

# Strategic Communication for Non-Profit Organisations

Challenges and Alternative Approaches

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## Chapter 1

# Strategic communication in non-profit organisations: Challenges and alternative approaches

Evandro Oliveira, Ana Duarte Melo and  
Gisela Gonçalves

Communication in the public sphere as well as within organisational contexts has attracted the interest of researchers over the past century. Current forms of citizen engagement and community development, partly enabled through digital communication, have further enhanced the visibility and relevance of non-profit communication. These are performed by the civil society, which is “the organized expression of the values and interests of society” (Castells, 2008, p. 78), in the public sphere. Non-profit communication feeds the public sphere as “the discursive processes in a complex network of persons, institutionalised associations and organisations”, whereas those “discourses are a civilised way of disagreeing openly about essential matters of common concern” (Jensen, 2002).

Furthermore, by being deeply intertwined within civil society, non-profit communication provides alternative participative platforms to citizens and, by frequently emerging from grass root initiatives, it summons special conditions for discourse legitimacy, community engagement, ethical support and — what will not be an insignificant argument — as a practical response to problems where both the corporate, thus profit-centred, and the institutional structures are absent or have failed. Therefore, non-profit communication is set up as an alternative approach and recurrently referred as a driver to social change and development (Greenfield, 2016; Lane, 2016; Thomas, 2014; Wilkins *et al.*, 2014).

Despite its relevance in the public sphere, non-profit communication has been enduring efforts to be properly defined within communication research, whether in broad studies (Salamon & Anheier, 1997) or within a strategic mind frame (Andreasen & Kotler, 2008). Nevertheless, we register the rise of sub-fields, some of them already institutionalised within international academic organisations, like the sections *Communication and Democracy*, *Science and Environment Communication* as well as the working group *Communication and the European Public Sphere* at ECREA – European Communication Research and Education Association; *Community Communication*, *Participatory Communication Research* conjointly with the *Health Communication and Change* at IAMCR – International Association for Media and Communication Research and the *Environmental Communication*; *Health Communication* and *Global Communication and Social Change* sections at ICA – International Communication Association.

The aim of the present book is to offer an overview and report on Strategic Communication for Non-Profit-Organisations and the Challenges and Alternative Approaches. Considering the assumption that a key principle of strategic communication is the achievement of organisational goals, the majority of research developed in the field has used business environments to develop theories, models, empirical insights and case studies. Here, we make a step on the proposal of new approaches that are centred on the concept of non-profit in various dimensions and from various perspectives, showing the diversity and complexity around this subject and concurrently the need of further theoretical and empirical work that provides frameworks and also tools for further understanding of the phenomena.

We postulate that the distinctive element of what we call non-profit communication and its agglutinated factors is humanity and the relations with the fields of life in the public sphere, not mediated directly or subscribed on the first instance to the logics of an institutionalised organisation. Nevertheless, we also see that the specificity of the organisational form can have implications along with the communication setting. Still, we advance here the proposal for the inclusion of six sub-fields of study under the term Non-Profit Communication such as: (1) Development Communication, which addresses humanity on the way to democracy and social change,

(2) Civic Relations (Communication), as humanity defending and improving democracy; (3) Health Communication, concerning disease prevention, life extension and promoting health and wellbeing; (4) Environmental Communication; (5) Science and Innovation Communication; and (6) Religious Communication.

The concept of development communication is a “social process”, designed to seek a common understanding among all the participants of a change initiative, creating a basis for concerted action (Servaes, 2007: p. 14). Hamid considers the existence of three main aspects that comprehend this concept: 1) Communication for social Change and Media Development in which CfSC is the basis of media for development; 2) the need for empirical westernisation on the dimension of communication for social change; 3) the fact that diversity in society increases and approaches to CfSC as a main factor for social cohesion and social capital (Hamid, 2016).

The term Civic Relations has been defined by Oliveira (2016) as a social communicative function of an agent that performs direct or indirectly the civic exercise of pursuing and searching the common good. This agent can be engaged as an individual, into a group, a formal organisation, a movement, a network or other level and, by means of communication. It is involved on the process of the exercise of the political being, while discussing to reach consensus in the habermasian sense, but also in the performance dimension of the language as constitutive of the social reality and on the third dimension, as a symbolic interaction in the public sphere by driving and/or performing communication around the subject. (*ibid.*)

Health communication is one of the most established fields of non-profit communication with two dedicated journals – *The Journal Health Communication* since 1989 and the *Journal of Health Communication* after 1996. Kreps (2015) considers that two areas of health communication can be identified: Health care-focused communication research and health-promotion-focused communication research (p.1).

Environmental communication can be consider as “the pragmatic and constitutive vehicle for our understanding of the environment as well as our relationships to the natural world; it is the symbolic medium that we use in constructing environmental problems and negotiating society’s different responses to them” (Cox, 2010, p. 20). While advancing a need of innovation communication, Zerfass & Huck (2007) advocate three levels of facilitation: “On a *macro* level, it sparks the public debate about new ideas and tech-

nologies, thus enabling discussions and the construction of meanings within national and regional clusters" (...). On a *meso* level, institutionalized communication campaigns and programs are necessary to create an understanding of innovations in interactions of organisations with relevant stakeholders. (...) On a *micro* level, each manager can contribute to innovations by mediating meaning in asymmetrical social relations" (Zerfass & Huck, 2007, p. 111).

Religious communication can be noted within the frame and distinctive elements that "is metaphorical, irreducible to any non-figurative form of expression, and identifies metaphysical referents that can be apprehended but not defined" (Lessl, 1993, p. 127).

These sub-fields of thematic communication within non-profit communication are also performed and driven through various collective actors in society like NGOs, associations, churches, foundations, social movements, single-issue organisations, unions and even public organisations. Researching these six sub-fields includes specific challenges and requires modified categories compared to profit-making or political organisations. Hence, alternative approaches to value creation had to be developed which are not aimed at economic profits, but rather oriented towards goals such as public welfare, societal and humanity values, and religious ideas. These alternatives cannot be overseen and represent the core of non-profit communication within organisations. To elaborate on this, we advance the concepts of the intermediary or bridging role of organisations from Carroll (1992) and the communities of interpretation (Berger & Luckmann, 1995) as a communicative social function. Both can be useful as a framework for further understanding the dynamics of collective actors in the six sub-fields, apart from their own organisational needs and specificities.

This particular book focuses on the role of strategy. Strategic communication can be defined as "the purposeful use of communication by an organisation to fulfil its mission" (Hallahan *et al*, 2007, p. 3), when considered as a functionalist approach. But we can expand this definition if we consider the strategic game situation of the communication (Pérez, 2001), the performativity and emerging dimension of the language (e.g Weick *et al*, 2005), or other approaches that are more towards a complex perspective. We firmly consider that this diversity of approaches is present along this book, which is divided into four main parts. In the Part I, we collect con-



ceptual proposals and best practices for the field; In Part II, NGOs are on the focus of the chapters. Religious organisations strategic communication and organisational identities constitute the Part III and the Part IV presents three case studies that report on empirical research on the field of non-profit communication.

Public Interest Communication as a discipline is the proposal of Jasper Fessmann from the University of Florida. He argues that Public Interest Communication is connected with the Public Relations Scholarship and has influences from sociology, marketing, psychology. He describes its proposals and draws a list of arguments and elements on which is based, reporting on already existing events and research, including institutionalisation efforts.

Markus Wiesenbergh and Evandro Oliveira, from the University of Leipzig, address the question of legitimacy in two organisational forms from the third sector – NGOs and Churches, proposing a conceptual model that looks at four dynamics of legitimization, grounded on theoretical pillars of legitimacy and legitimization; social theory like the structuration theory, post-modernity and Searle's understanding of collective action; but also definitions of public sphere, public interest, strategic communication and communication management.

Public Health and the role of strategic communication in the theory and practice of this impactful field of non-profit communication is approached by Ana Duarte Melo, Sara Balonas, Teresa Ruão from the University of Minho and Manuela Felício from the North Regional Health Administration, in Portugal. They share the experience and challenges of a visionary research-action program that combines training and consultancy in order to empower public health professionals through strategic communicative skills.

In the second part of this book NGO's communicational modus operandi, its strategies and specificities are highlighted, scrutinised and discussed.

Anke Wonneberger, from the University of Amsterdam, proposes a journey through the challenges set out by the political institutionalisation of "Environmental Non-Profit Organisations in Public Discourses" indicating that this constitutes an opportunity for the public legitimacy of movement organisations.

Greenpeace Germany lobbying strategies analysis and the impact of digitalisation of public affairs campaigns are at the core of the work of Felix Krebber, Christian Biederstaedt & Ansgar Zerfaß, from the University of Leipzig. In “Online campaigning and offline lobbying: Public Affairs Strategies of Greenpeace Germany” the authors point out that although digitalisation increases the range of influence, traditional lobbying is still crucial to non-profit organisations.

Louise Van Dyk, from the University of South Africa, addresses the central relationship between non-profit organisations and corporate donors, frequently a fundamental source for their survival. Control, trust, commitment and satisfaction dimensions are observed through the donors perspective in “Perceptions from the bottom up: Relationships between non-profit organisations and their corporate donors” providing valuable insights to non-profit stakeholders’ managers.

“Audiovisual narrative in the advertising strategy and creativity of NGOs”, by Rafael Marfil-Carmona, Isidoro Arroyo-Almaraz & Francisco García-García of the Universities of Granada, Rey Juan Carlos and Complutense of Madrid, provide an approach to NGO’s storytelling through the content analyses of “Manos Unidas” and UNICEF in Spain. Although the interactive potential of the digital is still being explored, the authors observe a shift from the advertising campaign paradigm to the development of an active storytelling based on truthfulness and objectivity in portraying human drama.

Chapters gathered in section III present a way of understanding “Religious Organisations” strategic communication singularities and contemporary challenges. Sara Balonas, from the University of Minho (Portugal), develops a case study focused on an innovative internal communication strategy developed by the Catholic Church in order to implement an effective vocational programme: the Vocational Pastoral Teams Kit. With this strategy it is stressed the role of internal members as actors in the legitimacy process of the Church in its communities.

The construction of the Muslim identity on the Web is central to the chapter authored by Billur Ülger (Yeditepe University, Turkey) and Gürdal Ülger (Maltepe University, Turkey). By analysing the case of the Presidency of the Religious Affairs in the light of Cheney’s (1983) identity strategies, they reflect about how the religious organisations tend to construct identity through discourses, practices, communities, and structures just as companies do.

The IV and last part of this book presents case studies from different European non-governmental and non-profit organisations. In “Public Information and Communication for Public Participation in Spain”, Alejandro Alvarez (Universidad Católica de Córdoba, Argentina) and Isabel Ruiz-Mora (Sheffield Hallam University, England) analyse the official websites of local governments in Spain to ascertain which communicative practices could boost citizen’s participation. To achieve this objective, an innovative geographical e-tool – “The Infoparticip@ Map”, is presented as a way to motivate governments to make improvements in transparency and citizens’ engagement.

In the following chapter, civic engagement and digital media continues to be at the centre of attention of Bruno Asdourian and Virginie Zimmerli, from the University of Fribourg (Switzerland). These researchers try to answer to “How important is civic engagement for public transportation communication?” by analysing a cultural context of civic engagement as well as a communicational model between the players enrolled in democratic exchanges taking place in an open data environment, in the specific case of the company Transports Publics Genevois (TPG).

Finally, the communication strategies of the European Journalism Observatory (EJO) – a consortium of 14 non-profit media research institutes from 11 European countries – is analysed by Marco Bardus, from the American University of Beirut and Philip di Salvo, from the Università della Svizzera italiana. In “Leveraging the power of social media to enhance internal and external communication”, the author shows how the communication strategies were developed through an iterative, shared decision-making process, aiming to improve the public visibility of the network and the efficiency of internal communication fluxes, especially using social networking sites and Web 2.0 applications.

Emergent versions of some of the chapters included in this volume were presented at the conference hosted at the University of Leipzig, in December 2015, under the theme: “Strategic Communication for Non Profit Organisations: Challenges and Alternative Approaches”. This conference was an event of the Organisational and Strategic Communication Section of the European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA) and was hosted by the Chair in Strategic Communication at the Institute of Communication and Media Studies, University of Leipzig, with the support of NAPROK – Young German Scholars in Public Relations and Or-

organisational Communication. Organised and hosted by Evandro Oliveira this event included more than 15 presentations and gathered around 200 participants during two days. We believe that the double-blind peer reviewed chapters presented in this volume share critical reflections and also keep alive the debate initiated in the Leipzig conference. Thank you to all authors, reviewers and thoughtful critics without whose contributions this book would not have been possible.

The editors,  
Evandro Oliveira, Ana Duarte Melo, Gisela Gonçalves

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## **Part I**

# **Conceptual Approaches**





## Chapter 2

# The emerging field of public interest communications

Jasper Fessmann

## Introduction

*“Public interest communications is distinguished by a commitment to communication that advances the human condition. Public interest communications embraces the vision of ethicists who make explicit the priority of shared human values and rights over vested interests that deliberately seek to obfuscate or have as their goal the denial of any person or group of people the fundamental human rights of dignity, freedom, equality and quality of life including health and safety.”*

Linda Hon, *frank* (scholar, 2016) Director<sup>1</sup>

The chapter provides evidence that public interest communications (PIC) is emerging as a separate field of communication, grounded in, but substantively different from, public relations and other existing academic communication fields. The chapter provides evidence for this emergence and offers some possible explanations why it has recently emerged. In particular, this chapter argues that PIC is filling an increasing void in the social advocacy role of journalism by using strategic public relations and marketing planning and implementation techniques to serve the public good.

The chapter discusses specific points of demarcation between public interest communications and public relations, journalism, marketing and advertising; its roots in these fields; and the linkage to other fields such as political science, psychology, history and sociology. Both in scope and methodology, PIC also is different from CFSC, communication for social change (Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte, 2006). Public interest communications is defined here as the devel-

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<sup>1</sup> Hon, L. (2016). *frank* (scholar, 2016) [Brochure]. Gainesville, Florida: frank (scholar, 2016) conference.

opment and implementation of science-based, planned strategic communication campaigns with the main goal of achieving significant and sustained positive behavioural change on a public interest issue that transcends the particular interests of any single organisation.

