms of corporate social responsibility (CSR) have, in many respects, altered the expectations and demands placed on the profession. More specifically, I suggest that strategic CSR repositions public relations practitioners within the ethics/economics bind that has been so common and problematic in the past. As a result, I argue that strategic CSR should be reconsidered and that, in particular, its primary emphasis on "external" stakeholders for the sake of improving economic performance should be questioned. Prior to taking responsibility for strategically located problems in global communities, proponents of CSR initiatives first need operational ethics inside corporations in order to develop and sustain legitimate CSR practices. In response to the difficulties of "external" and bottom-line emphases in CSR and public relations, I propose that persons

interested in global CSR should focus attention on the ethical engagement of employees, including practices of alignment, dialogic communication, transparency, participation, courage, and accountability.

2 Public Relations and Social Responsibility

As a starting point, it is worth noting that the challenges for public relations practitioners have become even more pronounced, given the emergence, if not resurgence, of CSR in recent years. This fact is somewhat ironic, given that most of us would expect that CSR would make the public relations practitioner's job easier. Increasingly, however, practitioners are faced not only with typical difficulties common to media relations but also relations with a broader spectrum of stakeholders, including employees, customers, suppliers/vendors, distributors, competitors, regulatory agencies, and citizens' groups and NGOs, among others in affected and interested communities. Yet, practitioners are rarely well-equipped to deal with the divergent interests of a range of stakeholders beyond the generic "public," so often articulated in broad strokes in journalism education and training. Because social responsibility in public relations is rooted in theories of social responsibility of the press, most practitioners are not well suited to form and develop multiple sets of stakeholder relationships beyond the media.

The social responsibility theory of the press stipulates that with freedom of the press comes also a responsibility to the public interest and the public good (Peterson, 1966). Given the journalistic foundation of notions of social responsibility in public relations, then, it is not surprising that the profession has focused on truthfulness, fairness, and accuracy. While notable and relevant, such practices do not provide practitioners with the tools to adequately address the complicated and nuanced dilemmas they will experience in corporate relations in an increasingly competitive, global economy, for example.

Over time, scholars have developed additional perspectives to account for the complicated role of the public relations practitioner in the midst of cries for greater responsibility from our corporations, in particular. One of the early commentators on public relations and CSR, Donald Wright (1976), argued that every cultural institution – from families to churches to schools to corporations – is responsible for its members' actions and should be held accountable for them. Later, Heath and Ryan (1989) identified three realms of social responsibility in public relations: (1) moral rectitude, a problem-solving function; (2) image building, a self-interested function; and (3) consultation, a research-based function. As Boynton (2001) notes, the first two realms reflect enlightened self-interest, while the latter reflects an "issues management" approach. Drawing on this approach, Denise Bostdorff and Steve Vibbert (Bostdorff & Vibbert, 1993, 1994) proposed that an understanding of public relations strategies, such as "values advocacy" and issues management, must extend beyond journalistic-driven media relations to conceptions of values, argument, and rhetorical appeals within a complex range of stakeholders in interpersonal, organizational, and cultural contexts. They note that "rather than wait for others to define 'the issue' and its constituent values," public relations practitioners "seek to create a value climate that provides a favourable context within which to evaluate and act upon the environment" (Vibbert & Bostdorff, 1993, p. 105).

However, does such an approach, which advocates for corporate values and seeks to "manage" issues, meet the mandates of corporate social responsibility common today? How, for example, do public relations practitioners seeking to manage values and issues among publics meet the rebuke of scholars such as Jill McMillan (2007)?

> First, the modern corporation, *as constituted*, is unfit as a carrier of social responsibility because its *raison d' etre* is too narrow for the values of social responsibility *and* it has usurped the influence and neutralized the aid of other institutions better suited for altruism; second, even if corporations had tacit social legitimacy to operate unilaterally, and especially to play the economic rules of shareholder privilege, the recent "corporate meltdown" has betrayed even that social contract…. (p. 16)

In order to answer such questions and criticisms requires at least a brief explication of corporate social responsibility, its history, and its most recent iteration, strategic corporate social responsibility.

3   Corporate Social Responsibility

At least an initial, albeit partial, response to these questions and criticisms comes from an idealized definition of public relations proposed by Wilcox, Ault, and Agee (1986):

> The world needs a group of communicators and interpreters…who can explain the goals and method of organizations, individuals and governments to others in a socially responsible manner. Equally, these interpreters must provide their employers with knowledge of what others are thinking, to guide them in setting their policies wisely for the common good. This two-way responsibility is a challenging aspect of the public relations practitioner's role. (p. 4)

Similarly, in the 1990s, Jacquie L 'Etang (1994) had begun to notice an even broader role for persons in the public relations field, identifying professional expectations of mutuality and social obligation. The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), for example, created more demanding expectations regarding public relations' responsibilities to society, by stating that public relations "speaks for the public to otherwise unresponsive organizations," "can help activate the organization's social conscience," and "emphasizes the responsibility of management to serve the public interest." Such definitions and statements imply a substantive ethical role that extends far beyond that common to many public relations practitioners – as a representative of, and advocate for, a specific organization. They indicate a set of practices to maximize the public good, via constructive social change, through various strategies including, most notably, corporate social responsibility.

As I noted in a recent edited volume on CSR (May, Cheney, & Roper, 2007), the desire to create positive social change via the corporate world is not necessarily a new phenomenon, although current social, political, economic, and ideological conditions inflect it in specific ways today. Questions regarding the nature, scope, and impact of corporations have been present in various forms for centuries, ranging across the "classical," medieval, mercantile, industrial, and corporate eras. As Charles Conrad and Je'Anna Abbott (2007) note in their commentary in that volume, the history of corporate social responsibility has been a somewhat cyclical one – including the ebb and flow of actions and reactions, control and resistance – between corporations and their critics. As a result, emerging definitions

and practices of CSR will necessarily affect and implicate public relations practitioners. A brief review of some of the most well-known and widely accepted definitions will offer insights into the changing role of public relations, as it interconnects with CSR.

The social responsibilities of corporations, their leaders, and their employees have been explored in the academic literature since the 1950s (see de Bakker, Groenewegen, & den Hond, 2005, for a summary of the literature), with earlier examples in the form of industrial welfare programmes common as early as the 1920s (May, 1993). Howard R. Bowen, an economics professor at Williams College in Massachusetts, developed one of the earliest, widely acknowledged conceptions of corporate social responsibility shortly after World War II. According to Bowen (1953), America's post-war prosperity produced a new set of expectations for corporations and, as a result, he sought to outline the social responsibilities of business arguing that:

> We are entering an era when private business will be judged solely in terms of its demonstrable contribution to the general welfare….The acceptance of obligations to workers, consumers, and the general public is a condition for survival of the free enterprise system. (p. 52)

For Bowen, businesses were expected to produce social goods such as: (1) higher standards of living; (2) widespread economic progress and security; (3) order, justice, and freedom; and (4) the development of the individual person.

Others, such as management scholar Keith Davis, were advocating an even more expansive understanding of corporate social responsibility, relating it to an understanding of corporate power. Davis (1960) proposed the "Iron Law of Responsibility," which suggested that the "social responsibilities of businessmen need to be commensurate with their social power" (p. 71). *The Iron Law of Responsibility*, then, suggested that any ethical lapses and/or scandals on the part of business would gradually erode their social power and legitimacy. For Davis, corporate social responsibility created social goods whose impact must be understood within the whole social system. Yet, Davis' argument assumed a somewhat consistent level of corporate social power. As we are now fully aware, the nature and type of social power afforded corporations has varied quite widely internationally, based on the socio-political context and the resultant consumer expectations of corporations. Given these differences, it is no surprise that the roles and responsibilities of public relations practitioners may differ greatly, not just across corporations but also across national boundaries. It is also clear that any perceived irresponsible actions on the part of corporations will, in turn, negatively affect the reputation of public relations and its practitioners. It should come as no shock, then, to realize that the profession, as a whole, has a strong stake in the success of corporate social responsibility initiatives worldwide.

Historically, though, the roles, responsibilities, and interests of public relations practitioners have varied significantly, raising questions about the "core" skills required for the profession. For years, in the United States, one of the common means to fulfill social responsibilities was through corporate philanthropy, which had become a normative part of the social fabric. Concurrently, government regulators (e.g., the Federal Communications Commission, the Federal Trade Commission) and public interest groups (e.g., American Civil Liberties Union, Sierra Club) also emerged, holding corporations to a new level of accountability. Later, between 1969 and 1972, four of the major regulatory agencies in the United States – the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), the Equal Opportunity Commission (EEOC), the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), and

the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) – were founded to create greater disclosure and transparency of corporate actions. As a result, during this period, public relations was inherently tied to compliance rather than ethics, with an emphasis on legal and fiduciary accountability.

During the 1970s, the debates regarding the responsibilities of corporations changed somewhat. The focus shifted from corporate responsibility to corporate responsiveness, thus emphasizing what companies could do to better the world rather than what companies could do to ensure their own survival (Makower, 1994). This move was partly in response to threats of governments' intervention into "windfall" profits of industries like petroleum (Crable & Vibbert, 1983). The result, according to some observers, was a new emphasis on political action, public affairs, lobbying, and public relations directed toward "strategic philanthropy" and "cause-oriented" marketing. This proactive posture quickly spread to other industries and other nations. During this period, corporate social responsibility became so fashionable that its acronym (CSR) could stand alone. In some cases, the concept became a strategy by which companies attempted to turn public relations problems into public relations assets.

It was into this responsibility-responsiveness debate that Milton Friedman (1970) entered, with his now classic essay in the *New York Times*, "The social responsibility of business is to increase its profits." Ultimately, the degree to which his arguments became second nature in business schools and boardrooms across the world dramatically affected the future direction of public relations. Public relations, which had emerged as a core competency within the ranks of corporate leaders, was reduced to a secondary, staff function. According to Friedman, the doctrine of corporate social responsibility required accepting that "political mechanisms, not market mechanisms, are the appropriate way to determine the allocation of scarce resources." For Friedman, such an approach was more firmly grounded in socialism than capitalism and, therefore, he was highly critical of expanding the responsibilities of business beyond making money for shareholders.

In short, Friedman was primarily interested in the economic outcomes of business decisions. In a utilitarian manner, he argued that the greatest good would occur for all if businesses made decisions based on increasing shareholder value. It is interesting to note that, such assumptions of "trickle down economics" – which result from an emphasis on the shareholder as key stakeholder – relegated public relations to a secondary role. His essay has been widely used to support the common business adage that one's first duty is to increase shareholder value and, as a result, the public relations practitioner's role shifted to gathering information from, and advocating for, shareholders. Given this new role, it is interesting to notice that, in this era, corporate annual reports – and corporate documentation, in general – become more elaborate and expansive.

Friedman does suggest, though, that an executive should try "to make as much money as possible, while conforming to the basic rules of society, both those embodied in the law and those embodied in ethical custom." According to Friedman, business executives should trust market mechanisms when making decisions. A focus on social responsibility, he explained, is a "fundamentally subversive doctrine" in a free society. In effect, Friedman's arguments – and their wide acceptance in business circles – destabilized the emerging role of public relations as being among the operational functions necessary for a successful business. Seen as "subversive" to the fundamental interest of the corporation, public

relations was marginalized from traditional business functions and was, increasingly, viewed separately from corporate performance.

Such a view of public relations has persisted for years and has been difficult for the profession to combat. While public relations practitioners want a seat at the decision-making table, most public relations functions are viewed as non-strategic within the business community and, therefore, they are structured as support rather than operations. For years, public relations practitioners and scholars had articulated a more active, responsive role for their profession, but efforts to create a more central place in corporate decision-making were largely unsuccessful. Even in recent years, innovators in public relations, such as Grunig (1989, 2000, 2001) have been paid little attention in business scholarship and have had scant impact on business activities themselves. Although models such as "two-way symmetrical public relations" had a profound impact on public relations professionals' self-perceptions, they may also serve to enhance the disconnect between professional norms and expectations and business realities of the bottom line.

Not until the work of Archie Carroll (1979) did public relations have a clear, albeit un-intended advocate among business/management scholars. Scholars such as Carroll were taken seriously, partly because they acknowledged the profit motive of corporations. However, in Carroll's case, he also extended corporate responsibilities to encompass the "legal, ethical, and discretionary expectations that a society has of organizations at a given point in time" (p. 500). Carroll and others moved discussions of corporate social responsibility beyond the economic bottom line and legal compliance to the range of contemporary social issues that may concern the public at any historical moment. By the 1980s, authors such as Jones (1980) and Freeman (1984) clarified the notion of "the public" by more precisely defining the range of stakeholders affected by corporate decisions. In time, stakeholder models reaffirmed and even naturalized an emphasis on corporate "duties" and "responsibilities."

As L 'Etang (1993) explains, this shift toward a more accepted role for CSR in corporate strategy and decision-making also had benefits for public relations: "Corporate social responsibility has become important to public relations because such programmes offer the opportunity to build good will by promoting the benefits of the company to its stakeholders" (p. 115). In her view, the ability to manage such good will – and to gather key information from various stakeholders – will help public relations practitioners "capitalize" on an increasingly valuable advisory role. That is, one might argue that public relations, when supported by CSR, facilitates businesses efforts to respond to society's needs.

Yet, a more substantive role for public relations in the trend toward CSR is problematic, as well. Without substantive and real change in corporate actions, CSR may be viewed as no more than a logo change, another advertising or marketing campaign to sell goods and services. If corporate CSR initiatives appear to be self-serving rather than mutually determined in collaboration with stakeholders, then CSR will be viewed as "window dressing" or "greenwashing." Even arguments related to corporations' "enlightened self-interest" seem disingenuous when public relations and community affairs specialists emphasize "stakeholder management" rather than stakeholder engagement. In addition, the trend toward "branding" and the nearly constant shift in corporate identities further erodes public confidence that CSR merits the public's trust.

In short, public relations today finds itself embedded within yet another ethical quandary, unable to meet the demands placed upon it by (often) conservative business leaders,

the political left, and the public, in general. From the perspective of neo-liberals such as Friedman – and the businesspersons who frequently subscribe to his views – CSR negates the principles of free enterprise and unnecessarily blurs the roles of the private, governmental, and non-profit sectors. From the perspective of corporate critics and community activists, CSR is viewed as a set of public relations strategies that allow for the control of stakeholder concerns and, in turn, produces limited corporate accountability for misconduct. For many members of the public, CSR is, at worst, illusory and contradictory, particularly as consumers (and even some stockholders) increasingly question the social potential of the corporate form (Doane, 2005; Frankental, 2001).

4   Strategic Corporate Social Responsibility

For public relations practitioners, then, the stakes have never been higher, both personally and professionally. Increasingly, CSR advocates have, to their credit, transformed corporate expectations into corporate demands. So too have the expectations and demands on public relations changed. Some scholars (Falconi, 2004; Schoenberger-Orgad & McKie, 2005) have argued that public relations has not been up to the task, partly because both the definitions and the practices of CSR have become more rigorous and far-reaching in recent years. For example, Whetten et al. (2002) recently defined corporate social responsibility as "societal expectations of corporate behaviour; a behaviour that is alleged by a stakeholder to be expected by society or morally required and is therefore justifiably demanded of a business" (p. 374). Waddock (2007) suggests that societies now demand that businesses go "beyond compliance" to proactively address social inequities and environmental degradation. However, Werhane (2007) reminds us that extending CSR too broadly also extends the power base of corporations beyond their legal charters. Ironically, then, the move beyond legal compliance is likely to produce a variety of legal dilemmas for public relations practitioners devoted to CSR, as public companies, at least, must address the balance between shareholder interest and, for example, community interest.

