

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND THE POWER OF CREATIVITY

ADVANCES IN PUBLIC RELATIONS AND COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT

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ADVANCES IN PUBLIC RELATIONS AND COMMUNICATION
MANAGEMENT VOLUME 3

**PUBLIC RELATIONS AND
THE POWER OF
CREATIVITY: STRATEGIC
OPPORTUNITIES,
INNOVATION AND
CRITICAL CHALLENGES**

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INTRODUCTION

In 2017, the EUPRERA community went to London to get our creativity to blossom under the banner *strategic opportunities, innovation and critical challenges*. The coveted ability of creativity was discussed over three days at UAL – University of the Arts – London, London College of Communication. One hundred and twenty abstracts were received from 28 countries, making this 19th Annual Congress a truly international gathering. Pulling from a large list of articles for the conference, this volume gathers 12 outstanding contributions from scholars based in Germany, Finland, Austria, Romania, the UK, Spain, France, Norway, Turkey and the USA.

PART I with the title, ‘Leadership, Ethics and Creativity’, contains three chapters: the first of these, written by the German duo Maria Borner (FTI Consulting, Germany) and Ansgar Zerfass (University of Leipzig), focuses on the corporate value of listening. In a theoretical essay with the title, ‘The Power of Listening in Corporate Communications: Theoretical Foundations of Corporate Listening as a Strategic Mode of Communication’, the authors take us beyond the relational paradigm of listening.

While the first chapter discards normative ethical ideals of mutual understanding, the second chapter zones in on ethical leadership and interpersonal communication competence. Anne Laajalahti (University of Jyväskylä, Finland) and her literature review chapter, ‘Fostering Creative Interdisciplinarity: Building Bridges between Ethical Leadership and Leaders’ Interpersonal Communication Competence’, points to the need to work interdisciplinarily, something addressed by many at the conference.

The third chapter comes from the same country, Finland, and also discusses leadership communication. In keeping with the topic of the conference, Tiina Weman (Kuopio University Hospital, Communication Unit, Finland) and Helena Kantanen (University of Eastern Finland, Business School, Finland) discuss how leaders promote innovativeness. The chapter is titled, ‘Communicative Leaders, Creative Followers?’.

PART II puts together four chapters under the title, ‘Knowledge and Collaboration for Fostering Creativity’. During the conference, the organisers were experimenting with different structures and formats meant to foster creativity. Several chapters also address this topic: the first one, by Astrid Spatzier and Jessica Breu (University of Salzburg, Austria), relates it to education types: ‘Public Relations and Communication in Education: Is Creativity the Opposite of Knowledge?’.

One of the many exciting opportunities offered by the technological development is the phenomenon of crowdsourcing. The Rumanian duo Diana-Maria

Cismaru and Raluca Silvia Ciochina (National University of Political Studies and Public Administration, Bucharest, Romania) discuss creativity in this connection in the chapter titled, ‘The Role of Trust and Intrinsic Motivation in Enhancing Participation and Creativity in Crowdsourcing Communities’.

The topic of the latter chapter dovetails with the following one, written by Harri Ruoslahti (Laurea University of Applied Sciences and University of Jyväskylä, Finland). The chapter is titled, ‘Co-Creation of Knowledge for Innovation Requires Multi-Stakeholder Public Relations’. Based on a literature review, it is suggested that four types of projects exist where such co-creation typically takes place.

Collaboration is also key for the final chapter in this part. The cross-national cooperation of Paul Willis (University of Huddersfield, UK) and Elisenda Estanyol (Open University of Catalonia, Spain) has resulted in the chapter, ‘Collaborative Creativity, Leadership and Public Relations: Identifying and Addressing Research Limitations’. The authors specifically address what they call an overreliance on the ‘creative individual’ in current approaches.

PART III consists of five chapters introducing “New Creative Approaches to Public Relations. Culture is the focus of the chapter written by Alex Frame (University of Burgundy France-Comté, France) and Øyvind Ihlen (University of Oslo, Norway) – ‘Beyond the Cultural Turn: A Critical Perspective on Culture Discourse within Public Relations’. The authors use the prism of creativity as a vector of cultural change which also raises ideological issues.

The next chapter introduces a new approach for public relations. Ute Hilgers-Yilmaz, Ralf Spiller and Christof Breidenich (all from Hochschule Macromedia University of Applied Sciences, Germany) apply a so-called design-thinking approach in discussing visual communication strategies: ‘2,000 Years of Visual Storytelling: Alternative Approaches for Visual Communication of Christian Churches in the Age of Social Media’.

Creativity is also celebrated in the industry, as demonstrated by industry awards. Pinar Aslan (Istanbul University, Turkey) and Tugce Ertem-Eray (University of Oregon, USA) analyse how creativity is perceived by the PRWeek Awards, as well as the PRWeek Global awards – ‘Creativity in Public Relations: What Do Award-Winning Campaigns Tell Us?’.

Turning the attention back to innovation and research itself again, Kristina Henriksson, Harri Ruoslahti and Kirsi Hyttinen (all from Laurea University of Applied Sciences, Finland) advocate that commitment and active participation of end-user group is key for dissemination of research projects. In the chapter titled, ‘Opportunities for Strategic Public Relations: Evaluation of International Research and Innovation Project Dissemination’, they report from three EU-funded projects in this regard.

The volume is rounded off by Melanie Malczok (Hochschule Osnabrück University of Applied Sciences, Germany) and the chapter is fittingly titled, ‘Let Me Draw Your Attention to: Exploring the Potentials of Visual Methods for Strategic Internal Communication Management’. The main argument related to creativity here is connected to visualisation of organisational structures, again pulling on design thinking that is novel to public relations theorising.

Taken together, the chapters demonstrate a range of possibilities for creative thinking about public relations management and collaboration in different settings and with different purposes. The chapters hint at opportunities, point towards innovation and, yes, challenge our thinking about the power of creativity.

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