While this chapter argues that PIC is a current phenomenon, its roots go back a long time in history: The use of strategic communication – defined here as analysis-based, deliberately designed, comprehensive communications campaigns with specific objectives, media outlets and key messages to achieve general goals – has already for centuries profoundly changed societies. Public relations scholars such as Denis Wilcox (Wilcox, Cameron & Reber, 2016) date deliberate communications strategies back to Alexander the Great and Indian Emperor Asoka (273-326 B. C.). However, these very early examples lack the mass distribution characteristic that the invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg provided – the first true mass media technology. This technology and deliberate communication of ideas enabled religious reformers such as Martin Luther to build for the first time national and international movements based on effective communication strategies. Strategic communication to achieve political goals was also critical to the success of the American War of Independence in the form of Thomas Paine's (1776) pamphlet *Common Sense*, effective slogans such as *No taxation without representation* and pseudo-events such as the *Boston Tea Party* (Cutlip, 1995; McKinnon, Tedesco, & Lauder, 2001).

The use of a planned strategic communication campaign, using research and analysis in the modern sense to achieve a specific positive change in a society (which is what we called public interest communications), was first employed in the British 1787 anti-slavery campaign *Am I Not a Man and a Brother?* by Josiah Wedgwood and the *Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade*: Starting first with a strategic analysis of the situation, they identified the key target audience they needed to mobilize to have a significant and sustained impact on the issue of slavery – women. At the time, women had not yet gained the right to vote and were thus largely ignored by other communicators and social activists. Other efforts focused on men had little effect because there was a strong lobby in parliament financially benefitting from the slave trade. Instead of attacking these directly, the anti-slavery campaigners realized in their analysis that the key to financial success of the slave trade was sugar, a single slave-produced commodity at the time.

So, the campaign aimed at mobilizing women to express their moral disapproval by boycotting the sugar produced by slave labour, which 400.000 of them did (The Abolition of Slavery Project, n.d.). This made the slave trade uneconomical, eliminating key interest groups that would otherwise have fought the abolition of the slave trade. It thus directly lead actually achieving their goal – ending the slave trade and with it in the long run slavery overall.

## Theoretical Background

The notion that communication can be used as a tool to achieve positive social change is also not a new concept in mass communication. As McAnany (2012) points out, the basic premise that communication theory and techniques can be applied for societal development and social change is almost as old as the mass communication field itself. For example, the works of the communication pioneers Wilbur Schramm (1964), Daniel Lerner (1958), and Everett Rogers (1962) all had significant implications for the use of mass communications techniques to advance social causes. However, these and later research on communication for social change (Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte, 2006) primarily focused on using the mass communication theories that were developed in the United States and Europe to help developing countries.

In contrast, public interest communications (PIC) is an emerging strategic communication approach, using the full breadth and depth of current mass communications and public relations scholarship, aimed at achieving social change in highly developed Western countries. PIC is deeply grounded in public relations scholarship (informed by sociology, marketing, psychology, etc.), but it is substantively different from public relations. This dichotomy resembles the relationship of international relations to political science: grounded and inseparable in broad concepts from political science but unique in applications and specific features. PIC also resembles social marketing in that PIC applies sophisticated strategic public relations expertise and methods to advance social causes instead of applying them for the benefit of organisations and corporations.

## Research Design

This chapter is an explication of the term public interest communications and conceptually address the following research questions:

RQ 1: What is public interest communications?

RQ 2: How is public interest communications different from existing communication fields of study?

RQ 3: What evidence is there that public interest communications is emerging as a new academic discipline?

RQ 4: Why has public interest communications emerged now?

## Results

### What is Public Interest Communications?

A first step in describing an emerging communications field is giving it a definition practitioners and academics generally agree upon. Public relations as an academic discipline, for example, failed in this, with almost 500 different definitions of term public relations. (Harlow, 1976). This ambiguity has been highly detrimental to the field of public relations as a whole because without clear demarcations, the public relations field, in spite of the high moral standards most practitioners hold, has been tarnished by unethical conduct such as Hill+Knowlton developing the playbook for the tobacco industry to attack cancer science in defence of cigarette smoking (Oreskes & Conway, 2010) or Burson-Marsteller supporting the Nigerian government's attempts to discredit the reports of genocide in the Biafran war (Corporate Watch UK, n.d.) .

The following definition of PIC was developed by the authors of this chapter. It was proposed and unanimously adopted as the definition of the field by the 300+ self-identified public interest communications professionals at the 2015 *frank gathering*<sup>2</sup>:

*Public interest communication is the development and implementation of science based, planned strategic communication campaigns with the main goal of achieving significant and sustained positive behavioural change on a public interest issue that transcends the particular interests of any single organisation.*

<sup>2</sup> <https://vimeo.com/120885700>

An obvious key question of the definition is what constitutes the public interest, which has also many different definitions and legal meanings. For our purposes, the dictionary definition of public interest in the Oxford English Dictionary (2014) as “the benefit or advantage of the community as a whole; the public good” is a good starting point. One approach might be to use a catalogue of criteria to judge if an issue is in the public interest. This however, is beyond the scope of defining public interest communications here. Instead, we judge an issue to be in the public interest if it can pass the test of the thought experiment that the philosopher John Rawls devised of assuming an *original position* to judge if one would like to live in a society with the features in question, which is hidden behind a *veil of ignorance* about one’s own future role in that society (Rawls, 1971). This thought experiment can also be roughly understood along the lines of reincarnation: How would we like our society to be, if we would have no control over the societal strata into which we would be reborn into and in which had to live? A societal problem thus is an issue where dissonance exists between how society should be to be as fair to everyone as possible and the actual situation. Thomas Paine also put it well when he noted in his 1776 *Common Sense* that a social problem exists if some group or individual fails to allow the same rights to others that they allow themselves (Paine, 1776).

*Science-based* in the PIC context refers to the paramount importance of research at the initial stage of the campaign process. Initial research is also normatively stressed in other communication fields, for example by public relation’s *Barcelona Principles*<sup>3</sup> (Manning & Rockland, 2011). However, the primary focus in PR research tends to be formative situational and client research and, in practice, little scientifically rigorous research is usually conducted on the message’s effectiveness and impact of the campaign. Part of the problem is that the consequences of not conducting such initial communication research on the results of the campaign strategy tend to be limited to, at worst, ineffectual campaigns. While these are issues in PIC as well, the stakes are considerably higher. Good public interest communications require a strong scientific/research basis to identify the various aspects of an issue, a *specific community of influence on the issue* (similar but different to stakeholders), and tests

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<sup>3</sup> A set of principles to measure efficacy of communication campaigns adopted in 2010 by the International Association for Measurement and Evaluation of Communication.

of the proposed solution to the problems. This is because public interest communications campaigns without a good research base may cause actual harm to groups and individuals in a way not normally the case in marketing, public relations, or advertising. Thus, there is an ethical imperative to conduct the proper research in PIC.

The Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) program illustrated what can happen if this is not observed: At its height, DARE was taught in 75% of the U.S. school districts by police officers (Reaves, 2001), with the avowed aim at reducing drug use of teenagers. Unfortunately, later research showed that students that had participated in the program were more likely to use drugs later than students not exposed to the program (Reaves, 2001; Wagner and Sundar, 2008), thus being actively harmful by lowering self-esteem (Lilienfeld, 2007; Lynam *et al.*, 1999).

The *main goal* in PIC is to *achieve significant and sustained positive behavioural change*. A PIC campaign is to be almost exclusively judged by what social good it actually brought, not by the awareness and attitudinal changes generated. Positive social good is here defined as providing positive benefits for individuals and the society as a whole, such as preventing personal damages, improving health, protecting the environment, promoting civil rights, and fostering the United States Declaration of Independence's principles of *life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness*. Formally, social good should be judged on the basis of the social desirability of how prior behaviour compares to post intervention behaviour if judged on the respective justice provided according to Rawl's thought experiment of an *original position* behind a *veil* of ignorance. There are four main ways this is achieved (Kotler & Lee, 2016) by the target audience: 1) *accepting* a new positive behaviour such as water conservation; 2) *rejecting* a negative behaviour, such as deciding not to smoke; 3) *modifying* a current behaviour, such as drinking less sugary drinks per week; and 4) *abandoning* an existing undesirable behaviour, such as texting and driving.

While awareness of problems and subsequent attitude changes can be important precursors to positive social change, without actual behavioural change, they have little inherent value. For example, the *Occupy Movements* have achieved incredible levels of awareness on an issue and a positive attitude but almost no dis-

cernible improvement on the social issue in question (growing wealth disparity). Indeed, there is often only a quite tenuous link between the common sense perception of attitude change as a prerequisite of behavioural change and its actual impact on behavioural change (Behavioral Dynamics Institute, 2015).

Thus, output objectives are irrelevant while informational objectives (raising awareness) and even attitudinal objectives, often core PR campaign objectives, are of secondary importance in PIC. A PIC campaign should only be considered a success if it significantly improved an aspect of a societal problem and this improvement is sustained over time. It should be noted that secondary goals may be compatible with making a profit for an organisation. A good example for this is TOMS's One-for-Once campaign model<sup>4</sup>, where a for-profit company equally serves the public interest by giving a new pair of shoes to an impoverished child for each of their shoes sold.

PIC lies on a continuum with public relations corporate social responsibility (CSR), but it is different in the primacy of the social issue. In CSR, social issues are considered and influence corporate conduct and campaigns, but, as the term itself makes clear, the corporate interest and business sustainability is nevertheless still the primary concern, while for PIC the social good is the most important goal.

The greatest distinction and litmus test of a public interest campaign versus public relations or marketing campaigns, which may or may not have societally beneficial results, is that PIC *transcends the particular interests of any single organisation*. Many popular campaigns appear at first glance to be in the public interest. However, often the social good is secondary to other motives and may even, if scientifically evaluated, be harmful. On environmental issues, this is termed *greenwashing*, which the Oxford English Dictionary (2016) defines as "disinformation disseminated by an organisation so as to present an environmentally responsible public image." Often, it is hard to distinguish *green-*, *healthy-* and *other-washing* campaigns which nevertheless claim to serve a public interest from genuine public interest campaigns. Examining whether or not a campaign serves a public interest that transcends the particular interests of any single organisation thus allows distinguishing genuine PIC campaigns from those only claiming to be in the public interest.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.toms.com/improving-lives>

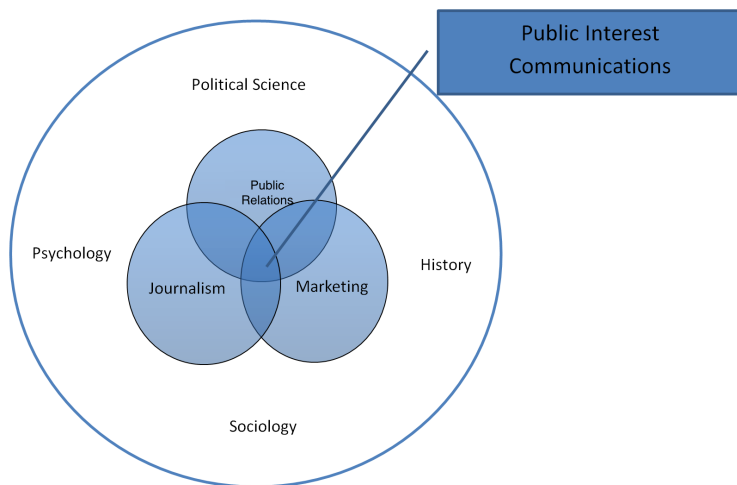
Public interest communications as an emerging academic discipline focuses on an underrepresented target group of students – social activists. There is currently a major gap in the amount of formal communications training between activists on the one side and corporations that engage in societally problematic activism. The so called *Big Industries* (big tobacco, big energy and oil etc.) field highly trained public relations professionals (Oreskes & Conway, 2010), while activists often have limited or no training in communications and lack the strategic communications skills to adequately analyse the communication strategies adopted by the opposition and thus create counter strategies. This is true even of journalists, who have effective communication skills but are often not trained to employ strategy because this runs counter to the journalistic ideal of objectivity. PIC aims at offering students with social activist interests an alternative, more focused route of developing communication professionals than the usually heavily corporate and agency focused public relations program. Thus, it is hoped that PIC will eventually help to *level the playing field* in the public opinion war by addressing this professional imbalance and thus ensure a better functioning *marketplace of ideas*.

## **Public Interest Communications and related Fields**

Overall the new discipline of public interest communications lies at the cross-section of the academic disciplines of public relations, journalism, and marketing. It is further informed by political science, psychology, history, and sociology, as summarized in Figure 2.1.

It is very closely related to social marketing – the use of marketing concepts and techniques to promote social causes and to counter antisocial behaviour and to emphasis achieving social change – rather than on increasing shareholder value (Toledano, 2013). “Social marketing is about (a) influencing behaviors, (b) utilizing a systematic planning process that applies marketing principles and techniques, (c) focusing on priority target audience segments, and (d) delivering a positive benefit for individuals and society” (Kotler & Lee, 2016, p. 8).





**Figure 2.1:** Public interest communications at the cross-section of academic disciplines

Public interest communications can fairly accurately be described as the same approach applied to public relations: using public relations concepts and techniques to promote social causes and to counter antisocial behaviour rather than being oriented towards having an impact on the bottom line of an organisation. In the broader sense, social marketing is also often an integral part of a public interest communication campaign.

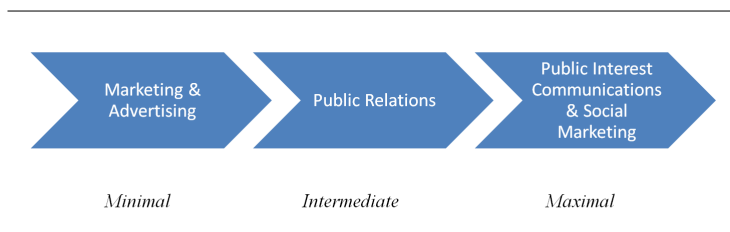
PIC's emergence at this time is linked to a void created by the decline in journalism's ability to perform its traditional (indirect) social advocacy role, and the increased social activism of the millennial generation (Stengel, 2011; TBWA Worldwide, n.d.; Deloitte Millennial Survey, 2016) provides a key impetus to this development. Public interest communications is performing a social role similar to advocacy (normative) journalism on issues that are "central to society's well-being in matters of health, safety, order, morality, economics, and politics" (Peters and Tandoc, 2013, p. 61). In contrast to journalism, however, it does so by using the academic body of knowledge and skill sets of strategic public relations, advertising, and marketing.

Thus, public interest communication resembles the normative role of journalism. In fact, the work done by a public interest communications practitioner may well fulfil the definition of a journalist as “someone employed to regularly engage in gathering, processing, and disseminating (activities) news and information (output) to serve the public interest (social role)” and that “person’s role is to serve the general and public welfare (e.g., reporting on issues and events that are central to society’s wellbeing in matters of health, safety, order, morality, economics, and politics)” (Peters & Tandoc, 2013, p. 61). However, public interest communications performs only one of the two major roles of professional journalists, advocating “for those who are denied powerful spokesmen” (Janowitz, 1975, p. 619) but not serving as a engaged in “the search for objectivity and the sharp separation of reporting fact from disseminating opinion” (Janowitz, 1975, p. 618).