The broadening of the range and scope of CSR-related practices is evident in the proliferation of CSR reporting (Tinker & Lowe, 1980) and CSR indexes (Courville, 2003), both of which may impact public relations practitioners. Not surprisingly, many corporations have responded to societal demands for responsible behaviour with extensive reporting mechanisms. It is common, in today's business environment, for the annual report to be accompanied by the CSR report, as well. Since the audience for CSR reports is often more discerning, they tend to be longer and more elaborate than traditional annual reports for general consumption.

In a related phenomenon, CSR indexes have grown nearly exponentially in the last several years. Not only are average consumers interested in corporate responsibility but also so too are mutual fund managers who want to respond to consumers in the financial markets (see Waddock, 2000, for a discussion of socially responsible investing). As a result, the convergence of these two realms of consumers of CSR-related evaluation has produced indexes such as the Global Reporting Initiative, Caux Roundtable Principles for Business, Global Compact, the Dow Jones Sustainability Index and a host of consulting firms (e.g., Accenture, Deloitte), institutes (New Economics Foundation), and universities devoting resources to social auditing.

One result of the emergence of CSR reporting and CSR indexes has been a growing need for public relations practitioners to develop expertise in assessment, evaluation, and accountability, which has been more commonly located in corporate investor relations functions. Another result, I would argue, has been a re-emphasis on an age-old question: Does corporate social responsibility pay? Although the answer to the question remains contested and, ultimately, unsettled, it has, nevertheless, produced a boon in scholarly research. The research on corporate social responsibility and performance, for example, has increased significantly (see, for example, Harrison & Freeman, 1999; Hillman & Keim, 2001; McWilliams & Siegel, 2000) in the last decade.

Although most scholars still acknowledge the conflicting conclusions regarding the relationship between CSR and the bottom line, ambiguous results have intensified, rather than, limited the debate (see, for example, Paine, 2003). The most recent iteration of this debate can be found in *strategic* corporate social responsibility and it is likely to significantly affect public relations. Strategic CSR is based on the assumption that it should be "integrated into the firm's strategic perspective and operations because of the long-term benefits this brings to the organization" (Werther & Chandler, 2007, p. 7). That means strategic CSR is concerned with both the ends of economic viability *and* the means of being socially responsible. Its potential appeal to broad publics is found in its basic premise, which is commonly shared by many citizens: Because society's contributions make business possible, those businesses have an obligation to society to operate in ways that are deemed socially responsible and beneficial.

In Carroll's (2001) terms, strategic CSR focuses more on the ethical and discretionary concerns that are less clearly defined and for which there is no clear societal consensus. Strategic CSR or "strategic philanthropy" is accomplished via strategic business goals, but good deeds are assumed to produce positive outcomes for business *and* society. With strategic CSR, corporations "give back" to constituencies and/or address stakeholder needs. Such an approach aligns philanthropy and profit motives (Quester & Thompson, 2001), based on the belief that market forces will, in time, create financial incentives for corporations engaged in socially responsible actions. Such strategic CSR has been popular since the mid-1980s (Jones, 1997), but Carroll expects it to grow even further in the years ahead.

Michael Porter and Mark Kramer outlined the foundations for such an approach in a 2002 essay in *Harvard Business Review* on corporate philanthropy and, more recently, articulated a broader "link between competitive advantage and corporate social responsibility" in a December, 2006 essay (see also Porter, 1990). In that essay, they take as given that "CSR has emerged as an inescapable priority for business leaders in every country" (p. 78). They suggest that the relationship between business and society does not necessarily need to treat corporate success and social welfare as a zero-sum game: "When looked at strategically, corporate social responsibility can become a source of tremendous social progress, as the business applies its considerable resources, expertise, and insights to activities that benefit society" (p. 78). In a seeming nod to Friedman, Porter and Kramer suggest that each company select the issues that most directly intersect with its particular business. It does so by integrating inside-out and outside-in linkages. The former reflects how the company impacts society and the latter reflects the societal conditions that affect the company.

Based on these linkages, their framework identifies three categories of social issues relevant to corporate responsibility: (1) general social issues, which are not directly affected by the company's operations nor materially affects its long-term competitiveness; (2) value

chain social impacts, which are significantly affected by a company's activities in the ordinary course of business; and (3) social dimensions of competitive context, which significantly affect the underlying drivers of a company's competitiveness in the locations where it operates (p. 85). According to Porter and Kramer, the third approach is preferable because it creates the perception of CSR as "building shared value rather than damage control or as a PR campaign" (p. 92). They contend that corporations, NGOs, and governments must begin thinking in terms of "corporate social integration" rather than corporate social responsibility.

In some respects, then, strategic CSR offers public relations the ideal opportunity to resolve many of the contradictory dilemmas of doing well and doing right found in earlier business strategies. Assuming that corporations are able to withstand the legal challenges to the practice, which are sure to emerge in the courts, strategic CSR is still fraught with difficulties. Most notably, strategic CSR would require a fundamental redistribution of power (and perhaps even wealth) in order to truly integrate business and social needs in developing countries, in particular, where labour is commonly outsourced. Will corporations ever become adept – even assuming mutual interest rather than self-interest – at understanding, collaborating with, and contributing to global culture(s) largely unfamiliar to them? How might corporations create "shared value" through integration without reproducing, if not enhancing, the cultural colonization, cooptation, and appropriation of the past? Will corporations develop the will, as well as the expertise, to measure social impact in communities, both near and far? How might strategic CSR affect some of today's most common business practices, such as mergers and acquisitions, downsizing, and outsourcing/offshoring, among others? Will an acquiring company "take on" and continue the acquired company's corporate social agenda? How might social initiatives rise and fall with the ebb and flow of the economic success of particular businesses and industries? How might the economic strength of corporations that "do good" be balanced with that of citizen participation so that the corporate dependence of company towns and the paternalism of industrial welfare programmes would not be repeated? How might strategic CSR connect with political practices in different cultures? Will corporations cede their lobbying power to citizens? At the most fundamental level, strategic CSR assumes that a model of shared values and consensus is preferred to competing interests and dissensus. However, history has suggested that, when consensus is built, it typically serves the interests of corporations at the expense of citizens.

Perhaps the primary challenge for public relations practitioners, though, is found in the following comment by Porter and Kramer: Few companies have developed operations "that identify and prioritize social issues based on their salience to business operations and their importance to the company's competitive context" (p. 91). As a result, public relations practitioners are likely to be on the front lines of any backlash from new CSR initiatives that are not backed by corporate planning or expertise. As Munshi & Kurian (2005) have argued, for example, public relations' naive appropriation of CSR has replicated a colonial strategy of corporate reputation management at the expense of marginalized publics. They suggest that public relations can only begin to be ethical and responsible when the profession acknowledges the diversity of publics, breaks down the hierarchy of publics, and takes into account the resistance of peripheral publics. Strategic CSR seems unlikely to do so, particular in the context of globally competitive economies.

One of those peripheral publics that seems to be regularly overlooked, oddly enough, has been the employees of the corporations themselves. Another unresolved issue related to

strategic CSR, then, is the ways in which competing stakeholder interests might be balanced. While customers might prefer that resources be spent on product/service quality and cost, employees might prefer better working conditions, wages, and benefits. Although some scholars, such as Freeman (2001), have argued for the need for balance in serving various stakeholders, few have offered clear guidelines for addressing the most common ethical dilemmas that might arise.

Most recently, with the emphasis on strategic CSR, the stakeholder pendulum has swung decidedly away from fundamental considerations of employees and toward consumers. When authors (Vaughn, 1999) describe, for example, a "good will bank" that can be developed, they are certainly not referring to employees as stakeholders. Scholars and public relations practitioners, alike have begun to claim that it is wise to "make deposits," via strategic CSR, in order to "make withdrawals" when a corporation comes under fire. This re-fashioning of crisis communication for public relations practitioners, in particular, raises difficult questions regarding corporate motivations for, and activities related to, strategic CSR. The common public relations bind between image and substance of corporate behaviour will only intensify as a result of strategic CSR.

5   Reconsidering Strategic CSR: Ethical Engagement of Employees

If strategic CSR – let alone any form of CSR – is to have any long-term benefit for society, attention must first be turned to corporate employees themselves because they, in the end, comprise the corporate culture which must reconstruct corporate strategy, operations, and decision-making to prioritize social issues. If the corporation has not developed embedded logics and practices to address difficult questions of social responsibility, it has no hope to participate in meaningful and constructive cultural change. Similarly, if the corporation has not been able to attend to its own employees, how can it be expected to address the social needs of diverse sets of stakeholders with a range of divergent interests? The first test of responsibility, as a set of minimum specifications, must be the manner in which employees are treated. Unfortunately, however, recent emphases of strategic CSR, as well as the longstanding focus of public relations on external publics, have deterred any real consideration of the "ethical engagement" of employees that may, ultimately, foster legitimate CSR.

A viable test of a corporation's capacity for CSR, then, would be to first turn its attention inward and assess its ability to pursue ethical, responsible behaviour towards, and among, its employees. In a global context of outsourcing, offshoring, and Third World labour, assessment of employees' experiences is complicated, although no less important. If anything, global labour and the immediacy of mediated networks has moved concerns about the conditions of work to the front and centre. Any good public relations professional knows that the best laid CSR plans can be destroyed quite quickly because of media coverage of inhumane working conditions at home or abroad.

Unfortunately, business leaders' ability to tap labour markets in impoverished countries has far exceeded scholars' ability to study such practices. Nor have the producers of CSR indexes created assessment tools that have kept pace with business innovations to identify and maintain cheap, mobile, and docile labour. For example, Stohl, Stohl, and Townsley (2007) argue that, "despite the ubiquitous acknowledgement of globalization in virtually all areas of social, political, and economic life, conceptualizations and discussions

of ethical and responsible organizing within academic, policymaking, and local communities remain remarkably parochial" (p. 30).

They suggest, correctly I believe, that we are now in the midst of a third generation of global CSR. Each generation of CSR reflects, more broadly, the standards and norms of international human rights. For example, like first generation human rights, first generation CSR is based on discussions regarding what *not* to do. Second generation CSR is devoted to discussions of fair and adequate compensation and reasonable working conditions. Finally, third generation CSR focuses on proactive responsibilities, such as creating a just and sustainable world (Stohl, Stohl, & Townsley, 2007). Many public relations practitioners have long sought to move business executives from first generation CSR – and its reactive approach to crises – to third generation CSR, with its proactive emphasis on a "global community." Not surprisingly, Porter and Kramer would concur that the next wave of CSR, strategic in nature, must be proactive. Yet, it is clear that the standards for second generation CSR, as it relates to employee treatment, have not been met globally. To satisfy the criteria for second generation CSR – as a necessary condition to move toward third generation CSR – requires a complex understanding of what, if any, issues bind employee stakeholders, for example. On what basis, and in what manner, should corporations act toward a stakeholder group, such as employees?

One approach is to appeal to universal principles of human existence. For example, Peukert (1981) suggests that our humanness is based on the principle that "We have inescapable claims on one another which cannot be renounced except at the cost of our humanity…. Universal solidarity is the basic principle of ethics and the normative core of all human communication" (pp. 10-11). This sacredness of human life, as a "protonorm" according to Christians and Nordenstreng (2004), "binds humans into a common oneness." Such an approach offers at least a preliminary, if overly abstract, answer to CSR-related concerns regarding the treatment of employees across cultures. All cultures, Christians and Nordenstreng argue, entail basic ethical principles such as the respect for human dignity, truthtelling, and non-violence. The standard of judgment for all cultures, they suggest, is "not economic or political success but whether our worldviews and community formations contribute in the long-run to truthtelling, human dignity, and nonmalefiecence" (Christians & Nordenstreng, 2004, p. 24).

Although compelling as universal principles, the preceding standards provide little pragmatic guidance to either business executives or public relations practitioners, for that matter, who may face a range of ethical dilemmas in their day-to-day decision-making. Both groups need a set of practical guidelines, grounded in ethics perspectives and business practices. What I refer to as "practices of ethical engagement" (May & Mumby, 2005; May, 2006) offers a specific alternative to Christians and Nordenstreng's broad principles and the abstract reporting measures common to most CSR indexes. Ethical engagement of the primary stakeholder, employees, requires that corporations:

- create *alignment* of personal, professional, and organizational aspirations and behaviours
- foster *dialogic communication*
- encourage *participation* in decision-making
- establish *transparency* in structures, policies, and procedures
- emphasize *accountability* for anticipating and responding to ethical crises
- promote *courage* to identify and resolve ethical dilemmas.

Pursuing and, in some cases, strengthening these practices of ethical engagement will not only improve ethical conduct within and outside corporations, but it will also better align the ideals and the reality of CSR. Since such alignment is one of the primary challenges – if not ethical dilemmas – for public relations practitioners in an era of strategic CSR, such a practical assessment of the corporation's ethical culture will also provide greater clarity regarding its CSR-related capacities.

5.1 Alignment

First and foremost, ethically engaged corporations must align their formal policies and procedures (e.g., ethics code, employee handbook, training and development, performance appraisal) with their informal culture (e.g., norms, rituals, narratives). While the former prescribes responsibilities to various stakeholders, the latter describes the day-to-day practices, the habits, which sustain ethical responsibilities. In order to develop, maintain and refine ethical practices, via habit, corporate leaders – and subsequently, employees – will need to, in effect, align corporate image with substance. In order to sustain a culture of ethics, for example, a corporation needs more than an ethics code, as noted earlier. It needs the will – and the operational expertise – to engage in the myriad behaviours that keep informal and formal dimensions aligned, ethically. Not surprisingly, public relations practitioners are often cognizant of tensions related to alignment, but they must also be able to both communicate relevant information to, and gather perspectives from, key stakeholders in order to most accurately assess the corporation's alignment.

5.2 Dialogic communication

Ethically engaged corporations must also practice open, informal, and candid forms of communication. They must value the perspectives of all employees and facilitate their ability to voice their opinions and concerns. Rather than focusing on shared values and consensus as evidence of ethics, corporate leaders need to value difference and dissensus as viable and useful resources for CSR-related decision-making. From the perspective of employees as stakeholders, communicative reciprocity, for example, helps to build perspective-taking, empathy and understanding, and "collective mindfulness," all of which are necessary to sustain a CSR initiative, operationally. When corporations establish reciprocal and productive dialogue, all stakeholders begin to understand that they are interdependent and, therefore, are responsible for effective communication. More specifically, corporate leaders are better able to communicate their goals to employees and, in turn, employees are better able to provide useful – and sometimes very challenging – feedback to leaders. For public relations practitioners, such practices of dialogue would more closely approximate recent models of symmetrical communication, albeit with a much greater respect of, and need for, differing views than is the norm in the profession today.

5.3 Transparency

To create ethical engagement, corporations must also develop and maintain clear and visible structures of governance, mission statements, policies and procedures. Doing so generates a high degree of trust and respect among all stakeholders, but especially among employees. For example, employees of transparent organizations better understand the rationales for decision-making and, ideally, the decisions themselves are fair and just. When such practices are modelled at the highest level of the corporation and in collaboration with outside agencies, employees learn the basis of effective decision-making. For other stakeholders – such as shareholders – transparency provides greater confidence that the corporation is being managed effectively and that it is working in the best interest of its communities. As you might expect, public relations practitioners have long suffered from opaque practices in corporations. Examples of "being the last to know" are not rampant in the profession by accident and, as a result, public relations is ideally situated to clarify how a lack of internal transparency necessarily negates external transparency, as well.

5.4 Participation

Ethically engaged organizations should demand high levels of commitment to confront both everyday and extraordinary ethical dilemmas. Leaders must set the tone that CSR is a core business practice, rather than a marketing strategy. Equally important, employees must participate in ongoing efforts to sustain and improve a corporate culture that supports responsibility. As a result, their personal sense of investment in, and commitment to, the ethos of the corporation is enhanced by their ability to make independent decisions. At a minimum, corporations that recognize and reward leaders and employees for addressing ethical concerns achieve superior levels of legal compliance with ethics regulations. More importantly, however, corporations that enable participation also foster organizational changes in decision logics. Employee-based perspectives in decision-making offer corporate leaders the first glimpse of how they may learn from, and adapt to, the lived experiences of other, "external" stakeholders. For public relations, the key here is to move away from "managing" stakeholders to engaging them, beginning with employees. From that point, practitioners can then work to develop participatory-based corporations, which also listen to their external stakeholders' concerns and integrate their feedback into corporate decision-making in ways that are truly mutually beneficial.

5.5 Courage

Ethically engaged corporations have the courage to admit mistakes, reject needless conformity, and encourage risk-taking. In addition, their employees have the courage to identify, assess, and resolve ethical dilemmas. Courageous corporations, and the employees within them, facilitate effective problem-identification and problem-solving in ways that nourish innovation and creativity. Their culture fosters risk-taking and treats mistakes as learning opportunities, creating a supportive environment that strengthens employee ethics and responsibility. The result is that employees begin to develop habits of problem-identification

and resolution rather than problem avoidance. In such corporations, public relations practitioners must be constantly vigilant regarding disincentives for employees to communicate bad news. In order to understand whether a corporation either encourages or discourages courage, public relations practitioners should look in a new direction: toward disenfranchised, disgruntled, and exiting employees who may hold key information about internal practices that are irresponsible and/or unethical.

5.6 Accountability

Contrary to most of today's global corporations, ethically engaged organizations take "automatic responsibility" for anticipating and responding to ethical challenges. They account for a broad set of stakeholders in assessing their responsibilities and impact. As a result, they view legal and industry compliance as important, minimum expectations. Accountable corporations also establish clear goals, such as in CSR initiatives, which are understood by all, with management practices that enable performance feedback based on those standards. Corporations focused on accountability have clear standards for CSR-related performance and have clear procedures for evaluation, as well. Within the corporation, they have a bias toward action that prompts employee involvement and learning. In time, employees develop better problem-solving skills and are less likely to blame others for mistakes. Outside the corporation, leaders are committed to external, third-party review of their practices, whether from regulatory agencies, non-governmental organizations, or community groups. They need to view such feedback and the related criticism when it occurs, as crucial features of organizational learning and change. Public relations can help strengthen corporate accountability but, first, practitioners must stop viewing external oversight as a necessary evil and see it as an essential, normal part of business operations.

6   Conclusions

The proliferation of CSR-related research, trade and professional publications, and reporting mechanisms and indexes suggest that CSR is here to stay. However, as I have suggested throughout this chapter, the specific nuances of CSR initiatives are likely to shift quickly, in the ebb and flow of complicated and interconnected social, political, economic, technological, and ideological tensions within and across global culture(s). A global economy has produced a wide confluence of factors that make the future form of CSR less predictable and, ultimately, ambiguous and rife for contestation. Public relations practitioners – and the universities that educate them – must negotiate these tensions, as well, and both must more directly address the range of ethical dilemmas that CSR produces for the profession. As I have indicated in this chapter, I believe that the most recent iteration, strategic CSR, creates several challenging issues for public relations – most notably a rearticulation of the longstanding tensions between economics and ethics, performance and responsibility. Its natural appeal – to bring together economic and social interests, the corporation and the community – makes it all the more important for us to pay close attention to its logics, its discourses, and its practices.

Although I have focused this chapter primarily on concerns with, and criticisms of, CSR, I remain convinced that CSR offers substantive opportunities for constructive social change:

> Important initiatives are afoot within and outside of corporate boundaries to question de facto corporate public policy (in organizations such as the WTO), to broaden relationships between corporations and their multiple stakeholders, to apply consumer pressure toward social responsiveness, to use union leverage to assert the human rights of employees, and to convert what sometimes begin as the mere window dressings of corporate philanthropy and nods to community projects into meaningful and sustained efforts. (Cheney, Roper, & May, 2007, p. 3)

Corporations can produce, and have produced, meaningful social change. To do so effectively and consistently, however, requires a new set of habits and practices within corporations. When corporations exhibit internal operational excellence in the areas of ethics and responsibility, I will more likely be convinced that CSR is more substance than image. When corporate leaders have proven that they have engaged practices of ethics inside their businesses, I may be persuaded that their motivations toward other publics are genuine. When their own house is in order, I will welcome them to turn their attention to the neighbourhood.

Acknowledgement

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Linking Stakeholder Relationships and Corporate Reputation: A Public Relations Framework for Corporate Sustainability

Ronél Rensburg, Estelle de Beer & Elsamari Coetzee

"Over the next decade or so, sustainable development will constitute one of the biggest opportunities in the history of commerce," predicts Stuart Hart, Cornell University professor and world authority on the implications of sustainable development for business strategy. In this chapter, the authors argue that a stronger link should exist between stakeholder relationships and corporate reputation. Public relations strategy and activity in organisations should be the nexus that binds stakeholder relationships and corporate reputation together in order to work towards corporate sustainability. All the above indicators and expectations require strategic thinking skills from public relations strategists that will contribute to much needed synergy, integration and alignment of activities, processes and systems in organisations. In a certain sense public relations strategists need to go back to the basics and remember that communication is in essence the sharing of meaning and the creation of understanding that can only be established by solid stakeholder relationships. By assisting business to become more sustainable in creating and maintaining good stakeholder relationships whilst solidifying strong corporate reputations public relations as practice and as discipline could also become better sustainable and socially more relevant in future.

1 Introduction

Sustainable development is defined by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. For sustainability to be meaningful, it must refer to maintaining, renewing and restoring something specific, but it should also encompass the ethical dimension of fairness of trade-off between current economic pressures and the future needs of the environment. As the eternal search for domination over nature is replaced by the challenge of achieving environmental balance, sustainability is emerging as a key business imperative. Corporate sustainability – in this context – can be described as meeting society's expectation that organisations ought to add social, environmental and economic value to their conduct, products and services. It is therefore the continuing commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of all involved stakeholders.

2   About Corporate Governance, Citizenship and Sustainability

Organisations should become good corporate citizens and socially relevant. "Corporate governance is concerned with holding the balance between economic and social goals and between individual and communal goals…the aim is to align as nearly as possible the interests of individuals, corporations and society" (Sir Adrian Cadbury, 1999).

The key challenge for good corporate citizenship is to seek an appropriate balance between the expectations of shareowners for reasonable capital growth and the responsibility concerning the interests of other stakeholders of the organisation. The Commonwealth Business Council Working Group on Corporate Citizenship defines corporate citizenship as: "…*the commitment of business to contribute to sustainable economic development, working with employees, their families, the local community, and society at large to improve their quality of life*" (King Report, 2002, p. 8). The notion of sustainability and the characteristic of good corporate citizenship can be found within the concept of sound human relations. It is the basis of a social contract that stems from, but transcends, the narrow confines of the nuclear family to the extended kinship network, the community (King Report, 2002, p. 94).

In a sustainability survey done by PriceWaterhouseCoopers in 2002 among Fortune 1000 companies in the United States it furthermore was found that the behaviour of organisations influences the reputation and financial position of an organisation largely and that it can endanger relationships with stakeholders if it is negative. It was also found that about 69% of the respondents were reviewing their ethics and corporate governance programmes, while 63% regarded reputation as a key factor related to sustainability (Sakebeeld, 2002, p. 10).

The message throughout this chapter is that sustainability is a multi-disciplinary concept, requiring organisations to ponder over their operations and actions across many aspects of business. These include governance, all stakeholders, the marketplace, as well as the social and biophysical environments in which the organisation operates (*The Sustainable Business Handbook*, 2007, p. 202).

The sustainability management process should ideally be repeated on an annual basis and includes the following activities (*The Sustainable Business Handbook*, 2007):
- secure committed corporate leadership
- engagement of all stakeholders
- identification of material sustainability issues
- embedding a sustainability culture
- devolving authority for action
- mitigating sustainability risks and turning opportunities into actions
- developing performance measures
- managing sustainability information
- reporting and assuring sustainability
- evaluating performance

3 Business Becoming Socially Relevant

Hertz (2001, p.13) points out that organisations are not amoral, but they are morally ambivalent. The boundaries between business and government have blurred and under certain market conditions, organisations are taking on the responsibilities of government. A major criticism of business is that it has abused its power. Power evokes responsibility that is the central reason for the corporate responsiveness that has been prevalent in recent years. These concerns have led to a changing social environment for business and a changed social contract with the community (Carroll, 1996, p.26).

Based on the global prognosis and the way organisations are seen to behave, business is being taken to task for its role in society and organisations are being scrutinised in all that they do. Corporate stakeholders demand more attention. It is "business as unusual" and business *in* society and not business *and* society any longer. Today the sustainability agenda encourages responsible organisations to consider and manage other capital than merely financial assets. Corporate social responsibility and investment are central to good business practice and corporate governance. Governments and society demand it. "The most strategic CSR occurs when a company adds a social dimension to its value proposition, making social impact integral to the overall strategy" (Porter & Kramer, 2006; quoted in *The Sustainable Business Handbook*, 2007, p. 201).

The social impact and relevancy of business refer to corporate actions that may affect society directly or indirectly and include how people live, play and interact (way of life); shared beliefs, customs, values and language (culture); local cohesion, services and facilities (community); political inclusion; economic inclusion; environmental rights; human and property rights, and perceptions about safety and aspirations about the future (*The Sustainable Business Handbook,* 2007, p. 126). In practice, being sustainable demands that business be responsible, accountable and strategic. This entails that organisations must find ways to benefit business and society while minimising the costs and risks of a particular project or operation. It also means making the best possible decisions and utilising the best available information to ensure social sustainability in a given situation.

In the future corporate scenario, there will be interdependency between all role-players and stakeholders and a concentration on integrated leadership qualities. Business will furthermore move from merely "economics" to "synchronomics" – an integration of the whole existence of business as an integral part of the community, society and the environment.

4 Public Relations and Sustainability

According to Grunig (1992, p. 11) managed interdependence between organisations and society is the major characteristic of successful organisations and as boundary spanners public relations strategists have a significant role to play in managing this interdependence. Carroll (1996, p. 4) adds to this by stating that many economic, legal, ethical, and social questions and issues about business and society are currently under debate. A major force that shapes stakeholders' view of business is the criticism it receives in a social environment that reflects affluence, education, public awareness developed through the media (especially television), the revolution of rising expectations, the rights movement, a growing entitlement mentality, and a philosophy of victimisation. In addition, actual question-

able practices on the part of business have made it a natural target. In a global business environment, there are few places where an organisation can hide its activities from sceptical consumers, shareholders or protestors. In the age of electronic information and activism, no organisation can escape the adverse consequences of poor governance (King Report, 2002, p. 10). Public relations strategists have a definitive role to play here.

Furthermore, a balance is needed between the individual interests of stakeholders and the collective good of the organisation in which their interests converge. Engaging actively with stakeholders, helps inform strategic planning and risk management. Organisations that follow this approach should adopt a process for the identification and, if necessary, prioritisation of key stakeholders having a legitimate and relevant interest in their operations. Organisations strive for autonomy from these publics and try to mobilise publics that support their goals (Grunig, 1992, p. 11). One of the departments most strategically placed in the organisation to support the executive management and board in their endeavour to be effective in a competitive and continuously changing environment, is the public relations or communication management department.

Excellent public relations departments contribute to decisions made by executive management by providing them with information about the environment of the organisation, about the organisation itself, and about the relationship between the organisation and its environment. Excellent public relations departments engage in environmental scanning have access to senior management, and present information at an appropriate level of abstraction for different levels of management (Grunig, 1992, p. 12).

Public relations is a distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain lines of communication, understanding, acceptance and co-operation between an organisation and its stakeholders; involves the management of problems or issues; keeps management informed on and responsive to public opinion; defines and emphasises the responsibility of management to serve the public interest; helps management keep abreast of and effectively utilise change, serving as an early warning system to help anticipate trends; and uses research and sound and ethical communication techniques as its principal tools (Hutton, 1999).

In analysing current measurement frameworks for stakeholder relationships and corporate reputation, possible links can be identified. The following sections of this chapter therefore address the etymology and measurement, and thereafter the possible links between stakeholder relationships and reputation management.

5   Stakeholder Relationships

Stakeholder relationships can take the form of strategic alliances, joint ventures, partnerships, research and development (R&D) cooperatives and interorganisational relationships to name but a few. The term relationship is also used in various fields from sociology to management sciences. As a result, disparate and diverse definitions of relationships abound in literature.

Consequently, various authors use the relationship outcomes (trust, commitment, satisfaction and control mutuality) to measure various types of stakeholder relationships and reported high correlations between the four outcomes (Bruning & Ledingham, 2000; Hon & Brunner, 2002; Ströh, 2005). Public relations adds value to the organisation when it

develops quality relationships with strategic stakeholders (publics). These developments in the field of public relations prompt many authors to use Cutlip, Center and Broom's (1994 in Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 2000, p. 4; in Ledingham & Bruning, 2000, p. xiii) definition of public relations as "the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depends." A "misplaced emphasis on communication production and dissemination" has previously lead to confusion about the purpose of public relations (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000, p. xi).

Today, organisations are experiencing an increased interdependence with the publics in their environment and have relationships with these publics whether they want such relationships or not (Grunig, Grunig, & Ehling, 1992, p. 69). Nonetheless, the value of these organisation-publics relationships has been widely recognised as a strategic asset to the organisation (Yang & Grunig, 2005, p. 3). Three specific theories contribute towards a better understanding of why stakeholder relationships are critical to organisational sustainability:

- From a *resource-based view*, these relationships provide the organisation with otherwise inaccessible resources (Gulati, 1995, p. 2) and thereby ensure that the organisation has a competitive advantage. This competitive advantage also contributes to organisational effectiveness and success. From a resource-based view of the organisation, reputation is also an intangible asset to the organisation as it is simultaneously valuable, rare, imperfectly imitable and not substitutable (Mahon, 2002, p. 422).

- Three approaches can be recognised in *stakeholder theory*: the instrumental, normative and descriptive approaches. The instrumental stakeholder approach establishes a framework for examining connections between the practice of stakeholder management and the achievement of various corporate performance goals. The instrumental stakeholder approach also argues for the inclusion of stakeholders in striving for organisational goals as well as the consideration of stakeholders in formulating corporate strategy. The normative approach identifies moral or philosophical guidelines for the management of organisations and the inclusion of stakeholders (Friedman & Miles, 2006, p. 29). Lastly, the descriptive approach attempts to describe the organisation's response to stakeholder influences (Spicer, 2007, p. 29). All three approaches can be integrated and emphasise the importance of stakeholders to organisational success.

- An *open systems perspective* recognises the importance of stakeholder relationships for the future corporate survival and simultaneously emphasise the importance of communication within these relationships. A system is formed by the relationships and interacting parts of the system. The organisation and the relationships that it has with various parts of the larger system form a greater whole (Littlejohn, 1989, p. 36; Baldwin, Perry, & Moffit, 2004, p. 294). Because of these interactions, various interdependencies are created between the organisation and its environment. This interdependence results in consequences to each other that need to be managed constantly. Hung (2005, p. 396) states that stakeholder relationships arise when organisations and their publics become interdependent. Communication is central in the functioning of a system as these interdependencies and relationships are governed within that system.