Unfortunately, both the advocate (for those without spokesman) and the roles of journalism are diminishing due to the vanishing of the *mass* aspect of *mass communications* (Chafee & Metzger, 2001), a clear decline in recent years in journalistic staffs and budgets, and a move to a more ideologically based single point of view partisan journalism (Kuypers, 2014). Furthermore, journalism is more and more threatened by *native advertising* and the encroachment of *content marketing*, in which corporate brands compete with news organisations for audience with aggressive storytelling strategies (Meyer, 2014, October 28). Also, technology is dramatically lowering the professionalism required to be a journalist because *new media* provides the capabilities to access sources, to search through information and determine its significance, and to convey it effectively without support of a professional journalistic enterprise (Picard, 2009, May 09). Now that everyone can be a publisher (Knight, 2008), citizen journalists are increasingly emerging and changing traditional journalistic roles. This is one of the reasons why public interest communication is emerging as a new field of study.

The key difference between the journalism and PIC is that the latter is a process in which planned campaigns are developed and implemented to achieve a significant societal change. Journalists usually do not engage in such advocacy campaigns because they would undermine objectivity.

With regard to serving the public interest, marketing, advertising, public relations, public interest communication, and journalism can be placed on a continuum as summarized in Figure 2.2.



**Figure 2.2:** Degree to which various mass communication fields serve the public interest

According to Fessmann (2016), there are eight key differences between public relations and public interest communications. They differ on 1) primary interest, 2) goals, 3) importance of relationships, 4) primary stance, 5) maintenance of the status quo, 5) time-frame of development, 6) minimally acceptable objectives, 7) typical challenges, and 8) legitimacy. However, the key difference between public relations and public interest communications can best be seen in the literal meaning of the two concepts:

*Public relations = about a relationship with the public;*

*Public interest communications = communication on behalf of the public.*

PIC also is different from corporate social responsibility (CSR), which is grounded in business as a *wealth generator* and not as a social actor (Piedade & Thomas, 2006). In contrast, public interest communication serve as both social actors and advocates for the public interest in which the public good always comes first and the interest served transcends the interest of any single organisation. It is more akin to, and may in part consist of, philanthropy. Public interest communications serves the public good by trying to correct problems that have a negative impact on a community as a whole.

Also related but somewhat different is *Communication for Social Change* (CFSC). CFSC focuses on the potential that mass communication has to lift up less developed countries and societies than the United States. The most prominent recent expression of this is the 1,067 pages long *Communication for Social Change Anthology: Historical and Contemporary Readings* (Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte, 2006) in which “the writing of the more than 150 authors form this book’s collage of ideas” (Loc. 629-630).

According to Vida Yeboah, “change happens in many ways, but sustained social change relies upon people to endure: the power of people to advocate for the change that will benefit them, the power of people to negotiate through their differences, and the power of people to come together, to form social movements, in order to demand their rights. Communication for Social Change is a way of developing and strengthening people’s confidence and skills to tell their own stories, explain their needs, and advocate for the kind of change they want” (Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte, 2006, Loc. 533-537).

CFSC focuses on modernization and trying to overcome dependencies and does so by facilitating dialogue: “Communication for social change is a way of thinking and practice that puts people in control of the means and content of communication processes. Based on dialogue and collective action, CFSC is a process of public and private dialogue through which people determine who they are, what they need, and what they want in order to improve their lives. It has at its heart the assumption that affected people understand their realities better than any ‘experts’ from outside their society, and that they can become the drivers of their own change. (...) the process is key: it highlights the critical two-way nature of communication during which people and communities come together in dialogue, listening and responding. The products, or dissemination of messages, are merely by-products of the communication process” (Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte, 2006, Loc. 800-811).

While CFSC is highly valuable for fostering development and social change in less developed countries, the approach has limited application in highly developed countries, particularly the United States and Europe. It has to be noted that CFSC (especially from an American PR perspective) does not reflect well the significant strides in sophistication the PR field has made in the last 25 years or more.

In contrast, public interest communications is emerging now as a distinct field in part because of the maturity reached by public relations as an academic discipline which provides a powerful tool set. However, PIC goes even a step further and starts to develop unique techniques of its own, which will complement previous PR techniques. While strategic public relations thus has been used successfully in social change campaigns in the past, the specialized PIC know-how will further improve the effectiveness of strategic communication campaigns. Thus, the emerging field of public interest communications promises to have a significant impact on the success rate of future social change campaigns and social movements.

### **What evidence is there that public interest communications is emerging as a new academic discipline?**

The term academic discipline generally refers to a subject taught at university that is further improved upon through continuous academic research. According to Armin Krishnan (2009), there are six characteristics of disciplines, though not all of these characteristics have to be present to for a field of study to qualify as a discipline. However, “the more of these boxes a discipline can tick, the more likely it becomes that a certain field of academic enquiry is a recognised discipline capable of reproducing itself and building upon a growing body of own scholarship” (Krishnan, 2009, p. 10).

These six characteristics of disciplines are: “1) disciplines have a particular object of research (e.g. law, society, politics), though the object of research maybe shared with another discipline; 2) disciplines have a body of accumulated specialist knowledge referring to their object of research, which is specific to them and not generally shared with another discipline; 3) disciplines have theories and concepts that can organize the accumulated specialist knowledge effectively; 4) disciplines use specific terminologies or a specific technical language adjusted to their research object; 5) disciplines have developed specific research methods according to their specific research requirements; and maybe most crucially 6) disciplines must have some institutional manifestation in the form of subjects taught at universities or colleges, respective academic departments and professional associations connected to it” (Krishnan, 2009, p. 9).

Krishnan also points out that “a new discipline is ... founded by the way of creating a professorial chair devoted to it at an established university” (Krishnan, 2009, p. 10). Thus, the emergence of public interest communications as an academic discipline can be traced to the creation of the *Frank and Betsy Karel Endowed Chair in Public Interest Communications* at the University of Florida (Wright & Hon, 2008) and the creation of the first curriculum in form of the PUR 4932: Public Interest Communications course at the University of Florida’s College of Journalism and Communications by the first Endowed Chair Ann Christiano. Furthermore, an online master’s program curriculum in public interest communications is planned for the Fall of 2016 (A. Christiano, personal communication, February 1, 2016). Thus, the sixth and most important criterion for a regarding PIC as a new discipline has been met. Also, number one above (a particular object of research) is met: PIC has as its object of research the question of how communication can best be employed to achieve social change.

Number two above (body of accumulated specialist knowledge) is also met: Since 2013, a \$10,000 research prize<sup>5</sup> in public interest communications research has annually been awarded. Furthermore, there is a growing body of specialised academic PIC knowledge such as Christiano’s TEDxUF talk (2015, April 22) *Accelerant on the fire of change*<sup>6</sup>; Jasper Fessmann’s *frank* talk (2016, February 27) *Sword & Shield: Public Interest Communication & Public Relations*<sup>7</sup> (also presented at the PRSA Educators Conference 2015); and Fessmann & Christiano’s (2015) presentation at the European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA) OSC 2015 Conference<sup>8</sup>. This research also includes specific terminologies such as *communities of influence* and *trigger events* – thus the discipline criterion in number four above (specific terminologies) is also fulfilled.

Number three (theories and concepts) and number five (specific research methods) are not yet fully met, but there is evidence of development here: In February 2016, a one-day academic conference called *frank (scholar, 2016)* was held in Gainesville, Florida that brought together 30 top researchers from various academic dis-

<sup>5</sup> [frank.jou.ufl.edu/prize/](http://frank.jou.ufl.edu/prize/)

<sup>6</sup> <http://tedxtalks.ted.com/video/Accelerant-on-the-Fire-of-Chang;TEDxUF>

<sup>7</sup> <https://vimeo.com/156869078>

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AlWz\\_ua8U2s&list=PL9WgOhC8bmPAuTJNB8gCgrjDOUzS9MDMu](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AlWz_ua8U2s&list=PL9WgOhC8bmPAuTJNB8gCgrjDOUzS9MDMu)

ciplines to collaboratively cultivate research that ignites lasting behavioural, institutional, and social change. As noted on the webpage<sup>9</sup>, “frank (scholar, 2016) represents a step toward establishing the robust practice area of public interest communications as a unique academic discipline and building the connection between research and practice.” The establishment of a *Journal of Public Interest Communications* is planned for 2017.

While the academic PIC community this is growing, the perhaps strongest reason to regard public interest communications as a new social phenomenon is the sheer number of self-identified PIC professionals. Since 2014, the *frank gathering*<sup>10</sup> for “movement builders and change makers who use strategic communications to drive positive social, institutional, and behavioural change” (What is frank?, n.d., par.1) has brought together “more than 300 participants and 45 speakers (...) from all over the country, and other parts of the world, including Switzerland, Mexico, and Alaska” (Flannery, 2015, par. 3-4) who identify themselves with public interest communications. The *frank talks*<sup>11</sup> presentations are live streamed and video recorded similar to TED talks. In 2016, the *frank gathering* was extended to include *Changeville*, a “music, film, virtual reality, storytelling, and comedy festival [which] is the intersection where passionate filmmakers, digital media innovators, and musicians cross paths with professionals who build movements and drive positive social change (Changeville: Gainesville’s Social Change Festival, n.d.).”

The PIC *frank* brand also includes *frankology*<sup>12</sup>, short summaries of recent peer-reviewed research from multiple disciplines optimized for understanding of practitioners. It further includes *frank finds*.<sup>13</sup> a collection of headlines and links to PIC relevant content from the internet; *frank talk*, -blogs focused on practice; and *7 Minutes in Heaven with a Scientist*, a series of podcast interviews with leading social change researchers.

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<sup>9</sup> [frank.jou.ufl.edu/scholar/](http://frank.jou.ufl.edu/scholar/)

<sup>10</sup> <http://frank.jou.ufl.edu/>

<sup>11</sup> <http://frank.jou.ufl.edu/frank2016/frank2016-recap/>

<sup>12</sup> <http://frank.jou.ufl.edu/frankology-main/>

<sup>13</sup> <http://frank.jou.ufl.edu/finds/>

## Why public interest communications is emerging now?

There are also at least three major structural reasons why public interest communications is currently emerging:

1) Public relations has achieved the necessary maturity and theoretical sophistication to spawn the new field. While the PR skill set and theory is still the core of the field, the development of a specialized PIC skill set and theory is now both possible and desirable.

2) There has been a sharp decline in formal journalistic positions at news outlets over the last 20 years, which may indicate a decline in the ability of journalism to fulfil its traditional watchdog and indirect public advocacy function. This has created a vacuum which PIC is well positioned to fill. This has led a significant number of former journalists to become public interest communicators, influencers, and activists themselves.

3) *Millennials* have become a dominant generational student group. Various books and research studies (Stengel, 2011; TBWA Worldwide, n.d.; Deloitte Millennial Survey, 2016) have shown that these students value social engagement more than most previous generations. Millennials are also more media sophisticated (especially with regard to social media) and more readily recognize the importance of strategic communications to advance social causes. For a certain number of these students, the corporate focus assumption of public relations makes the field less than appealing. Thus, some are looking for the activism-oriented communication training PIC can provide, instead of simply going into other fields of study.

## Conclusion

This chapter argues that public interest communications fulfils the necessary criteria to be seen as a new academic discipline, particularly the creation of an endowed chair at a major university, a curriculum, and the development of specialized academic knowledge. This field is also driven by the 300+ self-identified public interest communicators that participated in the annual *frank gathering* (2014+). There the definition of public interest communications presented here for the first time in an academic publication was unanimously adopted: Public interest communication is the de-



velopment and implementation of science based, planned strategic communication campaigns with the main goal of achieving significant and sustained positive behavioural change on a public interest issue that transcends the particular interests of any single organisation.

The chapter also traces the history of communications that lead to the development of public interest communications and examines how PIC is different from journalism, public relations, and Communication for Social Change. Furthermore, it shows that there are several key reasons why PIC is emerging now, including a demographic shift and the vacuum created by the decline of journalism to fulfil its traditional social advocacy role.

This chapter lays the groundwork for future PIC study by defining the field and describes broadly what PIC differentiates from other communications fields. Further research should examine these differences in detail. Fessmann (2016) has begun this with public relations. The connections to social movement theory in sociology and political science also will be need to be examined and a model / further theory need to be developed. Also, a series of in-depth interviews of key members of the self-identified public interest communications community should provide more qualitative data to judge the emergence of the discipline and provide further insights.

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## Chapter 3

# From the inside out: Four communication flows of NGOs' and Churches' legitimization

Markus Wiesenbergs and Evandro Oliveira

## Introduction

Organisations and their actions are constantly judged by the society. Not only individuals evaluate them, but also groups, and other collective actors (see Bitektine, 2011). Governmental legitimacy in democratic societies is warranted to governments through elections, making sure that they are chosen to represent the public interest. However, in cases of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Churches – organisations that especially act in the public interest – how are those organisations legitimated? We argue that the communication in the public sphere is creating a number of speech acts and talking situations that contributes to the legitimization and that the existence of these communication subscribes legitimacy to those organisations in a performative sense. More indisputable than in private companies and other organisational forms, NGOs and Churches subscribe *per se* legitimacy through communication from the inside out. Furthermore, the ontology of these kind of organisations is based on communication and the constitution of those social forms is only possible through communication – what is especially true for religion in general. In that sense, we propose in this article a model that illustrates the systematization of the communication flows that contribute to legitimization and to the constitution and creation of those organisations in an ongoing sense making process across time and space. The model is based on an understanding of collective intentions and action as stated by Searle

(1990) and Olson (2003) and offers a frame for empirical research of legitimization flows. Condensed, the conceptual paper aims to identify how NGOs and churches acquire and defend legitimacy through communication, and emphasize the particular role nuclear ambassadors play within the legitimization flows.

## Post-modernity and Organisations

In a post-modern time, organisations and their action are in constant evaluation and normative observation from the society (Bitektine, 2011) and even more in the rapidly changed 'public sphere' (Bentele & Nothhaft, 2010). The legitimacy is assured to the organisation by the society and is their primary "license to operate". Acquiring, defending and, in case of loss, restoring legitimacy is the main task of public relations and communication management (van Ruler & Vercic, 2005; Brønn *et al.*, 2009).

Other immaterial concepts like reputation and trust are being used to measure the bond between a society and an organisation, and, indirectly, their legitimization. With the dissolved power context of post-modernity (see Castells, 1999; Pérez, 2001) direct and indirect speech acts are also happening in a type of communication events that cannot be controlled, managed or framed by the management or other power institutions. Therefore, the organisation is constituted and operates not only on the efforts of persuasive communication performed in a managed frame or even in framed settings, but also at the same time as a communication agent that is performing a symbolic action – communication – as a part of this organisation.

If we consider the organisations that strive to be operating in the name of the common good and defending the public interest, we can find other primary legitimacy dimensions. For example, in democratic systems, elections are a form of legitimization given from the citizens to the government. Alternatively, the external appointed supervisory council and other similar structures are forms to control or to protect the public interest in public organisations. In their particular condition as citizens, the public, even if it doesn't have a direct control on Non-Governmental Organisations and Churches, are the main source of legitimacy and we can say that those organisations are constantly capturing legitimacy throughout communication.



## Legitimacy and Legitimation

Legitimacy is an essential addition to legality in social life for both individuals as well as corporate actors. Legitimacy allows all actors in society to not constantly question the institutions. Institutions are understood here as “formal rules and taken-for-granted cultural frameworks, cognitive schema, and routinized processes of reproduction” (Campbell, 2004, p. 11). Legitimacy as a process (as legitimizing) provides “explanation” and “justification” of the surrounding and strong institutions (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 93). Legitimacy can be seen as a cognitive process of understanding (describing the meaning of objects, actors and activities) or as a form of normative reduction (which acts are considered reasonable or correct) (ibid.). Based on these assumptions, Suchman (1995, p. 574) defined legitimacy as “a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions”. Hence, legitimacy should not be understood as reputation, image, confidence, status, or other attributions and perceptions (cf. Bitektine 2011; Sandhu 2009). It is rather understood as the basis of any stable society. Even though legitimacy and reputation are multidimensional constructs, legitimacy is based on grouping (acceptable/not acceptable) and reputation focuses on “what is different” (Bitektine, 2011, p. 160). Legitimacy is cultural and time-bounded and therefore always embedded in a social context. Institutions can always only be determined in terms of social reference groups. Thus, individuals cannot subscribe legitimacy, but rather certain social groups with collective value systems (Bitektine, 2011; Sandhu 2012, p. 166; Sandhu, 2009). Therefore, the disclosure of institutionalized expectations requires legitimation by social groups with collective value systems (see Berger & Luckmann, 1966) acting through communication, including the interpersonal communication in a form of indirect speech acts. That plays a central role not only for individuals, but also for corporate actors (see Suchman, 1995).

Santos (2004, p. 14) stresses the importance of NGOs for the defence of public interest. These NGOs are an integral part of modern society and serve as a form of collective expression of the people. That is why the legitimacy of these organisations both for the meta-institutions as well as for each individual in his or her privacy plays an important role. Thus, NGOs and Churches have to rely on the legitimacy of their internal and external environment in order to transport this switching-performance credible over the meta-institutions.

## Defining NGOs and Churches

NGOs and Churches are part of the group of non-profit organisations (NPOs), also referred to as “third sector” (see Priller & Zimmer, 2001). Not all organisations of this group pursue profit as the main goal or logic. However, this category includes also associations and foundations that are not *per se* of public interest and defending not the common good above all. These associations attempt primarily to defend the interests of its members and receives predominantly legitimacy awarded by this collective condition. However, the commitment does not extend beyond the interests of their own members. In contrast, Churches and NGOs have higher goals than just representing the common goals of their members. This is what distinguishes the latter types of organisation from NPOs in general.

Heins (2002, p. 46) defined NGOs as “formalized, stable long-term groups of persons who work in the public space, but without an official mandate [...] for the interests of non-members, whose lives length structurally from the life time of those organisations” [own translation]. In this paper, we focus on professionalized NGOs that have a minimum structure to have a communicative impact in the public sphere, even if we could consider the adaptation of the proposed work to small organisations with a very local setting, we consider here regional, national and international individual membership NGOs.

The definition of Churches is much more complex. Taking into account the typological distinction of Weber (1991) and Troeltsch (1994), churches can first be understood as religious organisations that accept their social environment in which they exist, therefore being not like sects that do not (Johnson, 1963). Following Luhmann (2000), he defines religion in his latest work as subsystem

within modern society with the binary code of immanence/transcendence “that ensures the autopoietic reproduction of religion as an autonomous subsystem within a functionally differentiated societal environment” (Laermans & Verschraegen, 2001, p. 16). In the context of civil society, churches have an intermediate, mediating function (Berger & Luckmann, 1995) and play a significant role for the welfare state as well as to deal with the crisis of modern societies (ibid.).

The definitions of Churches and NGOs stated above are still very vague. Churches are recognized often on the local (nuclear) level, but also on the national level as institutions in most of the European countries. However, in many European countries Churches are challenged due to processes of deinstitutionalization (e.g. Pollack, Müller, & Pickel, 2012). Nevertheless, Churches are based on their nuclear level as far as their baptized members are part of the church congregation/parish. The congregations/parishes are predominantly connected in a network with the same doctrine that can be described as denomination or national church. NGOs and their members are also foremost organized in local or often regional groups that are connected with the national or international level. Most of the managerial work needs to be done on the upper levels. However, both types of organisations need their members as “nuclear ambassadors” and not only as “paid members” (see for different members and their motivation Olson, 2003). In contrast to normal “followers” or (baptized) members, these nuclear ambassadors are involved in the Church or NGO and represent their organisation in their private as well as public sphere.

Both Churches and NGOs matter particularly in modern democratic societies. In particular, Putnam (2001; see also 1993) emphasizes the importance of such groups and organisations for the social cohesion of a society. He calls this form of trust in between societies “*social capital*”. In contrast to NGOs that build social capital, Churches and other religious organisations and groups create religious social capital, which is in countries like the United States much more prevalent than in others (see Welzel, Inglehart, & Deutsch, 2005).

## Organisational and Strategic Communication

A major strand of organisational theories considered in particular the context in which organisations are embedded. Since the 1950s, the action of the organisation on the environment is perceived as “strategic” (Hatch, 1997). While classical theories aspired to look at the efficiency of an organisation “in a box”, and without taking into account the environment (Fayol 1949; Taylor, 1947; Weber, 1968), Selznick (1949) developed the situational approach that has been further developed by Burns and Stalker (1961) Woodward (1965) as well as Lawrence and Lorsch (1967). This so-called “Situative Approach” shifted the emphasis to the organisational environment in which the organisation is embedded, by pointing out that there are hardly universal guidelines for organisations that would be suitable for all situations. Based on this, Hellriegel and Slocum (1973; 1978) refer that a distinctive environment of an organisation requires different settings to display a maximum effectiveness, taking into account the different social, legal, political, technical and economic factors. Subsequently the sociological neo-institutionalism emphasizes the influence of the environment on the organisation and its education and continual existence of institutions (the focus is no longer on the efficiency of the organisation, but on the legitimacy). Only at a later stage, the representatives of the institutional work could show that organisations are quite capable of deliberately manipulating the institutions and thus to determinate their own strategic agenda (see Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006).

When we look at NGOs and Churches, it becomes clear that a democratic context is needed, in which NGOs and Churches are allowed, as well as democratic participation. With the optional nature of participation and the voluntary commitment of its members, both Churches and NGOs have a support that allows them to make a contribution to society by means of strategic communication, which can have an impact on the meta-institutions of a country. For example, when churches are used for religious tolerance and for minorities, or NGOs put significant concerns on the political agenda in a country or internationally. Accordingly, the strategic communication of NGOs and Churches has two dimensions: the socio-cultural and political environment in which they communicate with the public, and the internal organisational context on the *meso level*, particularly within the nuclear context of the local level.

To consider both the members dimension as well as the overall objective dimension Holtzhausen and Zerfass (2013) define strategic communication as “the practice of deliberate and purposive communication a Communication Agent enacts in the public sphere on behalf of a communicative entity to reach set goals” (p. 74). The integration of a sociological dimension as a way of bridging between the tradition of strategic and organisational communication and public relations (PR) and the tradition of marketing and management approaches must be understood. Despite this extension, this definition only refers to a functionalist dimension of communication and emphasizes the public rather an external communications approach.

Thus, we argue that the studies and practices of strategic communication are embedded in a socio-cultural context, which leads to a permanent co-creation of NGOs and Churches. Only a post-modern environment in which the organisations are created constantly, gives rise to a strategic communications that is determined by the *modus operandi* required for mission performance and therefore their members slipstreams by internal communications. In turn, that arises only through the involvement of members in the strategic communication of NGOs and church as well as their communicative action – what is called nuclear ambassadors. Accordingly, *effective action is always limited* and therefore also the management function *per se*.

To this extent, the communication with and by the members have both an internal and an external dynamic of strategic communications of NGOs and Churches. Unpaid members in addition to the core staff are *ambassadors and multipliers in their environments* and legitimize the organisation constantly through their communicative actions. According to McPhee and Zaug (2000) the membership communication is one of four key communication flows in the broader sense. The organisation can ever arise and be constituted through this flow. The organisations are in an ongoing negotiation of membership and thus in constant communicative boundaries between inclusion and exclusion (see Schoeneborn & Wehmeier 2014, p. 416).

Pérez (2001, p. 462) speaks in the context of the game theory that communication must contribute to maximizing results and tackle “Issues”. In this context, we recall Michel de Certeau’s notion of strategies and tactics. While strategies is the approach of those in power (corporate and sovereign), smaller organisations such as NGOs

or Churches and their uncontrollable nuclear ambassadors as well as the other unpaid members can poach it and thus beat the strategies a tactical “trick” – which in this context, the strategic change (manipulation) of institutions can mean (cf. Certeau, 1984). Similarly, Giddens (1984) describes reflexive actors that are equipped with a control knowledge (knowledgeability) and capacity for action (capability) and, thus, be able to influence.

## Communication Management

Scholars in public relations have emphasized the managerial approach in public relations (see for the broader debate Dühring, 2015). It was especially James Grunig who set new standards with the managerial approach in public relations with his two-way symmetrical model of public relations (Grunig, 2006). His model focuses on high, quality, long-term relationships with publics. That is what he calls strategic public relations or communication management. Expanding the approach of Grunig, Zerfass (2008) emphasized a conceptual division of communication into public relations, market communication and internal communication in his theory of corporate communication. Adapting the management and marketing division with a stakeholder's perspective, he considers that legitimization is only to be found on the public relations division (Zerfass, 2014, p. 44), and as the ideal, he assumes that the communication is oriented towards the corporate goals (p. 43). On the other side, Christensen, Morsing and Cheney (2008, pp. 15-16) underlines that for more than 100 years the driving force behind corporate communications has been the social legitimacy and points out the question of the corporate soul and the acceptance of the corporation as member of the larger community. They also refer to the expanded communication as being all other organisational dimensions (p. 19) as well as mention the concept of auto-communication that involve a circular dimension (p. 75). Recalling the body metaphor, we like to highlight that the discourse of corporate communications presumes that the body is capable of self-examination (Christensen & Cheney, 2005). This metaphor includes the imperative of a holistic communication management. Hence, it would include a broader perspective over legitimization and the need to understand and identify communication flows that influence the legitimacy and the legitimization process of those organisations in order

to be inclusive and fostering these processes, instead of trying to adapt a pure new bottom up one. That would only not allow the enabling of the communication or even can be a blocker of them. Especially when the organisational form rises from a public interest, it is neither a management option nor a normative approach or even an organisation cultural variable to have the holistic approach, but rather an ontological must, driven from the democratic legitimacy need as the sociological principle in with those organisations were “talked into existence” included always a public interest perspective and a democratic structure of decision and participation. If the right of members’ participation would be left aside, the organisation is not taking its full sociological definition.

## Conceptual Model

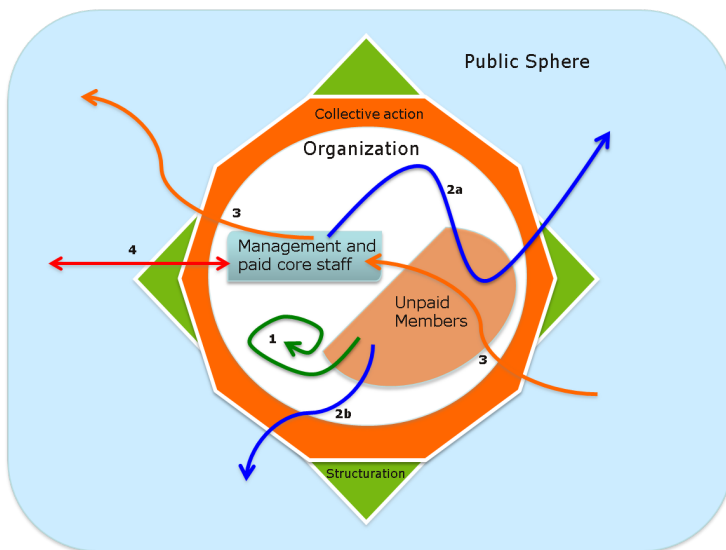
In this paper, we consider that legitimation is not only subscribed from the outside and obtained through a management effort for public mass media discourse, but it is happening predominantly from the inside out. Meaning that communication actors participating in the public sphere on communication are the ones that have the legitimacy to obtain legitimation from the public sphere. Those are in their condition as citizens and individuals, the only possible source of primary legitimation of those collective representative entities that pursue the defence of the common interest. Without those legitimation flows, organisational forms like NGOs and Churches cannot exist. They would assume other organisational forms, but lose their constitutive ontological premise and with it the basic legitimacy to exist, operate and to search for legitimation within the society and in the public sphere. To be clear on this: That follows especially from the definition of Churches and NGOs as stated above.

The communication with and by the members have both an internal and an external dynamic of strategic communication. Active members, including employees, are nuclear ambassadors and multipliers in their environments and legitimize the Church or the NGO constantly through their communicative acts. On the other side, according to McPhee and Zaug (2000) membership negotiation is one of the four main streams of communication whereby the organisation can ever be constituted, or “talked into existence” as Weick (1995) pointed out.

Following the theoretical discussions and the indicated line of arguments, the dynamics of legitimacy of NGOs and Churches are illustrated and described in a model. This legitimacy is a collective attributed (reference points), which can be described within two sociological concepts: on the one hand, the “structuration” of Giddens (1984) and, on the other, the collective action theory from Searle (1990; further described by Jensen, 2013). Looking at the status and deontic powers of collectives from the perspective of social reality, collective motives and actions have to be assumed, also contemplating the direct and indirect speech acts. This means that a wide variety of social actors are connected to each other throughout time, space and institutions. This results in four derived legitimacy flows.