Most public relations scholars take a systems perspective in studying stakeholder relationships (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000, p. xiv). From a systems perspective, organisational communication is aimed at building relationships with key stakeholders (Dolphin & Fan, 2000, p. 99; Van Riel & Fombrun, 2007, p. 1) and public relations strategists exist *"to create and foster relations between organisations and their publics"* (Bowman & Ellis, 1969 in Dolphin & Fan, 2000, p.99). Stakeholder relationships and communication are therefore intricately linked as communication contributes to the success of organisational relationships and thereby contributes to corporate effectiveness.

The organisation as a good citizen of the future, will not only have as a priority to build and maintain effective relationships with all of its stakeholders, but it will have to face the challenge of building significant partnerships between these stakeholders. Andriof and McIntosh (2001) refer to the "new social partnerships" that involve institutions from different sectors of the community that come together in addressing common purposes that involve the realisation of both social and commercial needs.

6   Corporate Reputation

Corporate reputation, as one of the many non-financial issues of an organisation, can be regarded as an asset, even if only in terms of perceptions, but if mismanaged it can become a liability. Like stakeholder relationships, corporate reputation lacks a commonly agreed upon definition and some confusion exists in the literature regarding the differentiation between brand, image, identity and reputation (Yang & Grunig, 2005). Reputation is often referred to as the "*perceptions of stakeholders*" (Mahon, 2002) or "*cognitive representations shared by publics*" (Yang & Grunig, 2005). By implication, reputation is both an estimation of a person (for example a CEO) and a thing (the organisation as a whole), and is an estimation of the actions of that person or thing (Mahon, 2002, p. 417). Consequently, some form of relationship is involved, whether behavioural or symbolic.

An organisation's reputation should be seen as a strategic issue that influences the triple bottom-line in a direct, measurable way. Commercial success and respect depend on a sound reputation as much as on good corporate governance. It has been illustrated that "reputational" capital is directly attributable to the perception, on a number of fronts, of an organisation's image. Publication of unsavoury details or failures can cause irreparable damage to corporate brands and reputations. Research shows that a downward move of one percentage point in the Fortune survey of the world's most admired organisations amounts to a $500m fall in market capitalisation (*Finance Week*, 2003, p. 57).

Reputation management realises value from the corporate image. It includes aspects such as strategic positioning of the organisation; corporate identity; branding and profiling; corporate social responsibility; internal and external communication; corporate performance and stakeholder relationship management. Organisations run the risk of destroying their brands and reputations when there is an imbalance among the three main elements of *image* (stakeholders' perceptions of an organisation), *identity* (what an organisation professes to be) and *personality* (what it really is). Executives often tend to say something, but do the opposite, which leads to a distorted image (*Finance Week*, 2003, p. 57). Reputation management is a multi-disciplinary exercise that requires a holistic and integrated approach. Although the implementation of a sound corporate governance framework can help

an organisation's reputation and, as such, is a move in the right direction, it does not address all the drivers of reputation (*Finance Week*, 2003, p. 57).

Reputation has been periodically rediscovered in various disciplines, which has lead to various perspectives and applications of the concept as summarised in Figure 1:

Perspective	Application of reputation
Strategy scholars	Reputation is viewed as an intangible resource for a competitive advantage
Social issue scholars	Organisational asset in the marketplace of ideas; various links to CSR were formed
Marketing scholars	Combination of strategy literature; included elements of branding
Corporate communication	Reputation's role in crisis management and the development of an organisations' image
Public relations	Communication and historical analysis; reputation was viewed as an element of PR
Others	Reputation is viewed as a distinct area of study and research

Figure 1: Varying perspectives and applications of corporate reputation (adapted from Mahon, 2002, pp. 415-445)

The above table is by no means an exhaustive list of what researchers from various fields have applied reputation to, but suffices in illustrating the varying perspectives regarding this construct. The numerous definitions of and perspectives on corporate reputation has impeded the measurement of this construct.

Another issue arises when corporate reputation is defined as a cognitive evaluation by stakeholders, but measured as an evaluation of the organisation's performance – various studies use this approach including the Reputation Quotient (RQ). Reputation is commonly defined as a cognitive representation but often measured in terms of evaluation of organisational performance (Yang & Grunig, 2005). Three separate but interrelated perspectives concerning corporate reputation need to be distinguished before this concept can be measured (Yang & Grunig, 2005):

- reputation as a *cognitive evaluation*,
- reputation as an *evaluation of organisational performance*, or
- reputation as *behavioural outcomes*.

7   Measuring Corporate Reputation

The diverse range of definitions/descriptions of corporate reputation has been seen as the biggest hurdle in its measurement and a variety of different measures has been developed (Helm, 2005, p. 96). The three primary approaches to measuring corporate reputation include firstly, rankings of organisations based on corporate performance and expectations regarding the activities of an organisation (Berens & Van Riel, 2004; in Helm, 2005, p. 96). Both the Reputation Quotient and Fortune's annual "Most Admired Companies" use simi-

lar approaches (Helm, 2005). The key factors used to measure reputation (Fombrun & Helm, 2000) in terms of corporate performance are:

- emotional appeal
- products and services
- vision and leadership
- financial performance
- workplace environment
- corporate social responsibility.

A possible limitation of this approach occurs in applying this framework to various contexts and stakeholders. Different stakeholders value different aspects at different times, where limiting the measurement of reputation to only these six elements could impede the reliability of the measurement instrument. The context wherein the measurement instrument is used also affects its reliability.

A second main approach to measuring corporate reputation sprouted from the concept of corporate personality, where corporate reputation is measured using indicators that represent personality traits of people that may also be attributed to organisations (Helm, 2005, p. 96). These personality traits used to measure corporate reputation include (Davies, Chun, & Da Silva, 2001, pp. 113-127):

- sincerity
- competence
- excitement
- sophistication
- ruggedness.

In this approach, corporate reputation acts as an evaluation of the organisation as a person, not merely as an evaluation of the outcomes of organisational processes and performance.

A third approach to the measurement of corporate reputation arises from the trust-based models of reputation where "the perception of an organisation's honesty, reliability and benevolence are predictors of corporate behaviour and therefore interpreted as possible indicators of reputation" (Helm, 2005, p. 96). Webley (2003, p. 9) states that reputation and trust have become key words in corporate management. The trust-based models of corporate reputation state that there are four types of trust and reputation where these two terms are often used interchangeably (Huynh, Jennings, & Shadbolt, 2006):

- *interaction trust* that refers to trust resulting from direct past experiences.
- *role-based trust* is defined by the various role relationships between stakeholders and the organisation.
- *witness reputation* is formed by reports of witnesses about an organisation's behaviour.
- *certified reputation* refers to reputation that is provided by other stakeholders about the organisation's behaviour.

Helm (2005), on the other hand, combined various approaches to measuring corporate reputation. A list of 25 factors that influence corporate reputation was compiled and based on these findings. Helm proposed a framework for measuring corporate reputation (see Figure 2).

Indicator	Description
1	Quality of products
2	Commitment to protecting the environment
3	Corporate success
4	Treatment of employees
5	Customer orientation
6	Commitment to charitable and social issues
7	Value for money of products
8	Financial performance
9	Qualification of management
10	Credibility of advertising claims

Figure 2: Formative measurement model for reputation (adapted from Helm, 2005, pp. 95-109).

These ten indicators of corporate reputation provide a formative measure of corporate performance. The differing perspectives on corporate reputation both contribute to and complicate the understanding of the link between this corporate reputation and stakeholder relationships.

8   Linking Stakeholder Relationships with Corporate Reputation

As organisations realise that quality stakeholder relationships enable the organisation to reduce costs and increase organisational autonomy in goal attainment, there has been an increased focus on relationships (Yang & Grunig, 2005) and the engagement of organisational stakeholders. These relationships therefore enable the organisation to survive and attain its goals (Goodjik, 2003, p. 225). Paired with this increased focus on relationships is a focus on corporate reputation, as corporate reputation also impacts on the triple bottom-line (Yang & Grunig, 2005). Public relations is concerned with the management of both corporate reputation and stakeholder relationships and the pivotal importance of including public relations strategists in boardroom decisions is thereby illustrated.

Some controversy exists regarding the definition and measurement of both stakeholder relationships and corporate reputation. A lack of a commonly agreed upon definition for stakeholder relationships hinders the operationalisation and measurement of this concept (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 2000, p. 3). Scholars in different disciplines with different perspectives have also periodically rediscovered corporate reputation and definitions (Mahon, 2002) and various perspectives on the measurement of this concept are therefore rife.

Previous studies (Mahon, 2002; Yang & Grunig, 2005) have attempted to link organisational relationships with corporate reputation, but the relationship between these two concepts remains unclear. Mahon (2002) suggests that historical action and relationship building can result in corporate reputation. Fombrun (1996) states that for good reputations, organisations need to invest in building and maintaining quality stakeholder relationships. Yang and Grunig (2005) conclude that the two constructs are separate but closely linked as reputation is a by-product of quality relationships. The link between corporate reputation and stakeholder relationships has consequently not been fully explicated.

The conclusion that can be drawn from these findings is that quality stakeholder relationships, as well as stakeholder engagement contribute towards favourable reputations of organisations. However, these two terms remain separate constructs, even though they are highly related (Yang & Grunig, 2005). Good corporate reputation also contributes to relationship building and quality relationships by introducing certain elements, like trust and knowledge about the organisation, at relationship formation. The interaction between reputation and relationships thus takes place both in the marketplace of goods and services, as well as the marketplace of ideas (Mahon, 2002). These separate but intricately linked constructs therefore influence one another to a great extent and a significant relationship between the two can be assumed. The similarities between the two concepts that can already be identified include:

- Both are intangible assets to the organisation.
- Both contribute to ROI and bottom line, albeit indirectly.
- Both lack a commonly agreed-upon definition and have diverse operationalisations.
- Both reputation and relationships are facilitated through communication or public relations.

Communication is thus the common denominator between stakeholder relationships and reputation management, and the important role of public relations strategists in the management of these is thereby emphasised. Steyn (2007) states that in aligning corporate reputation to corporate strategy and values, corporate reputation and successful stakeholder relationships will result. Strategic communication is communication that is aligned with organisational strategy and values (Steyn & Puth, 2000). Therefore, if communication (public relations) within an organisation is strategic, then quality relationships and good reputations are two of the resulting outcomes. These processes then, in turn, contribute to organisational sustainability.

Effective corporate reporting of the operations and conduct of organisations would essentially require an *integrated approach*. This is probably best achieved gradually as the board and organisation gain a better understanding of the issues identified for communication with stakeholders, and in becoming more confident with these intricate relationships (King Report, 2002, p. 100).

What organisations choose to disclose to their stakeholders, as well as *when* and *how,* are issues best left to the discretion of each organisation by reference to what is appropriate and relevant in particular circumstances (King Report, 2002, p. 99). However, as stakeholder and particularly investor pressure grows, it is unlikely that many organisations will be able to resist the demand for improved disclosure practices. Silence on issues of concern could create negative perceptions, which only increased transparency – even to the extent of reporting that "*nothing is being done*" – can address (King Report, 2002, p. 7). Impetus for change will therefore come from the market and society, which will be the ultimate arbiters of corporate behaviour in this regard. Therefore, organisations should engage with both civil society and markets. Shared expectations will ensure corporate reporting on issues that are pertinent to the sustainability of an organisation and the communities with which it enjoys the symbiotic relationship on which the viability of both depends (King Report, 2002, p. 97).

9 Conclusive Remarks

In this chapter, the authors argue that a stronger link should exist between stakeholder relationships and corporate reputation. Public relations strategy and activity in organisations should be the nexus that binds stakeholder relationships and corporate reputation together in order to work towards corporate sustainability. All the above indicators and expectations require strategic thinking skills from public relations that will contribute to much needed synergy, integration and alignment of activities, processes and systems in organisations. In a certain sense public relations strategists need to go back to the basics and remember that communication is in essence the sharing of meaning and the creation of understanding that can only be established by solid stakeholder relationships. In assisting business to become more sustainable in creating and maintaining good stakeholder relationships – and in so doing – solidifying strong corporate reputations, public relations as practice as well as discipline, can also become better sustainable and socially more relevant.

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Situating Science:
Public Relations, Status, and Theoretical Trends

David McKie

This chapter considers relationships between public relations and science. It suggests that public relations has been situated by science in three ways: by historical perceptions of science; by attempts to emulate a certain quantitative scientific method; and by seeking equivalent academic and social status to science. It argues that such perceptions may no longer be appropriate, that such attempts may be restrictive, and that such search is directing energies into limited channels less relevant to contemporary conditions. Adapting ideas from branding to academic disciplines, the chapter shifts attention away from emulation and towards the changing nature of discipline construction. It places these considerations in the context of attaining legitimacy and sustaining a competitive position for public relations to be a viable field for the future.

1   The Business of Branding and University Disciplines

In many ways, singular science has never existed. Nevertheless, many plural sciences have clustered under science as an umbrella heading. This has been effective in aggregating status, so that discoveries in biology and chemistry, whether connected or not, contribute to the overall value of science, as well as their own particular branches of science. While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to attempt a genealogy of this clustering, I suggest that the 17th century marks the beginning of the ascent of science in general and physics, as the queen of the sciences, as the particularly dominant intellectual discipline. That intellectual and social climb produced methods, mindsets, and achievements that shaped the early modern world and continue to impact significantly. Since that 17th century transformation, imitation as the sincerest form of flattery has been evident in how more and more disciplines exhibited a desire to emulate science or at least aspire to equivalent respect, sometimes unkindly classified as "physics envy." That evolution can be tracked through the naming of studies concerning psychology and sociology, as the social sciences, and nursing and physiotherapy as health sciences.

Since the later 20th century, critics from Karlinger (1997) to Hertz (2001) and Klein, (2007), have made credible arguments that business has been trying to capture the social prestige of science in the wider world, as well as in the academy. Deetz (1992) is another who has convincingly illustrated how "Corporate practices pervade modern life by providing personal identity, structuring time and experience, influencing education and knowledge production, and directing entertainment and news production" (p. 2). Nevertheless, despite all endeavours to aspire to management as a science, business and management studies still lag behind in academic standing. In practice, however, universities, in most parts of the Western world, have moved much closer to business models, business

practices, and business thinking. As part of this move, corporate identity practices – and academic theories about them – have successfully infiltrated life on and off campus.

The idea of branding is now commonplace and touches almost every area of society from the personal – see Gad and Rosencreutz' (2002) *Managing Brand Me: How to Build Your Personal Brand* – through to the university itself – see Wernick's (1991) *Promotional Culture* for an early analysis of university branding in Canada. More recently, although referring to corporate universities, Allen's (2007) *The Next Generation of Corporate Universities: Innovative Approaches for Developing People and Expanding Organizational Capabilities* exemplifies much current thinking, not just in the U.S., but also in state and government universities in Australia, Britain, and New Zealand, in its discussion of university reputation in brand terms: "Even if a corporate university brand is inadvertent, it conveys the services, the identity, the essence, the character, the inspiration, the leadership, the power, the value, and the purpose of the educational structure" (p. 86).

However, few fragments from these explosions of interest in branding as a tool for conceptualising personal and educational identity have embedded themselves in thinking about individual disciplines. This chapter seeks to integrate branding as an approach to understanding disciplinary convergences in general, and to exploring the identity of communication studies and public relations in particular. In the context of colleges and universities as competing agents in the education industries, many fields have similarly to distinguish themselves from both internal competition (especially other fields of study) and external competition (similar fields in other institutions). This external focus is driven by the survival needs of fields to appear attractive to outsiders, most obviously to potential students, but also to funding bodies. This chapter contends that many of the identity-constructing, identity-sustaining, and identity-planning competencies, which have become central to branding not just goods and services, but corporations and universities, have considerable relevance to specific disciplines.

2   Branding Evolution

The literature on corporate brand/differentiation/identity/image/personality/reputation constructs is shot through with contradictions, confusion, and potential. The range of formative factors that affect these constructs further complicates this. Key shapers range from the psychology and style of an organisation's CEO, and are evident across the usual positive portrayals of Richard Branston and Virgin, and Anita Roddick and the Body Shop in Britain, to a bunch of CEOs jailed for corruption such as Martha Stewart and Ken Lay in the U.S. Similar variations influence country of origin (in the case of Sweden for IKEA furniture and Scotland for quality alcohol) and emotional histories (Manchester United football club and Harley Davison motorcycles), through to visual logos (from Nike's swoosh to New Zealand rugby and the All Blacks). This relative chaos pales into insignificance in relation to academic discipline identities. The following sections will run some comparisons to see, firstly, if the experiences and theory from one area can inform others and, secondly, to explore implications for identity and academic practice.

According to Blackett and Boad (1999), the term "brand" derives from the Old Norse for "burn" (p. 2) and has since expanded exponentially from those early origins in the burning of ownership marks on livestock. Interestingly, that practice became internationally

famous to people of my generation through Hollywood Westerns about cattlemen and ranches, which in turn supplied the cowboy imagery under girding Marlboro's consistent success among world brands (see Clifton & Maughan, 2000) and the geopolitical image of the free West. From those basic beginnings in material agricultural practice, branding has become a highly sophisticated multi-million dollar global industry involving emotion, identity, and personality in corporations, governments, and NGOs alike. Accompanying that industry's growth, and indeed integral to it, has been an associated colonisation of consumer markets and academic territory. A key figure here has been John Balmer and his anthology *Revealing the Corporation: Perspectives on Identity, Image, Reputation, Corporate Branding, and Corporate-Level Marketing* (Balmer & Greyser, 2003) offers a useful retrospective on the mutating history of brand theory and reputation.

As indicated by the earlier use of the Foucauldian-style slashes in the phrase "corporate brand/differentiation/identity/image/personality/reputation constructs," the branding literature has not settled to universally agreed terminology and shared concepts. For example, the deployment of image in relation to an organisation has been done positively as an accurate representation of identity, or negatively as a dimension different from who, or what, the organisation actually is. Across the literature, usage can fluctuate substantially. Some writers have made image and identity almost interchangeable against the semantic grain of "image" as something distinct from the real whereas others (Bernstein, 1988) have sought to make the divide between image and reality, a guide to action. On top of terminological overlap, other breakdowns of the components of "brand" signal its complexity as a sign and manifest traces of eclectic hybridity in relation to all the slashed elements in brand/differentiation/identity/image/personality/reputation constructs:

> The ingredients in a brand constitute the brand itself, the packaging, the brand name, the promotion, the advertising, and the overall presentation. The brand is therefore a synthesis of all the elements, physical, aesthetic, national, and emotional. Essentially the end result must be not only appropriate but also differentiated from the brands of competitors. (Murphy, 1987, p. 3)

The notion of hybridity provides a useful transition to discussions of newer, often consider less pure, or less valid, academic disciplines.

2.1 Branded by the Fight: Campus Ventures and Science Wars

At this point, I seek to transgress the protocols of conventional science, and introduce fragments of academic autobiography. To not do so is to accept what Globe (2001) calls the "biggest misconception" (p. xxiv), that is "the belief that branding is about market share when it is really always about 'mind and emotions share'" (p. xxiv). At present in public relations, consideration of emotions, apart from some work on emotional intelligence, tends to be kept out or marginalised because they run counter to continuing aspirations to the kind of objectivity seen as laudable in the traditional sciences.

Prior to entering public relations education, my previous disciplinary homes included communication studies (of which more later), media studies, and cultural studies. As with public relations, these are all hybrid, interdisciplinary fields that synthesise from a range of other disciplines. Time has, to date, made these ventures, if not as reputable as science, highly visible in terms of academic journals and books, international undergraduate and

postgraduate courses, and, most spectacularly, in the rise of student numbers. The drop in numbers studying not only science, but also more traditional arts and humanities fields, such as English studies and history studies, has paralleled this. Ironically, by 1990, the rise to prominence of cultural studies as an internationally recognised study configuration was acknowledged by the acronym accolade of YUMDie, for "young upwardly mobile discipline" (Hebdige, 1990, p. ix).

By 1996, however, the strength of the backlash against the success of Cultural Studies left visible public traces that are observable in the Alan Sokal affair or the so-called science wars (Hacking, 1999). Sokal's intervention involved submitting a phoney cultural critique of science that was accepted and published as a serious article in *Social Text* (a reputable cultural studies journal). This incident heralded the empire of science (in the academy) striking back with a vengeance as they attempted to reduce the cultural studies tribe to pygmy status. However, the battle was about more than academic status, it also contested ideas about the nature of reality and how it can be perceived.

These debates continued, albeit without surfacing in public relations, but the key dispute retains considerable relevance to how science is situated. In these science wars, one side, the pro-Sokalists, would have us believe that the battles are between their side, who claim to believe in rational argument, truth, and empirical evidence, and their opponents, who are presented as not sharing those beliefs. This oppositional group can be clustered under various labels such as postmodernists, relativists, and social constructionists. Prominent pro-Sokalists, who reveal their allegiances in their book titles include Gross and Levitt (1994) *Higher Superstition: The Academic Left and Its Quarrels with Science*, The Editors of *Lingua Franca*'s (2000) *The Sokal hoax: The Sham That Shook the Academy*, and Sokal himself, accompanied by another physics professor, Bricmont, in *Fashionable Nonsense: Postmodern Intellectuals' Abuse of Science* (Sokal & Bricmont, 1998). These authors adhere to the view that science explains the way things really are by capturing nature through equations and experiments, and see themselves as the heirs of that 17th scientific revolution, whose success led to the elevation of natural science as the model for other disciplines, and that scientific method as the method to be followed. In one scathing footnote Donna Haraway (1997), a scientist with sympathies in cultural studies, condenses the Gross and Levitt version of nature as a simplistic projection of nature as nothing but "a treasury waiting to be discovered" (p. 301) by real scientists.

Taking parallel tacks, philosophers, such at T. S. Kuhn, and sociologists, such as Bruno Latour, describe conflicts between scientific theories in similar terms as conflicts between moral or political opinions and align broadly with a social constructionist view of reality. This debate surfaced briefly in public relations, in the short, sharp exchange between Stuart Ewen (1996) in his published account of interviewing Edward Bernays:

> I told him that I knew a great deal about him, his life and contributions, and added that I had recently published a book exploring the influence of commercial imagery on the contours of American society. Without missing a beat Bernays retorted scrappily, "Of course, you know, we don't deal in images…We deal in reality."…For Bernays and, as I would learn, for many others in the field, the goal was more ambitious. Public relations was about fashioning and projecting credible renditions of *reality* itself. [italics in original] (p. 6)

To the best of my knowledge, no one has connected this exchange over the nature of reality in relation to public relations with those other debates on the relationships between reality,

science, and social constructionism. At present, the race to build positivist programmes and based on old science continues to hold sway over much public relations research (Botan & Hazleton, 2006, p. 9) and thinking and its foundational importance ignores challenges in other fields.

2.2 Communicating Attitudes: Other Disciplines and Publics

An allied set of controversies has been stirred by claims for the construction of cyborg studies as a field in its own right: Cyborgology as an academic attitude started with her [Donna Haraway's] 1985 "Manifesto" as *The Cyborg Handbook* (Gray, Mentor, & Figueroa-Sarriera, 1995, pp. 7-8) put it. This discipline has adopted the acronym of COKOCO ("Constructing the Knowledge of Cybernetic Organisms"), and can transform, or more appropriately morph, "academic discipline" into "academic attitude" with ease. Aggressive as a Schwarzenegger-style Terminator from 21st century Los Angeles, cybergologists effortlessly meld the medieval, even ecclesiastical, frames of traditional knowledge with new science as well as 1950s NASA research, James Lovelock's science of Gaia, and assorted science fiction.

Identifying cybergology as a candidate for a future YUMDie award, I extend its use of "academic attitude" to define the core of discipline constitution and reconstitution. In extending attitude to encompass other fields, this chapter draws heavily on the work of communication theorists (who have established criteria for re-classifying disciplines); looks at rationales for discipleship; and touches on my own personal and political rationalisations as one of the many academics operating within a climate of rapid academic, business, cultural, social, and technological change.

Academic brands cannot be entirely separated from their organisations and even Cardinal Newman's (1852/1957) influential 19th century "idea of a university." Although a rather dated notion, that idea has residual public purchase – severely under threat with the continuing expansion of corporate education – as a floating signifier of a kind of mega brand with a moral dimension denied more market-responsive educational institutions. It was revived as a parent brand with market power by the U.S. Commission on Public Relations Education's Report entitled *Public Relations Education for the 21st Century: A Port of Entry* (Commission on Public Relations Education, 1999). This Report's "port" image is lifted verbatim from Dr Clark Kerr's 1995 claim that "In fact, a profession gains its identity by making the university, the port of entry" (cited in report, p. 2) and so associates public relations with positive connotations of a university.

The idea of the university has its own portals to its own disciplinary rooms sparks debates over the requisite entry processes. In the early 1990s, calling for papers for the International Communication Association *Journal of Communication's* special issue on "The Future of the Field – Between Fragmentation and Cohesion", the editors claimed, "Communication scholarship lacks disciplinary status because it has no core of knowledge. Thus institutional and scholarly legitimacy remains a chimera for the field" (Gurevitch & Levy, cited in Shepherd, 1993, p. 83). This desire for legitimacy is understandable in material terms. However, apart from the funding-status nexus, which is a huge issue in relation to the disproportionate economic funding awarded to science and medicine compared to almost all other disciplines, I do not see that particular exclusion as much of a problem. Nor

do I see the value in mobilising the word "discipline's" historical-semantic connections with the 17th century description of "strict discipline" (Walhausen, cited in Foucault, 1977, p. 170) as an art of correct training.

Where I do have problems is with the allegation that a lack of disciplinary status, or in this chapter's business corollary, a weak brand, stems from the absence of a "core of knowledge" or foundational set of ideas. That would make communication studies, cultural studies, media studies, and public relations no more than parasites feeding off real disciplines. Instead, following Shepherd (1993), I take the view that "disciplines are defined not by cores of knowledge (i.e., epistemologies) but by views of Being (i.e., ontologies)" (p. 83). That is to say, to revert to Cyborgology's terminology, more by attitude than by content. Etymological considerations lend weight to that perspective. The word "discipline" derives from the Latin disciplina, or instruction of disciples. Those disciples, in turn, are instructed in a doctrine or indoctrinated by doctors so that "Berkeley could write that to be 'undisciplined' is to be 'nurtured to no doctrine'" (p. 83). In short, therefore, academic disciplines have depended more on faith, indoctrination, and training than on any core of knowledge. Therefore, just like brands, they are distinguished more by what they value (e.g., Coca Cola's eternally youthful lifestyle), or how they inquire, rather than by the content of what they know.

My chosen subject for exemplifying Shepherd's thesis is the human body. In taking this topic and approach, I follow Foucault's (1977) procedure in *Discipline and Punish*: "There can be no question here of writing the history of different disciplinary institutions, with all their individual differences. I simply intend to map on a series of examples" (p. 139). Nevertheless, with serious intent and attempted humour, I propose to map a series of micro examples of how different bodies of knowledge raise distinctly different questions about the same object, the human body. Just as neither product nor firm, on their own, make a brand identity unique, neither content nor knowledge, on their own, provides a discipline with a unique identity.

In practice, from anthropology through physics to zoology, the distinction of each discipline arises from the particular view of existence it adopts. Therefore, anthropology, as the study of conscious human bodies in interaction across cultures, might pose the question of how similar, or how different, the tribal body is from the urban body. Astronomy, concerned with more celestial bodies, might consider the human body as minute fragments of stellar disintegration, and ponder the distance between extraterrestrial dust and terrestrial flesh and blood. For chemistry, considering a body as metabolised carbon compounds of terrestrial flesh and blood, the key question might be how those compounds are constituted. English studies, less attached to the solid and more concerned with the imaginative, might be concerned to find out how representing the body takes place in genre and language. On the other hand, physics, still searching for the ultimate building block of the universe, what Lederman and Teresi's (1993) book title called "the God particle," might want to know how far its bones can be reduced. Perhaps unkindly, I might pose the key public relations question as how influential, in terms of billability, politics, and power, the particular client or stakeholder's body might be.

The major point of this extraordinarily crude exercise is that *attitude* to whatever is being studied can be a key to what distinguishes disciplines. Shepherd (1993) clarifies the point by posing a series of questions about the characterisation of disciplinary ontology: "Is existence best understood as cultural, creative or chromosomal? Is the foundation for all

best thought of as the molecule, a commodity, or time? Is ontology best viewed as rational, material, or governmental?" (p. 84).

From Shepherd's standpoint, disciplinary ontologies become imperfect approximations of how they look at the world: "They depend on disciples acting as advocates for the ontology they put forward, making implicit and explicit claims that their view 'matters' (i.e., is of the 'mother stuff' from the Latin mater)" (p. 84). In adapting Shepherd to position identity as attitude for brands and disciplines alike, I stress that attitude alone cannot sustain meaningful existence without interacting with material, political, and social realities. That unsustainability undergirds a claim that public relations is a disciplinary brand on the run. Further justification of the claim comes from three areas: analysis of various promotional vehicles for public relations identity; consideration of certain key stakeholders; and possible future projections.

2.3 Students as Publics: The Business of Branding, the Post-Humanities, and E-Commerce

As Lee Clow, Chairman and Chief Creative Officer of TBWA Worldwide advertising agency, puts it "Brands aren't just a way of remembering what you want to buy any more" (cited in Clifton & Maughan, 2000, p. 71) but, like disciplines they "are part of our system of ordering things" (p. 71). And just as the head of the world's fourth largest brewing groups claims "We don't sell beer anywhere, we sell brands" (cited in Clifton & Maughan, 2000, p. 83), I suspect that much higher education is moving more from branding itself as selling knowledge to selling employability – certainly the likelihood of a job motivates public relations students that I have encountered in many different parts of the world.

All disciplines need to pay attention to existing undergraduates and potential undergraduates in school. One significant brand bid, which simultaneously acknowledges the reality of existing interdisciplinary degrees, and threatens many traditional university borders, is the term "the post-humanities." Now, if the post-humanities are not to resemble post-industrial cities – that is to say to have virtually no humanities presence as many of the cities have virtually no industrial presence – that is one public all disciplines have an acute interest in. To remain, with rapidly decreasing government support, viable, as well as worthy, then disciplines will have to attract students in sufficient numbers. As Grossberg put it, "you don't win by being moral" but "by being effective" (cited in Slack, 1994, p. 11). So, since the status quo becomes less and less an option in tertiary education, how are disciplines based in, or aligned with humanities, such as English, cultural, and media studies, and, frequently, public relations, to retain or increase their attractiveness?

Throughout much of Australia and New Zealand, there has been a shift in student desires for the old humanities (e.g., classics and European languages) to the new humanities (e.g., communication studies, media studies, public relations). The shift has been accompanied by a downturn in job opportunities and a vocationalism as discernible in school leaver preferences as in the economic fundamentalist discourse of right wing politicians. In the academic construction of public relations as brand, all these elements need to contribute to the field's alignment with appropriate stakeholders – including professional bodies.