Communication from members legitimize the organisation (1) because, after all, types of organisations such as Churches or NGOs cannot exist without their members’ legitimacy. However, this can also occur as the members act as ‘reflexive actors’ communicating in the public sphere (Giddens, 1984) to fulfil strategic objectives of its organisation. This enabled communication processes set in motion (see Holtzhausen & Zerfass 2013, p. 74) is also a form for members to acquire legitimacy to the organisation through the communicative process of legitimation (2a). In addition, they can initiate communication processes by themselves, in the interests of the management or against it and thus acquire legitimacy (2b). Both actions can contribute to the legitimacy of the organisation, but also damage them. For example, when critical movements as a church group comments on specific issues in the public, that may contribute to legitimation or they can damage it. Finally, members also bring “issues” to the organisation (3) and give the management or other members the chance to acquire legitimacy through the communicative addressing of these “issues” (4). These dynamics are illustrated in Figure 3.1 and will be explained in-depth in the following paragraph.





**Figure 3.1:** Four communication flows of NGOs' and Churches' legitimation

### 1st Flow – Internal legitimation

As mentioned before, internal legitimacy possesses an essential dimension. McPhee and Zaug (2000) highlight the importance of members for the constitution of the organisation as one of the four-flows. The internal legitimacy of the organisation is also the central theme of Kostova's and Zaheer's (1999) as well as Kostova's and Roth's (2002) work. For organisations that represent the public interest, the internal legitimacy (Bitektine, 2011) plays a significant role. Although Churches and Church leaders invoke a divine charisma, this alone is no longer enough to represent a membership organisation in the public interest. This not only leads to a self-legitimation but also to activation or reactivation of members.

## **2nd Flow – variation a – From the inside out (campaigns)**

Reflexive actors are engaged as members of the public to bring strategic objectives of its organisation by enabling communication processes or communicating in the public sphere, in order for members to acquire legitimacy for the organisation (2a). This is often the case in campaigns, in which the members are involved to act on behalf of the organisation. One key driver is here the identification of members with their organisation and management.

## **2nd Flow – Variation b - From the inside out (momentum)**

In addition, voluntary members can initiate communication processes in the organisation environment by themselves in the interests of the management – or against it – acquiring legitimacy (2b). In particular, the organisation's identity plays a very important role and therefore it is the task of ongoing identity search not to let this momentum out of hand. Members should therefore not be simply considered as significant stakeholders, but as Faith-holders' and won strategically so involved in the communication and not to Hate-holders' (cf. Luoma-aho, 2015; 2010).

## **3rd Flow – From the outside, inside out**

Finally, members also bring "Issues" to the organisation's attention (3). The members are as citizens in different socio-cultural contexts communicatively active and therefore have a keen sense for their environment. Through that communication flow, it can be perceived issues in settings that are often imperceptible to the corporate actor as a whole or on the management analysis tools. The members thus function as strategic ears of the organisation and can carry these moods for organisation management, allowing adaptation or even integrating through indirect or direct speech acts into the organisation. For this purpose, however, it needs a sympathetic ear of the management of communication that recognizes and promotes this dimension and flow. In addition, crisis can be detected and prevented earlier if issues are addressed accordingly.

When an “issue” addressed by a member, legitimation both internally and externally can be acquired. The members feel that something changed when the organisation communicates. Christensen (1997) describes this process with Lotman’s model of auto-communication (1990). Since NGOs and churches are not only organized nationally or regionally but are often at the local level with the base in contact, it represents also a flow of communication through the employees and levels of the organisation (see Morsing, 2006).

#### **4th Flow – External legitimation**

The fourth flow describes the dynamics of organisational legitimation as it has already been described in detail before (see Sandhu, 2009). The organisation is confronted with expectations from their environment that either is met or the organisation can change and adapt. However, it needs at least the legitimacy as “license to operate” to finally secure its survival.

#### **Summary**

With this model, we have tried to outline the legitimacy flows in NGOs and Churches. From a management perspective, these dynamics can be perceived and processed, even if some (1/2b) cannot be controlled. With it, we drive the focus into the performative dimension of communication on itself, recalling that talk is an action and reflexively participates in the constitution of the organisations and hence reality (Robichaud & Coreen, 2013). If management does not consider these dynamics in strategic communication and communication management, organisations like NGOs and Churches may lose legitimacy, like heavenly experienced in recent years. However, an exception is made if the organisations acquired through campaigns, events, advertising, etc. members as means to an end (for example, only as a donor). In these cases, the role of the member is limited in the communication processes. It is something else when members support a public action or initiate it by them. When that happens, they are actors who are active on behalf of the organisation, part of strategic communication and contribute to the legitimacy of the organisation from the inside out.

## Conclusion and Outlook

This article started with describing some principles of post-modernity and organisations. It emphasized the importance of legitimacy and legitimation for NGOs and Churches, in particular the ontological conditions of this kind of organisations and the specific importance the members have. By referring to the specific conditions and the legitimation flows, it was emphasized that managerial approaches cannot easily be transferred to NGOs and Churches. Building on theoretical approaches that emphasize the importance of legitimacy for strategic communication and communication management, the different lines of thought have been combined within a model that demonstrates the main communication flows of NGOs' and Churches' legitimation that are partly manageable and partly not: *internal legitimation, from the inside out, from the outside – inside out, external legitimation*.

The described legitimation flows constitute an extension of the known and customary legitimacy flow. While legitimacy is often considered a responsibility of the communications department, there are more flows which have not been taken into account to the extent. When Zeffass and Franke (2013) speak of an internal PR consultancy, then this can be understood in the sense of legitimation flows. Not only members of NGOs and Churches, but also employees play a vital role in communication, both internally and externally. Thus, they are also significant multipliers to members.

The legitimation flows provide a theoretical basis for the research communication in NGOs and Churches with and by members. In a next step, the model including the here outlined flows needs to be operationalized to further explore means of case studies. Looking on the latest developments on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), companies increasingly understand their societal role – movements like the “Global Compact” are promising precursors (Jensen, 2013). However, it seems a long way for profit-organisations to serve the society like social businesses. It is not the predominantly goal of companies to serve the societal good. However, the model developed above may incorporate important insights for balanced companies (Jensen, 2013) that search both their own as well as their societal benefits. If company members recognize that their company not only serves their shareholders or owners interest, but

also the societal, than they may also become nuclear ambassadors of their company not only on the job but also beside the job. However, that indicates that CSR is not only a lip service, but also realized business culture. In addition, such a business culture can also create social capital in modern societies.

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## Chapter 4

# Strategic communication for public health: A research-action empowerment program

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## Introduction

It is the aim of this paper to describe and discuss a training and consultancy program, the Communication for Public Health: from Theory to Practice Program (CPH), its framework and scope. The program is embedded in the HealthyCom Project and was designed to reach the major public health professionals in the north of Portugal, working in regional and local public health services. In their activity they interact, internally, with different other services and, externally, with the population, but also with health partners and community representatives, as diverse as schools, city councils, social security structures, security forces, NGOs, business companies, parishes, trading and professional associations, etc, as well as with the media. These public health professionals are mainly doctors, nurses and environmental health technicians and they are the specific targets of this tailor made designed training program, based on a research-action hands-on approach. The program syllabus included the condensed study of Communication Theory and its connection with Public Health, namely the concepts, evolution and state of the art on Health Communication, Organisational Communication and Social Communication. Additionally Strategic Communication operational concepts such as Communication Plans and the key factors for their implementation were studied. Applied Communication sessions were also designed, where public health professionals worked together in random teams to solve communication problems emerging from their own everyday reality.

In order to promote a more complete understanding to this hands-on approach research-action on Strategic Health Communication, we will develop a literature review in the following pages, present the training and follow up program, as well as its implementation timeline. As this is a work in progress project we will focus on the already implemented and evaluated two phases: throughout 2013-2014, a training program and follow up actions were implemented; and currently (2015-onward) the program is active with further specific training and consultancy actions. Currently the team is designing a more sustainable and impactful intervention scheme, aiming, on one hand, to contribute to produce supporting data for better public policies and, on the other hand, to provide inspiration to stimulate further academic studies for better public health and social development. We will share the results of the first actions implemented, along with the main ideas for the next intervention steps currently in discussion and preparation.

## The Communication for Public Health: from Theory to Practice Program

The analysis of Strategic Communication in Public Health and its empowering role to public health professionals are at the core of this paper. In recent years we have been studying in an exploratory manner the on going interaction of this sector with society at large and with local communities in particular. Within this context, we address a communicative engagement as an alternative approach to promote value creation, aiming at public welfare and societal development, thus fitting both the notions of non-profit communication (Andreasen & Kotler (2008); Salamon & Anheier, 1997) and communication for social change (Greenfield, 2016; Lane, 2016; Thomas, 2014; Wilkins *et al.*, 2014).

Bounded by this mind frame we will present and discuss a Training and Consultancy Program – “Communication for Public Health: from theory to practice” embedded in a broader on going research-action project – “HealthyCom – Strategic Health Communication for Development and Social Change Project”. To provide a comprehensive understanding of the subject we will also describe its vision and its scope.

## The HealthyCom Project

HealthyCom is a pilot research-action project meant to be implemented in the Northern region of Portugal, through a partnership between the Public Health Department of the North Regional Health Administration (Administração Regional de Saúde do Norte – ARSN), a service from the Portuguese Ministry of Health, and the University of Minho (UMinho), specifically through the Communication Sciences Department of the Social Sciences Institute (ICS) and the Communication and Society Research Centre (CECS), concerning the use of strategic communication for better public health.

The relevance of the project is grounded on several structuring axes, which shaped both the project's configuration and its conceptual nature, namely:

- a) The increasing valorisation of communication in Health – identified as an essential operation for Public Health by national and international policies, namely by the European World Health Organisation (WHO, 2013);
- b) The growing use of strategic communication techniques - as effective performance tools and as socially inclusive skills in non-profit areas, outside the traditional business and management field, where they were commonly used as normative or power legitimization mechanisms;
- c) The development of health communication as a specific field of scientific knowledge and research – grounded both on a theoretical and academic evolution as well as on best practices (Kreps *et al.*, 1998), frequently related to community empowerment and intervention in the health communication process;
- d) The paradigm shift of the concept of Health – from a stage when it was conceived according to a set of criteria that defined human condition to a broader notion, assuming its contribution and relevance to common wellbeing and development, thus configuring a society's objective and an individual expectation as well;
- e) The understanding of Public Health as a sector of knowledge and intervention – focused on disease prevention, life extension and health promotion through medical and communication efforts;

- f) And the commonly accepted double assumption that better communication fosters appropriate conditions for social change to occur and a higher level of wellbeing to be achieved – having into consideration, particularly, behavioural communication strategies, as suggested both by social marketing theory, since the 1950s, and contemporary international best practices.

## **Theoretical background**

The HealthyCom Project was inspired by a challenge proposed by the Public Health Department of ARSN - Administração Regional de Saúde do Norte (the public administration institution in the northern region of Portugal) to the Communication Sciences Department of the University of Minho (Braga, Portugal), as the public health department top executives were being increasingly convinced of the role of communication in the effectiveness of their public health programs, following international trends and best practices (WHO, 2012; WHO, 2013). Accepting this challenge as an opportunity to expand knowledge and to reach society with the output of academic work, the HealthyCom project's team decided to explore the following question: how can strategic communication contribute for social impact in public health?

The central idea was to understand to what extent strategic communication could provide added value to public health interventions, enhancing the populations' wellbeing and the life quality of societies. Public Health is the medical field concerned with preventing disease, prolonging life and promoting health through the organized efforts of society (Acheson, 1988; Kickbusch, 1989). And communication can be a strategic tool to promote social change and communities' health development. Inherent to this rationale are proved assumptions that communication can raise social awareness on the importance of public health, prepare health actors to promotional or risk interventions and also that communication has a significant role on the efforts to empower citizens to act. However, this demands a critical approach to current communication uses in the social sphere.

Strategic communication refers to the development and delivery of persuasive messages to target audiences with the purpose of influencing opinions, attitudes and behaviours (Hallahan *et al.*, 2007), and it has been used for long in the corporate world to achieve higher performances. The extended use of strategic communication in the health sector is, however, a more recent trend and it is an extremely complex phenomenon, as the messages must be carefully designed and conveyed to be effective in a very sensitive area. The key point seems to be the accommodation of those messages to public needs and to public literacy.

However, the strategic communication intervention is central to public knowledge, information and, therefore, development. As stated by the Communication for Development literature, it helps to establish a common understanding among all participants of a development initiative, creating a basis for common action. Strategic communication plans and activities seem to empower development stakeholders with awareness and understanding that can be applied to effective decision making, accountable management, social and political mobilization, helpful behaviour change, and individual or collective growth (Mozammel & Schechter, 2005).

Strategic communication is, then, at the heart of the Communication for Development approach towards human growth and empowerment. And Health Communication can be conceptualised as a subfield of communication for development and social change. Growth and empowerment in the health sector are based to a great extent on social change, which in turn depends to a significant degree on systematic, effective, and widespread access to and application of knowledge and information (Wilkins *et al.*, 2014). And the Public Health, being the science and art of promoting health within communities, demands the promotion of an informed health society.

In Portugal, the use of strategic communication within the health sector has been growing in the past decade. Driven by the enlargement of the health market (with the growth of private health care institutions), the increase on public demand for accountability or the rise of market oriented approaches in public institutions communication became a recognised asset for health organisations, namely

the public ones. And the increase of health promotion practices is part of this process (Ruão *et al.*, 2012). A study from Balonas (2013) shows that Health Promotion campaigns are growing in the category of TV advertising for social causes in the 21st century first decade, in Portugal.

However, there are few studies on Health Communication in Portugal and even less in Strategic Health Communication. Though, at an international level, we can find enough examples that remain important supports to our research-action approach, as the studies on Health Communication and Promotion by Dutta-Bergman, Kreps, Nutbeam, Maibach, Ratzan, Rogers or Springston; or the publications of the WHO on Public Health Communication (such as 2012, 2013). Moreover, the Communication for Development and Social Change literature presents enough evidences that communication is a driver of social change, dealing with risk groups, reducing inequalities and promoting socially sustainable behaviours (Thomas, 2015; Wilkins *et al.*, 2014); being these goals frequently anchored on the best practices of international behavioural communication strategies, as suggested by the Social Marketing theory, since the middle of the 20th century (Serrat, 2010).

Social Marketing is commonly defined as a behaviour science dedicated to promote social change. Through a process of analysis, planning, execution and evaluation of programs – including communication strategies – this field aims to influence and to motivate the voluntary change behaviour for personal and societies welfare and development.