After the post-humanities, a large and powerful – in terms of coming out of business schools and serving current big business – interdisciplinary brand was e-business or e-

commerce. In one earlier cyborgian rhapsody, its earlier incarnation, cyber business, was defined as "the ever-closer harmonization of people, computer technology and organisational infrastructure" in "the shared computer-mediated electronic realm of information and communications" (Barnatt, 1995, p. 5). This definition comes from Christopher Barnatt's (1995) book, entitled *Cyber Business: Mindsets for a Wired Age*. Its bibliography features more novels and movies than it does business literature, and throughout he sets theories from *Management Today* alongside analyses of pop culture products such as Marge Piercy's (1992) novel *Body of Glass* and Paul Verhoevan's (1990) film *Total Recall*. Barnatt's inclusive attitude signals what is seen as an essential openness towards content from diverse areas as part of the branding of new post-traditional disciplinary configurations. In Barnatt and others, this inclusive, and less hierarchical, approach, has demonstrated considerable potential not only to attract students, but to offer them relevant cultural, educational, life, and/or professional resources: that is to say, ordinary culture and science are presented in dynamic interplays rather than the former being assumed to be inferior to the latter. Once again, Foucault's (1978) words seem apposite:

> "Discipline" may be identified neither with an institution nor with an apparatus; it is a type of power, a modality for its exercise, comprising a whole set of instruments, techniques, procedures, levels of application, targets; it is a "physic" or an "anatomy" of power, a methodology. And it may be taken over either by "specialised" institutions (the penitentiaries or "houses of correction" of the nineteenth century), or by institutions that use it as an essential instrument for a particular end (schools, hospitals). (p. 215)

Foucault's (1978) insight extends into universities. My ordinary working experience has been inextricably bound up with forms of branding – although I did not use the term, or conceive of its relevance in this context for many years – to gain student publics for the courses and qualifications I and other faculty colleagues construct and run. As evidence, I offer three examples. Firstly, at Edith Cowan University in Western Australia, business courses and multimedia courses were combined to address a perceived market demand for e-commerce relevant papers (and these attracted students from as far away as Norway). Secondly, my current university in New Zealand similarly constructed a Bachelor of E-Commerce degree by combining courses from diverse business disciplines and computer science. Australia's Queensland University of Technology went so far as to have an experimental electronic music composer offering courses to business students. Across higher education, traditional notions about the university such as the idealistic view that extra disciplinary considerations can be excluded from curriculum categorisation have become manifestly unsustainable. As a result, aligning intelligently with current trends becomes a necessary part of academic survival for institutions and their faculty.

That alignment includes taking account of negative aspects. In this context, it continues to astonish how few people in public relations seem to be mobilising their field's theories of issues or crisis management to address the public's negative view of public relations and public relations practitioners. There seems to be an irony deficiency in not attending to that fact that a brand selling reputation management has a low image intellectually as a discipline and a scandalous reputation as a practice. On the evidence of recent planning and strategy, this state of affairs looks likely to continue and remains seriously out of touch with the business of branding in relation to university disciplines, identities and global trends.

This can be brought more sharply into focus through Interbrand's (Clifton & Maughan, 2000) *Twenty-Five Visions: The Future Of Brands*, in which the editors interview 25 selected visionaries responding to such common questions as "What is your understanding of a brand?" through "Which brands do you believe are the greatest in the world today?" to "Which types of brands, or which categories, do you feel may yield great new brands in the future?" (Clifton & Maughan, 2000, p. xiv). While the diversity of the interviewees – from Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz through film director Spike Lee to new age guru Deepak Chopra – produced diverse responses, there was also a clustering of agreement around the premise that the three critical characteristics of today's strongest brands are: "*clarity, consistency* and *leadership*" (Clifton & Maughan, 2000, p. ix).

3   Evaluating Brand PR

Clarity is the first of the revisionist holy trinity of branding and it covers "vision, mission and values," and "clarity of what makes those values distinctive and relevant" and "clarity of their ownership in…people's minds" (Clifton & Maughan, 2000, p. ix). Currently I see the public and public relations practitioners as equally clear but with the former having opposing values to the latter's positive self-assessment. In general, the academic community is unconcerned with, or dismissive of, public relations as a field. I see more considerable potential in Clifton and Maughan's (2000) third characteristic of leadership as the "ability to lead and exceed expectations, to take people into new territories and new areas of product, service and even social philosophy at the right time" (p. x) allied with the "ability to be restless about self-renewal" (p. x).

Public relations puts many influential stories into the public domain. Scientific approaches generate many "facts" about the world. In simply aiming to generate equivalent facts by adopting similar methods, public relations falls down on its storytelling duties. Our world emerges from the interplay between evidence about what it consists of, and narratives about what that evidence means. In clinging to science's story as the singular story of itself as the one, true narrative about reality, public relations does neither science, nor itself, any justice. Understanding emerges through dialogues between predictive models and interpretative accounts. As the world changes, public relations will have to change too, and it had better do so while it still has options. Climate change has crystallised the urgency of dynamic science-society interchanges, and, public relations may find out too late, that there is no hiding place in the new communications environment where unseen power is increasingly visible. In the public arena, public relations could make a start by redefining its "vision, mission and values" (Clifton & Maughan, 2000, p. ix) and by acknowledging its involvement in the global warming denial industry (see McKie & Galloway, forthcoming), which will otherwise make public relations values "distinctive and relevant" (Clifton & Maughan, 2000, p. ix) in "people's minds…around the world" (Clifton & Maughan, 2000, p. ix) for all the wrong reasons. If public relations is to become a discipline brand leader by living up to Clifton and Maughan's (2000) injunctions "to lead and exceed expectations" (p. x) and demonstrate the "ability to be restless about self-renewal" (p. x), then it will need to be as much in touch with contemporary critiques of science as with historically validated science (McKie, 2001). As a field, let us participate in the situating of science as a social

and intellectual activity, rather than simply acquiesce in attempting pallid emulations of what are no longer accepted as the unquestionable truths of science and scientific methods.

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Globalization and Public Relations

Krishnamurthy Sriramesh

The 21st century is typified by globalization, which has increased the importance of international public relations because of the cross-national (and cross-cultural) communication needed by organizations of all types. Globalization has also highlighted the extreme ethnocentricity that currently exists in public relations practice and scholarship. Existing ethnocentricity can only be reduced by integrating knowledge about the extreme diversity in such things as culture, political economy, media systems, and activism that exist around the world and temper public relations strategies accordingly.

1   Introduction

Globalization seems to be the hallmark of the 21st century just as democratization was the legacy of the 20th century. After a wide-ranging analysis, Freedom House (Sussman, 1999) found that whereas in 1900 not a single country was truly democratic (offering universal adult franchise), by 1999 all adults had the right to vote in 118 countries. This spurt in democratic processes (however imperfect they may be in different parts of the world) prompted the authors of the study to label the 20th century as *Democracy's Century.* During the 15 years following the end of World War II, colonization ended in most parts of the world, principally in Asia and Africa, and a second wave of democratization occurred after the fall of the Berlin Wall in the former East bloc countries to usher in democratic processes in more countries by the end of the century. Modern public relations practice also came of age during the 20th century in no small measure because of the spurt in democratization.

Although the phenomenon of globalization began in the early 1990s, its impact has become increasingly evident in the 21st century. The fall of the Berlin Wall was the precursor to the era of globalization. It was followed by the signing of the Maastricht Treaty and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1992 establishing two large trading blocs to facilitate manufacturing and sales between blocs of countries as opposed to individual nations. The signing of the World Trade Organization (WTO) regime in 1994 gave further fillip to the process of cross-border trade and communication among countries in a trading bloc and with other trading blocs as well. The explosion of communication technology, in the mid-1990s, also has contributed to globalization in the 21st century. Therefore, it is appropriate to label the 21st century as the century of globalization.

This chapter addresses the nexus between globalization and public relations. This relationship is reciprocal because public relations practice has contributed to the process of globalization while globalization has affected public relations practice and scholarship. It is undeniable that the increased cross-border economic, political, and socio-cultural exchanges resulting from globalization have resulted in an exponential increase in the need to communicate with diverse global publics. Communication being the primary activity of

public relations professionals, we find ourselves in the midst of the challenge of communicating with global audiences on behalf of our organizations or clients.

Globalization, then, has brought new levels of importance to the public relations profession, which is surely good for the profession. However, how has the industry responded to this challenge? Not very well, if one were to be objective. The debacle in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Middle East, for example, clearly showed that trying to manage relationships with audiences without first understanding them based on mutual respect and symbiotic communication channels and goals would be disastrous to everyone involved. Anecdotal evidence suggests that multinational corporations have also not been very successful in dealing with the challenges of communicating with global audiences. NGOs, such as the various agencies of the United Nations have done a relatively better job of communicating with audiences of diverse cultures although there is much room for improvement even in their activities. Not understanding a culture appears to be the most common mistake by governments, corporation, and NGOs that contributes to the failure of communication.

2   Ethnocentricity in Public Relations

Ethnocentricity in public relations practice and scholarship is one of the most glaring deficiencies that globalization has brought to the fore. Ethnocentricity has definitely contributed to limiting the efficacy of most public relations strategies and tactics especially as the profession expands to newer societies and markets. As a solution, there is a need for robust holistic education to prepare professionals to effectively communicate with global audiences (Sriramesh, 2002). PR strategies are consistently developed in the home countries by multinational organization and implemented in different cultures with few or no changes to suit local socio-economic conditions. Although some of this has changed for the better, there is a long way to go before one can say that public relations practice is holistic and culturally sensitive.

The problem of ethnocentricity begins with the identification of the history of the profession itself. It is a commonly held belief that public relations is at best a twentieth century phenomenon principally originating in the United States (Pimlott, 1951; Sriramesh & White, 1992). Bentele and Wehmeier (2003) differed contending that in the 1860s public relations in its modern incarnation was practiced in Germany. However, is the public relations profession so young? When we look beyond Western developed nations, most of which have relatively shorter histories, we see the presence of publicity and public relations practices, some even sophisticated ones, even in pre-biblical times. For example, the ancient emperor Asoka of India used rock and pillar inscriptions to instruct citizens on government policies and rules around 323 B.C. (Kaul, 1988). Al-Badr (2004) has chronicled how papyrus scrolls were used around 2000 B.C. to inform and educate farmers on increasing crop yields by predicting the best times to plant seeds based on the flooding of rivers.

Ancient history also provides us insights into defining the profession itself beyond currently established notions of gaining positive publicity by organizations using mass media (principally by corporations). Personal influence had played a key role in public relations during ancient times. The Indian emperor Asoka, for example, used the marriage of his daughter to a foreign prince as a way of establishing and ensuring that there was a robust relationship and public diplomacy with that kingdom. He also used personal emissaries as

spiritual ambassadors in his zeal to propagate Buddhism in South-East Asia, and the success of his precocious efforts are evident even today.

Although the practice of public relations has such a long history, public relations research and scholarship (public relations as empirical "science") is more recent in origin. After their analysis of 4,141 books and articles on the subject of public relations published prior to 1976, Grunig and Hickson (1976) concluded that only 63 had any research component in them. Although there has been a growth in the number of empirical studies in public relations especially since the 1980s, it is only in the last 15 years that studies have addressed public relations practices in regions other than a few Western developed nations.

Not only is the number of these "international" studies relatively small, but most of them also focus on a small set of Asian countries such as Seoul, Taiwan, China, India, Thailand. Further, most of those studies have only addressed some aspects of culture and its impact on public relations in their studies taking different perspectives and using different methodologies to do so (see Sriramesh, 2006 for an updated review of studies that have examined culture as a variable for public relations practice). Therefore, in spite of these studies, culture has been largely ignored as a variable that affects public relations practice. We (Sriramesh & White, 1992) had stated that it was high time that culture be given its due place in public relations pedagogy but the body of knowledge continues to largely ignore culture as a key variable in determining public relations practice. Two examples help illustrate this point.

The *Journal of Public Relations Research,* arguably among the premier English-language journals oriented to scholarship in public relations, published a special issue titled "Public Relations *Values* [emphasis added] in the New Millennium" at the beginning of the year 2000. Very well-known scholars of the field contributed thoughtful essays addressing activist values (Dozier & Lauzen, 2000), feminist values (L. Grunig, Toth, & Hon, 2000), rhetorical values (Heath, 2000), and postmodernist values (Holtzhausen, 2000). The co-editors of this special issue themselves rightly stressed that "professions are based on values and a body of knowledge to teach and enhance values" (Toth & Pavlik, 2000, p. 1). Yet, the entire issue mentioned *culture* only once when J. Grunig (2000, p. 39) observed that "[individualistic] Anglo cultures need symmetrical public relations even more than organizations in collective cultures." How can we speak about values without references to culture? Each of these topics: activism, feminism, rhetoric, and postmodernism is rooted in culture and is defined by our own cultural background and upbringing and have to be aligned with a peoples' cultural tradition in order for them to be meaningful.

The essay on rhetorical perspectives and public relations in this volume helps illustrate this point further. Western scholars, rightly, have relied on their cultural tradition (originating in Greece and Aristotle) to discuss rhetorical principles. However, rhetorical traditions of much older cultures such as the Indus-valley civilization (today's Indian sub-continent) and Chinese civilization including Confucian thought are conspicuous by their absence in rhetorical discussions in general and public relations in particular. This despite the fact that rhetorical scholars such as Burke have thoughtfully advocated the strong link between language, culture, and worldviews. For the most part this is an effect of the lack of public relations scholars from other regions of the world in this still emerging field. The natives of other cultures are best placed to bring the wisdom of their own cultures into the public relations body of knowledge and so they ought to begin doing just that. Therefore, criticism of the ethnocentricity of the body of knowledge is not aimed at Western scholars who have

diligently helped build the body to where it is now. However, it is to be used as a clarion call to the young and upcoming scholars from different parts of the world who should import their rich cultural traditions and knowledge to help reduce the ethnocentricity of the field thus making it and the public relations profession more global. Public relations scholars, especially from Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean, most of which have longer histories of human habitation, should take it up as a challenge to integrate the history and cultural values of their societies into the public relations body of knowledge and help expand it. This appears to be the only way of reducing the extreme ethnocentricity that exists in the current body of knowledge of public relations. This is also what practitioners who are increasingly asked to communicate with audiences in these far-flung societies are seeking to understand.

Ethnocentricity spills over to public relations education as well. The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) released its report titled: *Public Relations Education for the 21st Century: A Port of Entry* based on the work of a blue-ribbon panel (The Commission on Public Relations Education – CPRE) consisting of leading educators and professionals. One of the stated goals of the Commission was to "determine the knowledge and skills needed by practitioners in a technological, *multicultural and global society* [emphasis added], and then to recommend learning outcomes" (Public Relations Society of America, 1999). As noted in (Sriramesh, 2002, 2003), the report fell far short of its stated goals even if one were to accept that the report was intended solely for a U.S. audience. U.S. students and practitioners are often critiqued by observers for being ethnocentric but now find themselves forced to operate as effective communicators in an increasingly globalizing world. Therefore, they ought to receive a holistic education. Further, it is common practice for universities in Asia and other regions of the world to adopt textbooks from the U.S. or Britain (sometimes translated verbatim to the local language). They would also benefit from the holistic curricula of Western democracies. One also finds that cultural diversity and multiculturalism seem to be seen as the sole domain of books or classes on international or global public relations. These issues should be integrated into all public relations courses (subjects) such as public relations campaigns, writing, and cases.

Practitioners are becoming increasingly aware of the need to be culturally sensitive as they enter new markets but are forced to learn from anecdotal experience or trial and error rather than empirical evidence. It is high time that the body of knowledge of public relations serves professionals well by providing empirical data on which they can base their strategies and tactics in emerging markets. Therefore, while not discounting the giant strides that both the public relations profession and scholarship have taken in the past four decades, it is the theme of this chapter that much more needs to be done if the profession and scholarship are to respond optimally to the challenges of globalization. I hope that this chapter will provide the fillip for increased cross-national research leading to global theories of public relations.