But social marketing must be understood as one of the actors that operationalize two key concepts: social change and development. These keywords appear to be critical concepts that need to be contextualized. Communication for social change can be describe as “a process of public and private dialogue through which people define who they are, what they want and need and how they will work together to get what they need to improve their lives” (Felder, 2006: xiii), leading to a community-based identification problem, decision-making and implementation of solutions. This line of thinking puts the emphasis on the community empowerment. We defend the utility of the strategic communication angle, empowering stakeholders in line with predefined objectives. Correctly used, communication can help to achieve social development more ef-



ficiently, in specific realities. Social change is based on dialogue and collective action. Strategic communication is about empowering those movements on understanding their essence, expectations and abilities, seeking for individuals and societies' effective development.

As profusely shown in the *Communication for Social Change Anthology* (Dragon & Tufle, 2006), communication for social change is historically linked to a whole range of other themes - oppression, underdeveloped countries, rural development, participation, public sphere – rather than health issues. Communication as a natural partner for development was incorporated into government programs and social management in the late 50s, according to Pereira e Cardozo (2003: 619), with the purpose of supporting and strengthening a modern public sphere.

Contemporary literature about Communication and Development is focused on themes such as sustainability (Massoni, 2004), participation (Huesca, 1996, 2003) and health problems, mainly HIV/Aids (UNAIDS, 1996). In fact, the 90s marked a new agenda in development themes. HIV/Aids moved from being exclusively a health problem to being a complex development challenge, crossing sectors, “from agriculture to sustainable development, from gender equity to human rights” (Dragon & Tufle, 2006: xxviii). There seems to be a tendency to take local contexts and local cultures into account rather than applying global solutions.

Improving health is gathering crescent attention from health professionals, academics and organisations. Large-scale programs from the WHO or the UNICEF Health are strong evidences of the importance of the health issue for development.

On this scenario, strategic communication can become a strong ally, if recognized as so.

As it is well known, societies are organised around complex relationship systems and communication is an inseparable factor of that phenomenon. However, historically, strategic communication was understood as the process of designing and disseminating planned and intentional messages and it was developed mainly in the business field. Its application to other sectors has occurred more in the professional arena than in an epistemological sphere. Health, justice, state or religion are some of the areas that use increasingly strategic communication techniques and instruments, but such practices have not received great attention in the academic world (Almaraz & Mamic, 2009; Bartlett & May, 2011).

Concerning Public Health issues, strategic communication must have public literacy – or different literacy degrees concerning health – into account. That's why behavioural change must be part of strategic communicational plans – which behaviour should communication influence or change? This is a key issue. Knowledge, although fundamental, does not initiate change: intention is crucial in any decision-making process (Hartwell, 2015). Influence on behaviour can occur from persuasive techniques and tactics: who addresses the message, which incentives are stressed, how others do (norms) or why the subject is relevant. Also emotional associations, commitment demands or the belief of a better feel are considered the most robust, non-coercive influences on behaviour (*idem*).

This ambience raises the question: is there a real awareness of the social impact that strategic communication can have towards a more enlightened, a more equal and a more cohesive society?

Emerging and shaped by the above mentioned conceptual and theoretical framework HealthyCom is, in short, an innovative project that aims to contribute to the encouragement of the Strategic Health Communication research in the Academia and to envision how the Communication for Development approach can enrich the investigation in the field; and through that we expect to contribute to the improvement of the public health sector, in Portugal and worldwide. We support the assumption that Strategic Health Communication can be used to empower health professionals and citizens to social development and equality.

## The Communication for Public Health Program

Looking forward to deepen the understanding and to develop the assumption on the positive impact of communication on communities regarding public health issues, the HealthyCom Project, includes specific programs concerning the assessment of communication needs and public health professional training in communication skills.

As mentioned above the “Communication for Public Health: from theory to practice” program (CPH) emerged from a joint venture between the Portuguese Northern region public health administration (ARSN) and the Communication Sciences Department of the University of Minho (DCC/UMinho), following the increasing

and supported evidence of the potential of communication to the public health efficiency programs, on one hand, and the aim to explore communication performance in the social sphere, namely in the public health sector, on the other hand. The CPH had a double scope, both serving as a training program and as a communication consultancy opportunity as well. For that reason it was conceived and designed as a research-action project, based on a hands-on approach, calling for a seamless link between academic knowledge and practical know how.

CPH Program main objectives were: 1) to train public health professionals with communicative skills and 2) to assess public health professional's communicational needs. The main target were public health professionals from the northern region of Portugal, which included doctors, nurses and environmental technicians. More specifically the program reached the public health professionals of ARSN, including the responsible for public health communication and the public health units of the group health centres (ACES/UNL's) in the northern region of Portugal.

Furthermore, the CPH Program was visionary. It's rationale assumed pioneer characteristics, being the first program of such kind in the country, envisioning to deepen the knowledge of health communication and to put this knowledge into practice, by contributing to solve public health communication tasks and challenges, namely the creation of communication plans and the development and implementation of local health plans. Concurrently, as it had a consultancy dimension, the CPH Program allowed the identification of communicational training needs and furthermore the performance evaluation of public health professionals in communication skills.

The CPH Program reached 66<sup>1</sup> public health professionals, from the 21 local health units, the 3 group health centres, and the public health central services, involving the total universe of public health official units in the Northern region of Portugal. It was developed in the three phases:

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<sup>1</sup> The total number was calculated by the presence in the sessions in 2013 and 2014 only; does not take into account the fact that a single public health professional might attend to more than one session.

1. 2013 – two training editions (4<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> July and 20<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> November) focusing on a first contact and assessment of communication skills, followed by guiding sessions designed to put in practice the theoretical concepts and best practices learning. 34 public health professionals took part in these editions: in the 1<sup>st</sup> edition, 21 doctors and 7 nurses attended; 23 were from local health units, 3 from the public health central services; the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition was attended by 28 public health professionals (17 doctors, 7 nurses, 1 environmental technician, 1 nutritionist) representing local health units (21) and the public health central services (7);
2. 2014 – two follow up sessions occurring around one year after (31<sup>st</sup> October and 27<sup>th</sup> November) were designed to evaluate the application of the knowledge acquired. They involved 32 public health professionals: 14 in the 1<sup>st</sup> session (11 doctors, 2 nurses representing local health units (11) and the public health central services (3)) and 18 in the 2<sup>nd</sup> session (9 doctors, 5 nurses, 2 health technicians, 1 environmental technician, 1 administrative technician, representing local health units (16) and the public health central services (1)).
3. 2015-16 – new sessions have been taking place, designed in a follow up logic, including a performance assessment dimension. Followed by specific training in some of the skills previously identified as priority, this phase is still a work in progress with an estimated number of around 50 public health professionals to be involved both in training and consultancy initiatives.

The syllabus of the first training wave included a theoretical and state of the art framework on Health Communication, displaying theories, conceptual discussion and principles of Health, Organisational and Social Communication. It was followed by a Strategic Communication teaching plan: including the operational basics, namely, communication plans and the key factors for their implementation. Several communication specificities were illustrated with case studies and best practice examples. The training program concluded with practical sessions where random teams were challenged to solve diverse communication problems in the public health context. These cases were chosen in the media, suggested

by the Public Health Department or indicated by the trainees as relevant to their professional everyday activity and ranged from the implementation of Local Health Plans or the pivotal dynamics of Local Health Observatories to Epidemiologic Surveillance, Risk and Crisis Communication, Health Promotion and Protection or Environmental Health. The later training phase, still in progress, will focus in Media Training, Media Relations and Interpersonal Communication.

The CPH Training and Consultancy Program resulted in a diverse practice communication outputs, ranging from communication plans to crisis communication, organisational communication challenges, internal communication barriers and further on (see Table 4.1).

**Table 4.1:** Communication for Public Health Program Practice Outputs

Communication Plans	Crisis Communication	Organisational & Internal Communication
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• mobilise community participation in PH events,</li><li>• relational building sustainability between stakeholders,</li><li>• disclose local health plans through local media,</li><li>• increase tuberculosis awareness,</li><li>• plan of prevention and control of infections and antibiotic resistance</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• brucellosis outbreak,</li><li>• outbreak of meningitis,</li><li>• lice alert in schools,</li><li>• How to control the information during the crisis: Legionella, Ebola and Asian flu cases,</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• hierarchy awareness of communication issues,</li><li>• management of PH vs communication tasks,</li><li>• health centres communication plan validation and implementation,</li><li>• Intra-organisational communication: health and community stakeholders,</li></ul>

Random teams worked on these communication challenges, selected for their relevance to public health professionals' everyday activity.

The diversity of the themes and cases that the teams worked on, with the supervision of communication specialists, resulted in presentations that were subject to group discussions, so the experience of each team could be shared with the whole group and therefore enriching the individual training experience.

## **Communication for Public Health Program Evaluation**

The evaluation of the CPH Program methodology was designed to answer two main objectives: 1) to measure the efficiency of the CPH training program in terms of communication empowerment of the trainees; 2) to assess the long-term practical impact and consequences in terms of application of the knowledge acquired in the public health practitioners everyday. Having these constraints in mind the evaluation was applied in different phases, corresponding to two moments: one immediately after the sessions of the first wave (2013); another approximately one year after in the follow up sessions (2014).

Questionnaires, designed with closed and open questions for anonymous answers, were effectively filled by the public health professionals (31), providing general information:

1. on their perception of the contribution of communication to solve public health problems (29 rated it as “very important”, 2 rated it as “important”);
2. on the training program contribute to a greater knowledge and communication capacitation (all respondents rated it “very important”);
3. on the effective application of the communicational knowledge in the public health practice acquired in the training, one year after the program (29 answered “yes”, 1 answered “yes, but in an isolated manner”; 1 answered “sometimes”).

Furthermore, questionnaires provided specific data revealing public health professionals perceptions on several issues related with communication and their practice, from which we will highlight a few: the CPH program contribution to communication problem solving in the working context; the difficulties found in their everyday; their communication practical achievements, etc (Tables 4.2 to 4.6).

**Table 4.2:** Communication for Public Health Program Practice Outputs- Question 4

4. In practice, how did the training contribute to communication problem solving in your working context?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-To establish communication as a tool for health promotion</li> <li>-To improve interpersonal communication</li> <li>-To develop negotiating skills with the hierarchies, in changing the communication habits</li> <li>-To develop critical thinking, in identifying problems and communication solutions</li> <li>-«On external communication efforts, but have not yet seen results or measures»</li> </ul>

Assessing CPH contribution to problem solving in follow up sessions.

**Table 4.3:** Communication for Public Health Program Practice Outputs- Question 5

5. What were the most significant difficulties encountered?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "Ignorance of the concept of communication in health"</li> <li>- "Lack of training in health communication"</li> <li>- "Extension and dispersion of ACES"</li> <li>- "Lack of will to create a Communication Office"</li> <li>- "Lack of time"</li> <li>- "Selection of communication"</li> <li>- "Resistance to interactions with the external environment"</li> <li>- "Internal resistance to change"</li> <li>- "Assessing the impact of information with multiple partners"</li> </ul>

Practical barriers to communication efforts pointed out by public health professionals.



**Table 4.4:** Communication for Public Health Program Practice Outputs- Question 6

6. Which aspects of practical problems did communication help to overcome?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "Promoting and disseminating public health actions"</li> <li>- "To Diagnose problems"</li> <li>- "To reach the community more effectively"</li> <li>- "To Increase adherence to public health programs"</li> <li>- "Understanding the interests of ' partners ' and take them into account when communicating"</li> <li>- "Contributed to overcome personal difficulties"</li> <li>- "To Manage interpersonal tensions"</li> <li>- "Helped to build relationships"</li> </ul>

Public health professionals identified several communication breakthroughs after the training.

**Table 4.5:** Communication for Public Health Program Practice Outputs- Question 7

7. What communication problems did you detect?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-There is no internal communication</li> <li>-Information centralization</li> <li>-Organisational culture hinders the communication work</li> <li>-Lack of technical knowledge of communication</li> <li>-Difficulties in communication planning</li> <li>-Professional arrogance</li> <li>-Difficulties in transmitting technical/medical information</li> </ul>

Internal or hierarchic issues are significantly identified as a source of communication problems.

**Table 4.6:** Communication for Public Health Program Practice Outputs- Question 8

8. In the last year, what communication actions did you develop in your work?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-PLS (Local Health Plan) communication</li> <li>-Internal communication</li> <li>-School visits</li> <li>-Partnerships with local authorities and the community</li> <li>-Epidemiological evaluation</li> <li>-Disclosure of information to the media</li> <li>-Organisation of conferences and media relations</li> <li>-Crisis communication</li> <li>-Content production for non-specialists</li> <li>-Participation in scientific events</li> </ul>

Engagement and implementation of communication actions were crucial to the CPH Program evaluation.

Supporting the consultancy dimension of the CPH Program and the objective to assess communication needs, the evaluation phase resulted in valuable and relevant data that allowed not only to have a grasp on the everyday communication difficulties of public health practitioners, but also to foresee eventual adjustments of the further training sessions, conjointly with the selective choice of specific thematic training to be held in the following phase.

## Conclusions

The Communication for Public Health Training and Consultancy Program experience exposed above allow us to elaborate on the following concluding notes:

1. There is a growing awareness of public health professionals on the need to build capacity to act in the universe of communication, in an effort to contribute to social development and public health communication effectiveness;

2. Although some efforts have been implemented, as is the case of the above mentioned training program, public health communication professional abilities are improving but lack specialised supervising and there is still a lot to be done, such as: training health professionals in the field of communication; alerting the authorities to the need to hire communication professionals for public health institutions; or providing specialised training to communication and media professionals to work in the public health sector;
3. There is a growing assumption that Strategic Health Communication is a core field to promote social development in health, and through health interaction, because of its impactful potential for action on opinions, attitudes and human behaviour. Furthermore, due to all the exposed above and specially due to the personal, life and enriching contact and interaction between public health professionals and communication specialists, allowing the direct exchange of diverse knowledge fields and professional universes, we dare to advance suggestions for further development axes within the HealthyCom project, namely:
  - a) To diagnose – by mapping communication in public health in Portugal and finding the best practices of strategic communication for health development;
  - b) To act – by training public health officials for interventions in strategic communication and with this field of knowledge insights;
  - c) To share – by empowering communities through communication, stimulating academic research and influencing public policy to a higher quality in health.

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**Part II**

**NGO'S**





## Chapter 5

# Environmental non-profit organisations in public discourses: Challenges and opportunities of political institutionalization

Anke Wonneberger

## Introduction

While the literature on social movements focusses on protest events or other forms of non-institutional, non-routine action (e.g., Snow, Soule, & Kriesi, 2004), this chapter builds on the assumption that environmental non-profit organisations (ENPOs), or more general social movement organisations (SMOs), have increasingly institutionalised, for instance, by participating in institutionalised decision making processes (Koopmans & Statham, 1999). A recent example is the participation of environmental organisations, such as *Greenpeace International* or the *Climate Reality Project*, as representatives of civil society at the UN Climate Summit 2014 in New York. This development coincides with new conflicts for ENPOs: While such forms of political institutionalisation may increase organisations' effectiveness to reach their goals, a stronger institutional involvement may challenge their public legitimacy. Movement organisations mainly obtain legitimacy as oppositional actors taking critical perspectives on the political establishment and decision-making by representing interests of minority groups or those with less or no political power (Benford, 1993). To a large extent, the public legitimacy of ENPOs originates from their critical role in public discourses that can be observed in the mass media (Amenta, Caren, Olasky, & Stobaugh, 2009).