The question before us is how can we reduce, and eventually eliminate, this ethnocentricity? The *Excellence Project* (described in the first contribution by J. and L. Grunig in this part IV) provided a framework that we (Sriramesh & Vercic, 2003) modified and utilized to compile reports of public relations practices in 18 countries. A similar approach was used for compiling the nature of public relations practice in 10 other Asian countries (Sriramesh, 2004). Although both these book projects attempted to assess how sociocultural variables affected public relations in these 28 countries, by the end of the two

projects it became very clear that precious little empirical evidence currently exists about the impact of socio-cultural variables on public relations practice. Therefore, many of the chapters were unable to effectively link public relations with socio-cultural variables. Because of inadequate information, the field appears to be using similar strategies for conducting public relations practice across different socio-cultural environments, which is not always a good strategy. Further, practitioners tend to make changes to their strategies and techniques based on anecdotal rather than empirical evidence. It is therefore pertinent to revisit some of the variables we had used in the two book projects and discuss their relevance to the public relations practice and scholarship. The next sections will briefly assess the relevance of culture, media system, political economy, and activism on public relations practice. Doing so will pose a challenge to the field to lift itself out of the ethnocentricity in which it finds itself currently.

3   Culture

It is well established that communication and culture are two sides of a coin. Public relations, principally a communication activity, is also influenced innately by culture. Yet, the Public Relations Body of Knowledge Report presented in 1988 under the aegis of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) did not mention culture even once (Sriramesh, 2006). Culture began to receive attention only when the *Excellence Project* began in 1986 and in the early 1990s, this project was arguably the first empirical attempt to link public relations with culture. For the *Excellence Project*, we made a distinction between *societal culture* (Sriramesh & White, 1992) and *corporate culture* (Sriramesh, J. Grunig, & Buffington, 1992) and contended that organizations are not *culture-free* as stated by Hickson, Hinings, McMillan, and Schwitter (1974) but they are culture-bound as proposed by scholars such as Tayeb (1988) and Hofstede (1991). We then attempted to draw propositions that linked these two types of culture with public relations and provided some empirical results (e.g. Sriramesh, Grunig, & Dozier, 1996).

The debacle in places such as Iraq and Afghanistan is largely because of ignorance about the diversity of cultures within the borders of these countries on the part of those who wanted to communicate with the peoples of these cultures and manage them. Clans, tribes, and religious sects all play a role in the way people relate among themselves in these and many other societies. Using a one-size-fits-all approach has yielded disastrous results. Yet, the public relations body of knowledge had paid little attention to the impact of these aspects of culture on public relations. It was only in the 1990s that a few studies began to address this topic (Sriramesh, 2006).

Most of the studies that have linked culture with public relations have relied almost exclusively on the dimensions of culture proposed by Hofstede (1991). Replication of such research instruments, while contributing to knowledge-growth and therefore laudable, limit the parameters of discussion as far as concepts such as culture are concerned. For example, the five dimensions of culture identified by Hofstede are an outcome of commonalities he found across dozens of cultures. Further, Hofstede himself admitted that culture is malleable and therefore hard to measure and so the dimensions he had found were not comprehensive in describing all facets of a culture. It is important to note that we should be equally interested in the uniqueness one finds in a culture because such idiosyncrasies may be

fundamental to the efforts at communicating to peoples of that culture. The cultural idio-syncrasies of Japan and China help illustrate this point.

In our attempt to link public relations practice in Japan with the unique culture of the Japanese, we (Sriramesh & Takasaki, 2000) had found that the concept of *wa* (harmony) had a significant impact on public relations practice because the Japanese used communica-tion to find harmony with fellow-humans. We found that corporate culture (culture internal to an organization) was influenced by the concept of *amae,* defined as the desire to depend on another's goodness. This was manifested in superior-subordinate relationships where the manager attempts to satisfy the *amae* of subordinates who reciprocate by being loyal to the manager. This observation led us to contend that *amae,* a cultural idiosyncrasy unique to Japan, contributed to a strong corporate culture and thereby an organization's internal and external communication. We also found that communication in Japanese society was greatly influenced by *tataeme* (the public persona and behaviour of an individual) and *honne* (the private self). When the Japanese express reluctance to express disagreement publicly, they are displaying *tataeme* in their attempt to preserve *wa* (social harmony). Instead, they prefer to engage in communication in informal and social settings (such as in a bar or restaurant) to build stable relationships, thus practicing *honne.* We found that Japa-nese public relations practitioners used the term "nomunication," a manifestation of *honne*, to describe their penchant for engaging in informal communication by drinking (*nomu*) with key people such as journalists and government officials.

The concept of *mianzi,* or saving face, is an idiosyncrasy of Chinese culture that greatly influences communication in Chinese societies. This concept is seen in other Asian cultures although it is manifested uniquely in each culture. *Guanxi* is among the more widely discussed Chinese cultural dimensions (Chen, 1996; Kipnis, 1997; Tan, 2000; Huang, 2001; Aw, Tan, & Tan, 2002; Hung, 2003). *Guanxi* is the Chinese manifestation of the personal influence model of public relations – involving the process of building inter-personal relationships with strategic individuals such as journalists and government offi-cials often by doing favours for them (not unlike *nomunication* in Japan). This relationship building often helps open the "gates" for the public relations practitioner who can use these individuals for such things as publishing a news story or approving a government license. The example of the cultures of these two countries helps us stress the complexities of studying culture, which is a challenge that the field has to take on.

The complexities of cultures are further compounded by the fact that all cultures are dynamic and in constant flux even as we try to study them. Westernization (in the name of development), an offshoot of globalization, has altered societies and contributed to rather senseless "modernization" and culture change. In a study of corporate social responsibility in Singapore, for example, we found that most corporations in our sample relied on West-ern models of corporate social responsibility (Sriramesh, Ng, Soh, & Luo, 2006). Whereas there is nothing wrong in adopting wisdom from the West, it becomes a bit ironic when ancient values are forgotten but the same traditional principles are introduced with new slogans.

Traditional Asian values have shunned consumerism but the adoption of the WTO re-gime has unleashed a furious pace of consumerism leading to many social problems. The new emerging markets of Asia have become avid consumers of everything from cars (that lead to pollution) to plastic bags (that are not biodegradable) even though the infrastructure of the traditional towns and cities in these countries are not suited to cope with such

development. Recycling newspapers by making envelopes to pack groceries had long been a cottage industry in India. However, with the onset of plastic bags, this cottage industry has all but died throwing many families who relied on it into further poverty. Plastics being non-biodegradable are also contributing to trash. Sadly, there are no signs that the pace will slow down any time soon and therefore governments have begun to use campaigns and even legislation propagating such things as "plastic-free" cities and zones.

Further, respect for nature (and not being abusive of it) has been a core value of Asian cultures. Nature is worshipped by many of these cultures such as the aversion among many Himalayan dwellers that Chomolungma (popularly known as Mt. Everest) is sacred and one should not step on it or other ranges. Environmentalists have championed nature conservancy through the famous RRR (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) campaign. Sadly, much of urban Asia seems to have forgotten respect for nature – a traditional value – and is now in the unenviable position of having to conduct the modern version of the RRR campaign to save its cities and natural resources.

In sum, it is heartening that we now have far more studies that have evaluated culture as a determinant of public relations practices than twenty years ago when culture was an alien concept in public relations. Yet, it is also true that these studies are only the first wobbly steps and the field has to traverse a lot more ground in order to truly understand the interplay between culture and public relations. The challenge for the next generation of public relations scholars is to study culture qualitatively and quantitatively and understand the linkage between this key concept and public relations.

4   Political Economy

The hand of government looms very large in most countries of the world. In many countries of Asia, the influence of government is so pervasive and ubiquitous that government often becomes "the sole public" for public relations practitioners. Therefore, understanding the political system prevalent in a country is vital for efficacious public relations. We (Sriramesh & Vercic, 2003) had collapsed political and economic systems into one infrastructural variable (along with activism) because of the close relationship between these variables. Gilpin (2001) offered a contemporary definition of the term "political economy" along social parameters – familiar territory for public relations practitioners and scholars:

> The economy [is] a sociopolitical system composed of powerful economic actors or institutions such as giant firms, powerful labor unions, and large agribusinesses that are competing with one another to formulate government policies on taxes, tariffs, and other matters in ways that advance their own interests….In this interpretation, there are many social, political, or economic actors whose behavior has a powerful impact on the nature and functioning of markets. (p. 38)

The term *political economy* has its origins in the 18th century when a fundamental shift took place in the way people understood an economy and satisfying human wants slowly moved from the realm of the household to society at large (Caporaso & Levine, 1992). The nature of wants and the means of production and distribution to satisfy these wants began to evolve to the extent that individuals became increasingly dependent on people outside of familial bonds for their livelihoods and economic well-being. Heads of state and not heads

of households began to determine how to satisfy social wants. Therefore, understanding political economy is vital for public relations professionals.

Since the mid-1970s, scholars have identified *political/regulatory environment* as being critical to public relations practice (J. Grunig, 1976). The *Excellence Study* refined these early notions and identified political system as a key environmental variable for determining public relations practice along with economic system and level of development. Around the same time that the Excellence study was underway, Culbertson and Jeffers (1992) stressed political "context" as one of three variables that influence public relations practice that included economic system also.

The general contention of most scholars is that political pluralism provides a fertile ground for more sophisticated forms of public relations because societies that value public opinion will also provide the means of communicating within, and among, different social groups. Laissez-faire economic policies, first proposed by Adam Smith (1776) also seemed to foster capitalistic orientation in a society. Many of the principles of public relations are predicated on the importance accorded public opinion by a society (political pluralism). Economic growth also fosters relatively higher levels of political pluralism even in the most politically restrictive societies. As noted earlier, perhaps it is not by accident that the growth of public relations in the 20th century took place concomitant to the spread of democracy as well. Sriramesh and Vercic (2003) offered examples of countries in Asia and Europe where democracy and public relations were introduced by the Western Allied forces at the end of World War II.

We also cannot limit our discussions to just the liberalism-authoritarianism continuum offered by scholars such as Simon and Gartzke (1996) because of the complexity of societies around the world. The use of arcane terms such as First World, Second World, and Third World are also not very helpful. Instead, we (Sriramesh & Vercic, 2003) had identified the typology offered by Sussman (1999) as being useful in analyzing the linkage between political systems and public relations. Sussman had also chronicled the progress of democracy in these seven systems during the twentieth century. These seven systems as well as their progression during three points of the 20th century are presented in Figure 1. Broader categorizations of political systems are definitely more useful to public relations.

The fall of the Berlin Wall and accompanying economic liberalism driven by globalization (particularly the WTO regime) have created many emerging economies that are at different levels of political and economic transition. Scholars have only now begun to address the unique nature of public relations practice that exists, and perhaps may be required, in such transitional political economies (Lawniczak, 2003). Economic development has been accompanied by varying styles of political systems in different parts of the world (e.g. Russia, Poland, China, Vietnam). These differences also lead to further diversity in organizational environments and therefore we need to study different types of transitional economies and link them with public relations.

Further, scholars also need to explore the impact of political systems such as corporatism and communitarianism on public relations practice. Singapore, for instance, practices corporatism where government, labour and corporations are expected to work in unison for national development. The head of the labour union is a member of the national cabinet and works from the Prime Minister's office. Government Linked Companies (GLCs) are autonomous corporations with a lot of economic clout but are sponsored by the government. The uniqueness of such systems and how these influence public relations practice is

yet to be studied. In essence, globalization has put us (public relations practitioners) in the forefront of communicating on behalf of governments, corporations, NGOs, and individuals such as entertainment stars and political leaders. In doing so, globalization has given us the opportunity to recognize how deficient we are in understanding the rest of the world and its ways. The time has come for us to increase our understanding of the world's diversity and incorporate it into public relations practice and pedagogy.

	Sovereign States and Colonial Units			Population (millions)		
	2000	1950	1900	2000	1950	1900
DEM	120 (62.5%)	22 (14.3%)	0 (0.0%)	3,439.4 (58.2%)	743.2 (31.0%)	0 (0%)
RDP	16 (8.3%)	21 (13.6%)	25 (19.2%)	297.6 (5.0%)	285.9 (11.9%)	206.6 (12.4%)
CM	0 (0.0%)	9 (5.8%)	19 (14.6%)	0 (0.0%)	77.9 (3.2%)	299.3 (17.9%)
TM	10 (5.2%)	4 (2.6%)	6 (4.6%)	58.2 (1.0%)	16.4 (0.7%)	22.5 (1.3%)
AM	0 (0.0%)	2 (1.3%)	5 (3.8%)	0 (0.0%)	12.5 (0.5%)	610.0 (36.6%)
AR	39 (20.3%)	10 (6.5%)	0 (0.0%)	1,967.7 (33.3%)	122.0 (5.1%)	0 (0.0%)
TOT	5 (2.6%)	12 (7.8%)	0 (0.0%)	141.9 (2.4%)	816.7 (34.1%)	0 (0.0%)
C	0 (0.0%)	43 (27.9%)	55 (42.3%)	0 (0.0%)	118.4 (4.9%)	503.1 (30.2%)
P	2 (1.0%)	31 (20.1%)	20 (15.4%)	4.8 (0.1%)	203.3 (8.5%)	26.5 (1.6%)
TOTAL	192 (100.0%)	154 (100.0%)	130 (100.0%)	5,909.6 (100.0%)	2,396.3 (100.0%)	1,668.0 (100.0%)
	DEM = Democracy RDP = Restricted Democratic Practice CM = Constitutional Monarchy TM = Traditional Monarchy AM = Absolute Monarchy			AR = Authoritarian Regime TOT = Totalitarian Regime C = Colonial Dependency P = Protectorate		

Figure 1: Tracking polity in the 20th century (adapted from Sussman, 1999)

5 Media culture

The importance of mass media to public relations has been well-chronicled. Therefore, it is not uncommon to see media relations being considered as the principal activity of public relations practitioners. Public relations textbooks constantly advocate the need to maintain robust media relations and stress attention to news values, mechanics of press releases, etc. However, press coverage results not just from a well-written press release that adheres to new values but often because of the interpersonal relationships that public relations practitioners develop with journalists (Sriramesh, 1996). Such aspects are part of what practitioners operating in a globalizing world need to recognize vis-à-vis the diversity in media environments around the world so that they can effectively conduct their media relations activities. However, what help does the body of knowledge offer practitioners in their pursuit of these answers? We (Sriramesh & Vercic, 2003) had stated that the normative

theories of the mass media appear to be the only source for identifying the differences between various media systems around the world. We argued that some of the normative theories such as the Soviet media theory and even the communist media theory were obsolete owing to the changes the world has seen in the past twenty years.

We therefore proposed a framework of three concepts (*media control*, *media access*, and *media outreach*) to understand the dynamics of the mass media around the world. As the name suggests, *media control* refers to the level of editorial freedom in a particular media system. Media control should not be confused with media ownership because in many societies privately owned media are controlled tightly either by overt government regulation or covert political manoeuvring. In capitalistic political economies, media market forces determine control for the most part. In developing economies, media control is in the hands of social (often political) elites and the government. The governments of these political economies have covert ways of influencing media content of even privately-owned media.