Previous research has focused on media coverage of social movements by linking media attention to aspects of movement success such as public support (Amenta *et al.*, 2009; Koopmans & Olzak, 2004; Vliegenthart, Oegema, & Klandermans, 2005). The present research, in contrast, takes a closer look at media attention by assessing the consequences of political institutionalisation for the position of ENPOs in public discourses. This research focuses on the role of ENPOs within public controversies in relation to other influential actor types such as political or economic actors (Corbett, 1998; Koopmans & Olzak, 2004). In doing so, this study disentangles potential advantages and challenges that ENPOs face in an institutionalised context.

This chapter presents a case study on the Dutch Energy Agreement of 2013 that empirically investigates the relationship between institutionalisation and discourse opportunities. Several ENPOs were actively involved in the negotiations leading to the agreement and were, thus, of comparable importance as the participating political, industry, and public parties. Therefore, the topic of the Energy Agreement offered a unique chance to directly compare the salience and discursive contributions of different actor groups in the national media coverage.

## Problematic and Theoretical Background

### The Dutch Energy Agreement

The Dutch energy agreement is chosen here to study the consequences of political institutionalisation of ENPOs on their discursive opportunities. This issue presents a specific form of institutionalisation that can be considered as a form of co-optation (Coy & Hedeén, 2005; Selznick, 1949). Importantly, as opposed to broader institutional approaches (e.g., DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) I refer to political institutionalisation here as a specific form of integration of movement organisations into political decision making processes (Coglianese, 2001; Coy & Hedeén, 2005; Koopmans & Statham, 1999). The agreement is a typical example for the Dutch polder model – a practice of involving relevant societal stakeholders such as industry associations and labour unions in early stages of political decision making to form central agreements that guide subsequent policy processes (Woldendorp & Keman, 2007). The polder model has been considered as a promising opportunity to temporarily institu-

tionalise the involvement of relevant stakeholders and, in particular, of environmental and nature conservation groups in environmental decision-making (Glasbergen, 2002). While the model has been criticized for a lack of effectiveness (Woldendorp & Keman, 2007), an evaluation of environmental agreements concluded that their performance overall was positive (Bressers, Bruijn, & Lulofs, 2009).

The goal of the energy agreement was to stimulate sustainable development in the Netherlands in terms of energy production, supply, and consumption (SER, 2013). The negotiations started in January 2013 and led to the announcement of the final agreement in September 2013. Afterwards, an independent committee (“borgingscommissie”) was installed to monitor the progress of the objectives. More than 40 organisation including governmental bodies, industry and employer associations, labour unions, and nature conservation and environmental organisations were involved in the negotiations which were chaired by the *Social and Economic Council of the Netherlands (SER)*. Amongst the most prominent national ENPOs who participated were *Greenpeace Netherlands*, *WWF Netherlands*, *Milieu Defensie*, and *Natuur & Milieu*.

## **The Paradox of Political Institutionalisation and Legitimacy**

Although the study of social movements departs from fragile movement organisations having their origin in protest cultures with weak organisational structures, as movements succeed they tend to institutionalise. In addition to developing toward more professional organisations, one form of institutionalisation of social movements is regarded as the process of becoming more strongly embedded in political decision making processes (Coglianese, 2001; Koopmans & Statham, 1999). Political institutionalisation may strengthen political opportunity structures of ENPOs but at the same time challenge organisations’ public legitimacy. First of all, institutionalisation enables by changing the access points of a movement to political processes and by doing so unfolding opportunities of political action and influence (Brockett, 1991; Kriesberg, 2003). More professional ENPOs, for instance, may increase their impact as “counter-lobby in the political arena” (Brand, 1999, p. 51). A detailed analysis of trans-

formation processes of the environmental movement in the US revealed that institutionalisation not only empowered the movement in political processes but, moreover, influenced the national value system with a broad societal acceptance of values of environmentalism (Coglianese, 2001).

However, institutionalisation also constrains (Coy & Hedeon, 2005). Generally, such transformation processes have been found to come along with greater conservatism thus a stronger orientation toward societal consensus, as well as greater relevance of organisational maintenance (Zald & Ash, 1966). Successfully established environmental regulation, societal commitment and organisational success may hinder further processes of change, such as raising levels of awareness for the problem of climate change and creating appropriate regulation concerning climate change mitigation and adaptation (Coglianese, 2001). Thus, while institutionalisation may increase organisations' effectiveness to reach their goals, their legitimacy as oppositional actors taking critical perspectives on political establishment and decision-making may be challenged (Brand, 1999). This two-sided development can be called the paradox of political institutionalisation and legitimacy. In the following section I will argue that challenges for the public legitimacy of ENPOs are mainly linked to their discursive positioning. Institutionalisation may trigger changing actor relations and frames used in the public discourse which may potentially threaten the public legitimacy of movement organisations.

## **Discursive Position of ENPOs**

As outlined above, ENPOs or SMOs in general are considered vivid participants in public discourses. At the same time, their public visibility and strength of their position in a discourse are also requirements to reach organisational goals, such as social or political change (Amenta *et al.*, 2009; Sampson, McAdam, MacIndoe, & Weffer-Elizondo, 2005). The concept of discursive opportunity structures has been introduced to underline the importance of public attention for the success of social movements (Gamson, 2004; Koopmans, 2004). Discursive opportunities have been defined as "aspects of the public discourse that determine a message's chances of diffusion in the public sphere" (Koopmans & Olzak, 2004, p. 202, see also Koopmans & Statham, 1999). Although increasingly social

media and other digital platforms shape public discourses, traditional news media still are successful in reaching broad audiences and influencing policy-making processes (Curran, Iyengar, Brink Lund, & Salovaara-Moring, 2009; Trilling & Schoenbach, 2013; Wonneberger, Schoenbach, & van Meurs, 2013). Therefore, mass media have been considered the most crucial platforms for SMOs to gain public legitimacy (Koopmans, 2004; Lee, 2014; Vliegthart *et al.*, 2005).

### **Consequences of Political Institutionalisation**

Political institutionalisation or co-optation changes collaborative networks of SMOs which might, in turn, also affect their position in the public discourse. Collaborative networks are an important element for decision making processes and power relationships between actors. Research on the advocacy coalition framework (ACF) has identified different types of policy networks, such as ally networks, power networks, coordination networks or advice/information networks (Henry, 2011; Ingold, 2011; Weible & Sabatier, 2005). Network changes resulting from political institutionalisation of SMOs as studied here can best be described as coordination networks. These are networks of actors who temporarily coordinate their actions to achieve a common goal (Provan & Milward, 1995). Originally, movement organisations receive public legitimacy from the critical position in the public discourse that they take by confronting more established and powerful political elites with alternative viewpoints such as interests of minorities or other less powerful groups (Amenta *et al.*, 2009; Cress & Snow, 2000). Becoming part of a coordination network consisting amongst others of originally antagonistic actors most likely changes the oppositional position movement organisations take in public. With less critical contributions, however, also a crucial source of their public legitimacy might be at stake.

The present chapter focuses on two specific aspects that describe the oppositional position of ENPOs in the public discourse. These are discursive relations to other institutionalised and non-institutionalised actors and the discreteness of discursive contributions in the form of frames compared to frames employed by other actor groups.

## Actor Relations

Actors of the same level of institutionalisation who form a coordination network might also show a greater degree of connectivity within the public debate. For instance, actors might refer to a position they share with collaboration partners or refer to disagreements during negotiation processes. In doing so, actors of the same level of institutionalisation increase the resonance of their partners – with positive effects for involved movement organisations. Resonance comprises positive and negative forms of public response that movements receive by other actors in the public debate (Koopmans & Olzak, 2004). Consonance includes support or agreement whereas dissonance is evoked by critical reactions, disapproval, or rejection of movement claims. Any reaction to a message – supportive or critical – may amplify the reach and impact of the initial message and sender (Koopmans & Olzak, 2004).

Typically, movement organisations refer to specific actor groups in their discourses, such as the minorities they want to represent or established actors they aim to criticize (Gamson, 2004). The ACF can explain why institutionalisation might affect these actor references. With co-ordination networks becoming more important, not only ENPOs might profit from increasing resonance by co-ordination partners but ENPOs might also pay more attention to institutionalised partners. This shift of attention might be at the expense of key stakeholders of movement organisations, such as citizens or minority groups. More generally, we can assume that actors from the same institutional level who form a coordination network are more similar in their actor references and that, consequently, institutionalised ENPOs differ in their actors references from non-institutionalised ones:

- H1: Patterns of references to other actors by institutionalised ENPOs are similar to actor references by actors of the same level of institutionalisation.
- H2: Patterns of references to other actors by institutionalised ENPOs differ from actor references by non-institutionalised ENPOs.

## Frames

In addition to distinct actor references, an oppositional position in the public discourse is achieved by offering alternative frames of issues (Ryan, 1991). Media frames are regarded as selective and coherent perspectives on an issue (Chong & Druckman, 2007). The framing approach is used to evaluate to what extent SMOs successfully add meaning to a debate, such as unique and critical perspectives that challenge other, more established actors. The success of SMOs has been considered as dependent on the capacity to define problems, assign responsibilities and propose solutions (Cress & Snow, 2000; Snow & Benford, 1988). Although Cress and Snow (2000) emphasize the interplay between organisational contexts and framing activities of SMOs in influencing movement success, it has not been studied so far how framing efforts and institutionalisation of movements are related. While a favourable political context and elite access has been found to positively affect movement visibility (Amenta *et al.*, 2009), such a context could also lead organisations to refrain from critical contributions to maximize the potential of their political influence (Rohlinger, 2002, 2006). A low level of institutionalisation, in contrast, might increase the motivation of movements to stand out with critical, alternative discursive contributions. In sum, institutionalisation can be considered as a challenge for the framing efforts of ENPOs. Specifically, to maximize their possibilities in a co-ordination network to influence political decision making, movement organisations may converge their framing efforts to those of their network partners. In doing so a greater distance is created to non-institutionalised organisations of the same movement.

H3: Frames employed by institutionalised ENPOs are similar to frames employed by actors of the same level of institutionalisation.

H4: Frames employed by institutionalised ENPOs differ from frames employed by non-institutionalised ENPOs.

## Research Design

This research employed a manual quantitative content analysis of the national media coverage on the energy agreement to assess the discourse opportunities of ENPOs. The following section describes the sample, instrument, and procedure of data collection.

## Sample

Five Dutch national newspapers were included in this content analysis, namely *Het Financieele Dagblad*, *Trouw*, *NRC Handelsblad*, *De Volkskrant* and *De Telegraaf*. These newspapers were selected on basis of yearly circulation numbers and their coverage about the energy agreement. All articles published in these newspapers concerning the agreement were downloaded from the LexisNexis database. A total of 306 newspaper articles were selected via the search criterion '*energieakkoord*' (energy agreement). This keyword was verified with a comparison of alternative search strings and a manual article search for a selection of days. The sample period ranged from October 2011 to November 2013. This period covered the preparations prior to the negotiations, the entire period of the actual negotiations, and the successive debate two months after the announcement of the agreement.

## Content Analysis

Three coders were involved in coding the articles. The articles were first coded on the article level, identifying the news type and issue relevance. The sampled articles concerned the energy agreement either as primary (76.3%) or secondary (23.7%) topic. Secondly, statements served as the main level of analysis. A total of 1,540 statements were identified. Each statement was initiated by a subject actor. In addition, the institutionalisation of subject actors, addressees, and frame elements were coded.

## Subject Actors

For each statement, one or more subject actors were coded as the originator of the statement. The subject actor could be the author of the article or a different actor whose statement was presented via direct or indirect quotation. The actor type was specified from seven main categories. These were political, public, industry, civil society, SER commission, science or other actors. All categories included more specific sub-categories. In cases of doubt, coders were asked to search online to identify an actor's organisational affiliation and



the type of organisation. After coding, these categories were re-coded into the six groups: ENPOs (10.8%), industry actors (10.6%), political actors (7.0%), public actors (including the SER commission, 9.4%), media (53.5%), and other actor groups (including other civil society and science actors, 8.6%).

## **Institutionalisation**

The *SER* involvement served as a measure for the institutionalisation of an actor. For each subject actor it was coded whether or not the actor participated in the negotiations of the energy agreement led by the *SER*. The codebook included a list of participating organisations. 83.8% of all subject actors were not involved, 16.2% were involved in the negotiations.

## **Addressees**

Addressees were coded when the subject actor 1) directly addressed a different actor in the form of a call or appeal to do or not do something, 2) referred to an actor who is seen as standing in the way of a claim's realization or advocating an opposing position, or 3) referred to an actor who is seen as contributing to a claim's realization or advocating a congruent position. The same categories as for the subject actors were used to classify addressees. Overall, 71.3% of all statements addressed at least one other actor or group of actors. Among these, political actors ranked first (18.1%) closely followed by other actors (15.8%), industry actors (15.7%), and public actors (14.7%). Only 6.1% of all statements referred to non-profit organisations. Media actors were hardly addressed at all (0.9%).

## **Frame Elements**

The procedure suggested by Matthes and Kohring (2008) was followed to derive frames in an inductive manner. Based on the literature and a first reading of a selection of the coding material 37 frame elements were included in the codebook. The frame elements were subdivided into different categories, namely problem definition, causal attribution, moral evaluation and treatment. *Problem definition* consisted of issues which explicitly related to a problem and the rel-

evant actors discussing the problem. Here, different topics could be coded as well as different actors. *Causal attribution* was coded when an attribution of responsibility for failure of success regarding a specific outcome was included in the statement. *Moral evaluation* was coded when the statement included an elaboration on benefits or risks of a certain development. Finally *treatment* considered whether a call for or against a certain action was present in a statement. All explicit evaluations of the agreement or specific aspects of the agreement were coded in terms of whether the agreement was considered as negative or positive. In addition, the issue position of the actor was derived from the overall tone of the statement (positive or negative). Here the focus lay specifically on the position towards the particular issue of the statement which was not necessarily the energy agreement.