Editorial freedom is directly proportional to the level of economic development of a country. Reporting on an earlier survey by the Freedom House, Sussman (1999) reported that "the muzzling of journalists was increasingly accomplished by more subtle, legalistic methods than through violence or outright repression" (p. 1). Government advertisements are a principal method for political rulers to maintain control over media content. Advertising income forms the bulk of revenue for a large section of privately-owned print media in developing countries and so this covert method of control is very effective. Politicians of developing nations often own their own media outlets (usually print media) and are able to use them for controlling public opinion in their favour. In its latest annual survey of press freedom around the world, out of 194 countries and territories, 73 countries (38%) were rated "Free," 54 (28%) were rated "Partly Free," and 67 (34%) were rated "Not Free" (Freedom House, 2006). Public relations practitioners will have to identify the forces that control media content in order to be able to get their messages into the mass media.

Media access indicates the amount of access that different segments of the society have to the mass media. In other words, it refers to the ability of various socio-economic strata in various societies to influence mass media content. Erroneous assumptions are often made about the ability of public relations practitioners to "place" stories in the mass media globally as if the media environment is uniform across nations. Often, one may find interlocutors such as the *Kisha Clubs* (*Press clubs*) of Japan that determine access to mass media. In 2002, the European Commission threatened to take the exclusivity of Kisha Clubs to the WTO because foreign correspondents had been excluded from press clubs for decades. This led to changes in 2004 that provided greater access to government information to foreign correspondents. The NGO *Reporters Without Borders* had requested then Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi to alter this "archaic" system prior to the Japan/South Korea World Cup football of 2002. The system continues in tradition-bound Japan.

Media outreach refers to the level of diffusion of the mass media in a society. The level of economic development of a society plays a role in the state of infrastructure for the mass media. Poverty and illiteracy play crucial roles in the ability of the audience to receive and comprehend messages disseminated through the mass media. For example, in countries that have illiteracy rates as high as 40% – 60%, the print media have limited impact. The same societies often tend to have high rates of poverty also, which further hampers the outreach of broadcast media due to poor infrastructure owing to lack of finances. In these

societies, the media relations activities by public relations practitioners will be curtailed to specific groups of urban, educated, fairly affluent middle-class citizens, the elites of the society. In order to reach the larger populace effectively, the international public relations consultant will have to think of other media that reach out to these untapped publics. In India, for example, many public information campaigns have used folk media such as docudramas, dances, skits, and plays in rural areas (Sriramesh, 1992). Rensberg (2003) has described the use of indigenous media for campaigns in Africa.

Although all of the above refer to mass media and are important, the usefulness of interpersonal communication (personal influence) should not be overlooked. The onset of new media around the world has changed the dynamics for public relations practitioners because people are increasingly using new media to share information interpersonally. Figures 2 and 3 show the explosion of new media in countries in Asia, a trend that is bound to increase even further over the next decades. Even in countries such as China where mass media are strictly regulated, there have been instance of the use of new media to challenge authority circumventing the mass media. The successful campaign against the Starbucks outlet inside the walls of the Forbidden City (the icon of traditional Chinese culture) is a case in point. An anchor of the Chinese Central Television (CCTV), Rui Chenggang, used his weblog rather than television, in his successful crusade against Starbucks. Individual citizens used mobile phones and text messaging to spread word of the toxic chemical spill into the Songhua river in northeastern China in November of 2005 when the mass media did not report it due to pressure from local authorities. Ultimately, the mass media played catch-up to downplay rumour mongering. The use of text messaging (SMS messages) to unseat former president Joseph Estrada is an illustrative example from the Philippines. A leading political party in India used text messaging to court support from the 30 million mobile phone users in India during the last general elections. These examples highlight the changing environment for the media relations activities of public relations practitioners.

	Population (2007 Est.)	Internet Users (Year 2000)	Internet Users Latest Data	Penetration (% Population)	Use Growth (2000-2007)
India	1,129,667,528	5,000,000	40,000,000	3.5% (10.0%)	700.0%
China	1,317,431,495	22,500,000	137,000,000	10.4% (34.4%)	508.9%
Indonesia	224,481,720	2,000,000	18,000,000	8.0% (4.5%)	800.0%
Vietnam	85,031,436	200,00	14,913,652	17.5% (3.7%)	7,356.8%
Philippines	87,236,532	2,000,000	7,820,000	9.0% (2.0%)	291.0%
Malaysia	28,294,120	3,700,000	13,528,200	47.8% (3.4%)	265.6%
Singapore	3,654,103	1,200,000	2,421,000	66.3% (0.6%)	101.8%
Korea, South	51,300,989	19,040,000	34,120,000	66.5% (8.6%)	79.2%

Figure 2: Asia internet usage and population (adapted from www.internetworldstats.com)

	Mobile Penetration (2005)	BMI Forecast Mobile Penetration (2010)	Forecast Average Annual Growth
Hong Kong	118.5%	111.9%	-0.3%
Singapore	97.7%	100.7%	2.1%
Taiwan	92.4%	92.6%	1.3%
Korea	79.1%	85.9%	2.1%
Malaysia	74.1%	91.2%	5.8%
Japan	70.3%	85.6%	4.2%
Thailand	46.9%	78.5%	14.4%
Philippines	42.7%	75.2%	16.9%
China	30.2%	58.9%	21.9%
Indonesia	22.3%	41.5%	19.5%
Pakistan	14.1%	37.7%	38.5%
Vietnam	10.3%	35.9%	62.3%
India	7.0%	32.8%	80.1%

Figure 3: Mobile phone usage in Asia (adapted from www.internetworldstats.com)

6   Activism

A country's political economy and level of development influence the level of activism one may find in a society. Political pluralism is important if activists are to thrive but so is the level of economic development. Individuals who are fighting for their next meal are not inclined to invest any time or effort in engaging in activism except when their livelihood is threatened. That is why much of the activism found in developing countries has thus far been limited to labour unionism. The developing nations of Africa and Asia provide a good example of this phenomenon. Although they had engaged in massive social movements to gain independence from colonial rule, most of them have witnessed relatively lower levels of activism since then particularly because of a lack of democratic traditions but also because of economic factors. Activism provides public relations professionals challenges and opportunities as they strive to represent both sides of the struggle. L. Grunig (1992) stated that activist groups are motivated to "improve the function of the organization from the outside."

In addition to activism against corporations, one encounters activism in other forms. Social movements have won nations freedom from colonial rule much of which happened after World War II principally in Africa and Asia. Theocratic activism has also influenced the political and social structures of many nations and continues to be a potent factor even today in many regions of the world. The recent spate of terrorism around the world is evidence of theocratic activism. Labour activism has often played a key role in the economic and industrial development of countries. Therefore, it is critical for us to assess the nature of activism prevalent in a society and determine how it influences the public relations activities of that country. The international public relations professional cannot ignore activism on a global level just as one cannot ignore differences in culture, political, economy and media systems.

7 Can we Adopt Single Strategies for Practicing Public Relations Globally?

After the onset of globalization, public relations managers of multinational companies have begun to ask whether they can adopt a unified strategy for conducting their public relations practice across a number of diverse cultures. This is a question asked most often in interactions between scholars and practitioners. The body of knowledge of public relations has tried to answer this very question based on arguably the first large empirical cross-national public relations research – the *Excellence Project*. After surveying senior executives, public relations managers, and employees of over 320 organizations in the U.S., Canada, and the UK, the authors of this study proposed *factors* that contribute to excellent public relations practice. From these factors evolved ten *generic principles* of public relations practice that are commonly adoptable in different parts of the world. Vercic, L. Grunig, and J. Grunig (1996) contended that by adopting these generic principles organizations around the world could establish strategic public relations programmes for more efficacious relationship building between corporations and their relevant publics. These ten principles advance such concepts as involvement of public relations in strategic management, an integrated public relations function, valuing public relations by not making it subordinate to cognate areas such as marketing, law, or finance, and ethics and social responsibility. L. Grunig and J. Grunig (2003) collapsed these principles into five categories: *empowerment of the public relations function*, *communicator roles*, *organization of the communication function and its relationship to other management functions*, *models of public relations, and ethics*.

These five categories involving the ten generic principles are normative and certainly provide a platform for discussing the interplay between public relations and globalization. The foremost challenge is to see how applicable these principles are across diverse cultures to determine whether these normative principles have elements of positive theorizing as well. As previously stated, the Excellence Project only studied three Anglo-Saxon cultures. Although some of the elements of the generic principles have been tested in other cultures such as South Korea (Rhee, 1999) and Singapore (Lim, Goh, & Sriramesh, 2005), there is a need for more empirical evidence from other Asian cultures as well as Africa and Latin America before we can say with greater certainty that the generic principles are indeed globally applicable.

Some of the questions that need to be addressed in this regard are: Is *empowerment of the public relations function* possible in diverse cultures and regions where socio-cultural norms stratify societies differently? Further, it is worth addressing whether there are different ways in which such empowerment is manifested in different cultures. What factors contribute to decisions by dominant coalitions of organizations in different societies to empower the public relations function after ignoring it for decades? What is the role of class, caste, clan, religion, in such empowerment? Is empowering the public relations function enough, were it to happen, especially if the *communicator's role* is technical because of a lack of knowledge on the part of the communicator to play the managerial role? Are there, or should there be, universal standards of "knowledge" for a successful manager? Gathering empirical evidence in diverse regions to answer these questions will help in refining the generic principles so that they are more globally applicable.

When discussing the category they labelled *models of public relations*, L. Grunig and J. Gruing (2003) referred to the original four models proposed by J. Grunig and Hunt (1984). They did not include the personal influence model proposed in the early 1990s.

Admittedly, L. Grunig and J. Grunig had offered these five categories within the context of U.S. public relations practice. Many studies have chronicled the presence of the personal influence model in other parts of the world such as India (Sriramesh & J. Grunig, 1988), Greece (Lyra, 1991), and Taiwan (Huang, 2001). There appears to be a perception that personal influence is something done in "developing regions" such as Asia (possibly because many studies on the subject have originated in Asia). However, even within the United States there are plenty of examples of the use of personal influence by public relations practitioners (Sriramesh, 1992, 1996). More recently (2005-06), there were high profile scandals of influence peddling by lobbyists in the corridors of the U.S. Congress and White House. The "revolving door" phenomenon of former members of the legislative and executive branches of the U.S. is also fairly well-chronicled.

In offering the fifth category, *ethics*, L. Grunig and J. Grunig (2003) stated that "public relations practitioners frequently serve as the ethics officers or consciences of their organizations… [because] [p]ublic relations is the function that introduces the values and problems of stakeholders into strategic decisions and that establishes a moral element in those decisions." Clearly, the authors identified ethics and morality as being critical to the public relations function and for organizational efficacy as well. A key question that arises from globalization is: how are we to interpret ethics and morality? Both of these, one would have to agree, are steeped in culture including religion and spirituality. Yet, the body of knowledge of public relations is silent on the influence of ancient traditions such as Confucianism or Hindu or Buddhist philosophy. Spirituality in organizations is a largely unexplored topic and one that bears to be studied if we are to establish ethical principles that are plausible for application in diverse cultures.

In sum, there can be little doubt that the application of these generic principles of public relations strategy is influenced by the environments in which public relations needs to be practiced. Analyzing their applicability in different cultures would help us further refine these principles and make them more accessible to public relations practitioners operating in the global arena.

8   The Future

Asia had been a "silent continent" for corporate communication professionals until the dawn of the 21st century. The emergence of the two giants China and India (with as much as half the population of earth between them) as emerging economies with 8% – 10% annual growth rates and up to a billion middle-class consumers is the reason why Asia has been receiving this increased attention. Even ten years ago, few people in public relations wanted to learn about the Asian environment. Today, Asia is the rage in executive seminars. It is ironic that we are paying more attention to Asia mainly because the money trail leads the profession there. Non-profit organizations such as the agencies of the United Nations have been communicating with peoples of developing nations around the world for over 60 years. Yet the wisdom from those information campaigns has not found its way to the body of knowledge of public relations adequately. The field of public relations is still mired in excessive focus on corporate communication and public relations – again because the money rests predominantly with corporations. We (Sriramesh & Vercic, 2004) have critiqued the trend of focusing almost exclusively on corporate communication.

Paying attention to the immense diversity that exists in the world is going to be critical to the success of public relations activities in the 21st century. Sensitivity to diversity in culture, political economy, media system, and activism, should be fundamental to every public relations enterprise. Only then can the profession and scholarship move away from the ethnocentricity that currently exists and make the profession more holistic and far more effective than it is today. Scholars have a key role to play in this endeavour because we are in a position to offer future professionals a holistic education that will equip them to be communicators in a global environment. Scholars should also link environmental variables (such as culture, political system, etc.) with public relations empirically so that we can develop predictive models that professionals entering new markets and societies can use for effectively communicating with unfamiliar stakeholders. Such synergy between professionals and scholars also helps bridge the wide chasm that currently exists between the two entities.

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Annex

Günter Bentele – Curriculum Vitae

Born on March 24, 1948 in Heimenkirch, Bavaria (Germany)
Married to Christina Bentele, two adult children

Academic Career

1968 – 1974	Study of German Literature and Linguistics, Sociology, Political Science, History, Communication and Media Studies (graduation: state examination) Ludwig Maximilians University, Munich Free University, Berlin
1974 – 1989	Assistant Researcher and Assistant Professor Free University, Berlin
1982	Ph. D. with a dissertation about semiotics Free University, Berlin
1989	Habilitation (postdoctoral lecture qualification / second dissertation) with a monograph about media reality, objectivity and credibility Free University, Berlin
1989 – 1994	Associate Professor for Communication and Journalism Studies University of Bamberg
Since 1994	Full Professor for Public Relations University of Leipzig (first chair for Public Relations in the German speaking countries)
Since 1998	Visiting Research Professor at University of Athens, Ohio, USA University of Lugano, Switzerland University of Jyväskylä, Finland University of Klagenfurt, Austria University of Riga, Latvia University of Zurich, Switzerland University of Sofia, Bulgaria

Publications and Areas of Research

Author, co-author, editor and co-editor of two book series, about 40 books and more than 200 articles and book chapters in the fields of public relations, communication theory, journalism and semiotics. Current areas of research: trust and reputation, media relations & intereffication, corporate media, vocational field and ethics in public relations.

Positions in Academic and Professional Institutions (selection)

Since 1991   President and Member of Selection Committees, e. g.:
               Albert Oeckl-Award of the German Public Relations Association (DPRG)
               Ph. D.-Award of the German Communication Association (DGPuK)
               Media Award of the Media Foundation of Sparkasse Leipzig
               Reemtsma Liberty Award
               Politik-Award
               Günter-Thiele-Award for Excellence in European Public Relations Research

Since 1991   Member of the Editorial Board
               Several national and international research journals

Since 1994   Member
               Deutscher Rat für Public Relations
               [German Council for Public Relations] (DRPR)

1995 – 1998   President
               Deutsche Gesellschaft für Publizistik und Kommunikationswissenschaft
               [German Communication Association] (DGPuK)

Since 2000   Founder and Member of the Board
               Stiftung zur Förderung der PR-Wissenschaft an der Universität Leipzig
               [Foundation for PR Research at the University of Leipzig] (SPRL)

Since 2002   Founder and Director of the first German courses of study in public relations
               Bachelor of PR/Communication Management (2002 – 2009)
               Master of Communication Management (since 2007)

2004 – 2005   President of the Board of Directors
               EUPRERA European Public Relations Education and Research Association

2004 – 2006   Managing Director
               Institute of Communication and Media Studies, University of Leipzig

Awards

2004   "Public Relations Head of the Year" in Germany
               awarded by the Deutsche Public Relations Gesellschaft
               [German Public Relations Association] (DPRG),
               acknowledging his achievements in bridging PR theory and practice

2007   "Professor of the Year" in Germany
               awarded by the magazine UNICUM BERUF
               acknowledging his efforts in patronizing students' career development

Publications by Günter Bentele

1   Monographs and Editions

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