### **Pre-test and Reliability**

Before the data collection, the three coders were excessively trained. A selection of 11 articles that covered the entire research period and all newspapers was coded to assess the Intercooder reliability (ICR). ICR was determined first for the selection of actor statements and second for all variables of the codebook. Krippendorff's Alpha was calculated as it is the most widely accepted measure. Krippendorff's Alpha has the advantages of accounting for different types of metrics as well as the relatively small sample size. Because some variables such as frame elements had a very low frequency, a comparison with percentage agreements was provided as well. On the level of statement selection an acceptable agreement of .71 was reached (Krippendorff's Alpha = .742). The 11 articles varied in length ranging from 1 to 18 statements. In total, 55 statements were identified by all three coders. These statements were used to determine the ICR for all coded variables.

As a first rule, only variables that reached a Krippendorff's Alpha of .667 or higher were considered for further analysis (Krippendorff, 2013). Based on this threshold only the first addressee ( $k = .706$ ) mentioned in the statement could be included. Furthermore a number of frame elements had to be excluded. To a large extend the remaining frame elements coincided with those having a relative frequency of  $> 5\%$ . Thus, mainly the elements with a marginal relevance were excluded (compare Matthes & Kohring, 2008) – explain-

ing also the low ICR values. Exceptions were the elements procedure, content and technical aspects of the energy agreement which had the highest levels of occurrence (36.6% - 55.6%) as well as public and political actors (23.8% and 30.1%). Because these could be considered to have the highest explanatory values for the frames, these three elements were also included in spite of their low Krippendorff's Alpha, however, with acceptable levels of percentage agreement. Only the element content of the agreement was excluded because of its very low ICR score of  $k = .207$ . The average ICR level of the included frame elements was  $k = .724$  and the average percentage agreement was .89. Table A1 gives an overview of the ICR values of all remaining variables.

## Results

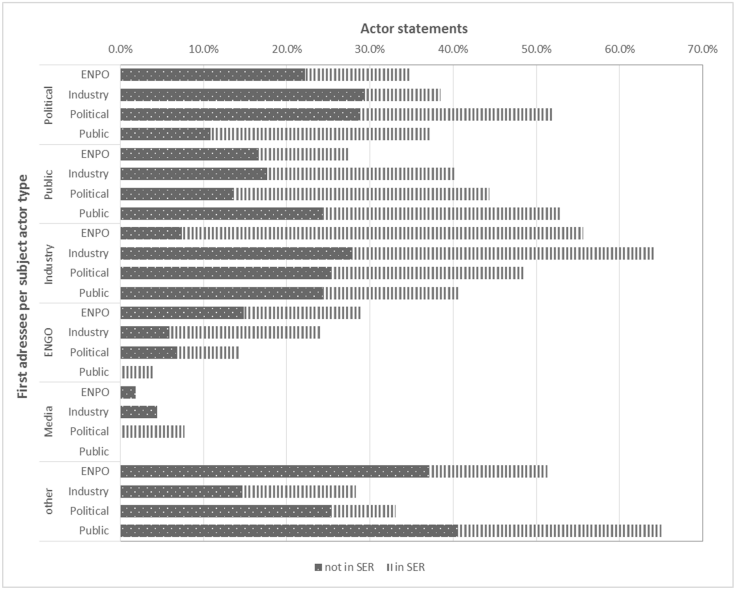
To test the hypotheses I compared the actor references and frames found in statements of ENPOs who were involved in the SER negotiations to other actors involved in the negotiations as well as those ENPOs who were not involved.

### Actor References

Reading the coding material revealed that participants often referred to their negotiating partners and were, thus, mutually increasing their resonance. Moreover, non-negotiating ENPOs frequently commented the role and contribution of ENPOs who participated in the negotiations. But to what extent can we also observe systematic differences between such actor references? Figure 5.1 depicts the share of addressees per actor type for institutionalised and non-institutionalised actor types.

For the first hypotheses we were interested in differences of actor references in statements stemming from actors who were involved in the negotiations. Due to low case numbers in more than 50% of the cells of the corresponding cross table, these differences could not be tested statistically. However, the data showed tendencies of heterogeneous patterns of actor references. Table 5.1 reveals that the rank orders of addresses differed between all institutionalised actors. While political and public actors most often addressed to public actors, Industry actors and ENPOs prioritized industry actors. With almost 50% of their statements referring to in-

dustry, environmental non-profit organisations addressed this actor group most often. Also other environmental groups were most often addressed by ENPOs. Although hypothesis one can, thus, not be formally tested, the data show tendencies that it may not be confirmed concluding that patterns of references to other actors by institutionalised ENPOs were not similar to actor references by actors of the same level of institutionalisation. Interestingly, the strongest overlap in actor references occurred between ENPOs and industry actors.



**Figure 5.1:** Actor references by non-participating and participating actors per actor type

To test the second hypotheses, I compared addressees referred to by ENPOs who participated in the SER negotiations and those who did not participate (Table 5.2). A  $\chi^2$  test revealed significant differences between these two groups ( $\chi^2 (5) = 25.095$ ,  $p < .001$ ). ENPOs that participated in the SER negotiations referred less often to political (12.5% vs. 22.2%) and public actors (10.7% vs. 16.7%) and also less often to the group of other actors including civil society or science (14.3% vs. 37.0%). The biggest difference, however, was found for references to industry actors. While ENPOs that did not participate in the SER negotiations referred in 7.4% of their statements to industry actors, this rate increased to 48.2% for those ENPOs participating in the negotiations. Therewith, the second hypothesis could be confirmed: Institutionalised ENPOs referred to different actors compared to not-institutionalised ENPOs. Specifically, they referred more often to negotiation partners and less often to organisational key stakeholders.

**Table 5.1:** Share of addressees referred to by institutionalised subject actors in percent

Addressee	Subject actor				Total
	Political actors	Public actors	Business actors	Non-profit organisations	
Political actors	23.1	26.5	9.1	12.5	17.9
Public actors	30.8	28.6	22.7	10.7	20.7
Business actors	23.1	16.3	36.4	48.2	32.9
Non-profit organisations	7.7	4.1	18.2	14.3	10.7
Media	7.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.7
other	7.7	24.5	13.6	14.3	17.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note.  $n = 145$  (statements of SER negotiation partners referring to at least one addressee).

**Table 5.2:** Addressees referred to by institutionalised and non-institutionalised ENPOs in percent

Addressee	ENPO		Total
	not in SER	in SER	
Political actors	22.2	12.5	17.3
Public actors	16.7	10.7	13.6
Business actors	7.4	48.2	28.2
Non-profit or- ganisations	14.8	14.3	14.5
Media	1.9	0.0	0.9
other	37.0	14.3	25.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note.  $n = 110$  (statements of ENPOs referring to at least one addressee).

## Frames

Frames were derived by a hierarchical cluster analysis of all 13 frame elements. SPSS TwoStep was chosen because this procedure is applicable for binary data. The number of clusters was determined by the ratio of distance change between the cluster solutions based on Schwarz's Bayesian Criterion (BIC). This procedure revealed five frames. Table 5.3 presents the means and standard deviations of all frame elements per frame indicating how strong each element was related to the frames.

The procedure (24.8%) and critique frame (24.7%) occurred most often. The *procedure frame* contained procedural issues and references to public actors (mainly the *SER*) and environmental issue. In addition, this frame often contained positive issue positions. The *critique frame*, in contrast, was clearly marked by negative issue positions. Critique was related to a variety of issues, such as energy and procedure but also financial aspects and political, public and industry actors. The *financial frame* appeared in 19.7% of all statements and combined references to finances, energy, industry and civil society actors. Although consumer risks had a low mean, the frame contained 97.9% ( $n = 47$ ) of this frame element. In addition, this frame contained positive and negative positions, thus, references to financial advantages and disadvantages of the energy agreement for industry and civil society. The *energy frame* occurred in 17.2% of all statements. This frame was clearly domi-

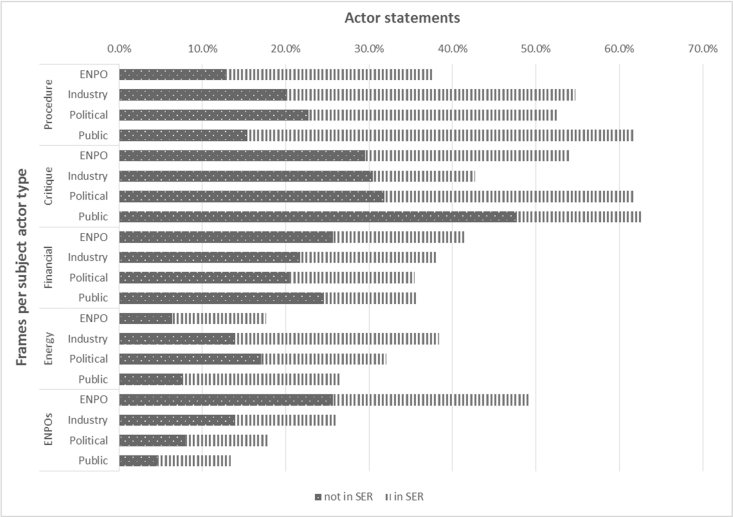
nated by the topical element “energy” which included references to energy supply and consumption, technical developments or issues regarding energy saving. Interestingly, the topic “environment” that comprised references to environmental problems (e.g., deforestation, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, or greenhouse gases) and references to sustainability and sustainable development did not emerge as a separate frame. However, both issues were jointly discussed with a clear dominance of technical, energy-related aspects of the energy agreement. Finally, 13.6% of the statements contained the *ENPOs frame* which was dominated by this actor group. In addition, it comprised frequent references to industry actors, followed by references to procedural issues and political actors.

**Table 5.3:** Means and standard deviations of the five-cluster solution

	Frames				
	1 Critique (n = 381)	2 Financial (n = 303)	3 ENPOs (n = 209)	4 Energy (n = 265)	5 Procedure (n = 382)
Topic: Procedure	0.34 (0.48)	0.12 (0.32)	0.64 (0.48)	0.30 (0.46)	0.48 (0.50)
Topic: Energy	0.40 (0.49)	0.69 (0.46)	0.34 (0.47)	1.00 (0.00)	0.06 (0.23)
Topic: Environment	0.25 (0.43)	0.30 (0.46)	0.46 (0.50)	0.53 (0.50)	0.27 (0.44)
Topic: Financial	0.27 (0.45)	0.74 (0.44)	0.08 (0.27)	0.28 (0.45)	0.12 (0.32)
Actor: Politics	0.24 (0.43)	0.32 (0.47)	0.58 (0.49)	0.27 (0.45)	0.22 (0.41)
Actor: Public	0.20 (0.40)	0.16 (0.36)	0.43 (0.50)	0.14 (0.35)	0.30 (0.46)
Actor: Business	0.19 (0.39)	0.62 (0.49)	0.85 (0.36)	0.02 (0.14)	0.17 (0.37)
Actor: ENPO	0.07 (0.26)	0.12 (0.32)	0.99 (0.10)	0.07 (0.26)	0.03 (0.17)
Actor: Science	0.09 (0.29)	0.02 (0.15)	0.01 (0.12)	0.01 (0.11)	0.06 (0.24)
Actor: Civil society	0.05 (0.22)	0.61 (0.49)	0.07 (0.26)	0.00 (0.00)	0.01 (0.11)
Risks: Consumer	0.00 (0.05)	0.16 (0.36)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Negative	1.00 (0.00)	0.28 (0.45)	0.25 (0.44)	0.04 (0.19)	0.00 (0.00)
Positive	0.00 (0.00)	0.26 (0.44)	0.28 (0.45)	0.22 (0.42)	0.35 (0.48)

Note: SPSS TwoStep Cluster with Log-likelihood distance measure. BIC = 17193.429; ratio of distance measures: 1.483. N = 1,540.

To test the third hypotheses, the frames used by the different actor groups who were involved in the negotiations were compared. Figure 5.2 presents an overview of the proportional use of frames by institutionalised and non-institutionalised actor groups.



**Figure 5.2:** Frames used by non-participating and participating actors per actor type

As depicted in Table 5.4, the frames differed significantly between the four actor groups ( $\chi^2(12) = 21725, p < .05$ ). Similar, to the actor reference patterns also the rank orders of frames differed between the actors. While political actors focused on the procedure and critique frames, public and industry actors used the procedure frame most often followed by the energy frame. ENPOs, in contrast, almost equally split their references to the procedure, critique and ENPOs frames. Therewith, the third hypothesis could not be confirmed. Frames employed by institutionalised ENPOs were not similar to frames employed by actors of the same level of institutionalisation. More specifically, ENPOs differed from the other actor groups in the highest use of the movement frame.



**Table 5.4:** Frames employed by institutionalised subject actors in percent

Frame	Subject actor				Total
	Political actors	Public actors	Business actors	Non-profit or- gan- isa- tions	
Critique	30.0	15.0	12.2	24.7	19.3
Financial	15.0	11.3	16.3	15.7	14.3
ENPOs	10.0	8.8	12.2	23.6	15.1
Energy	15.0	18.8	24.5	11.2	16.8
Procedure	30.0	46.3	34.7	24.7	34.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note. n = 238 (statements of SER negotiation partners comprising a frame).

Finally, hypothesis four addressed the frames used by institutionalised and non-institutionalised ENPOs. As Table 5.5 shows non-participating ENPOs used the financial frame more often, while participating organisations referred more often to procedural issues. However, the difference between these two groups was not significant ( $\chi^2(4) = 6.576$ ,  $p = .160$ ). Consequently, hypothesis four could not be confirmed. Frames employed by institutionalised ENPOs did not differ from frames employed by non-institutionalised ENPOs.

## Conclusion and Discussion

The public discourse about the Dutch energy agreement has been studied as an example for the institutionalisation of ENPOs in environmental decision-making. The aim of this chapter was to assess to what extent institutionalisation can influence the position of ENPOs in a public discourse and, therewith, potentially affect their public legitimacy. I found that the possibility of co-optation led to changes in actor references initiated by ENPOs but not to significant changes in their use of frames.

**Table 5.5:** Frames employed by institutionalised and non-institutionalised ENPOs in percent

Addressee	ENPO		Total
	not in SER	in SER	
Critique	29.5	24.7	26.9
Financial	25.6	15.7	20.4
ENPOs	25.6	23.6	24.6
Energy	6.4	11.2	9.0
Procedure	12.8	24.7	19.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note. n = 167 (statements of ENPOs comprising a frame).

Based on the advocacy coalition framework I predicted that actors of a coordination network who jointly participated in the negotiations to the energy agreement would become more important for movement organisations and consequently are also addressed more often in the public discourse. Indeed, the results suggested that political actors and key stakeholders such as citizens were addressed less often by institutionalised ENPOs. Instead, the organisations referred to negotiation partners, and specifically, those from industry more often. Co-optation or stepping into dialogue with business actors has been regarded as an important opportunity for ENPOs to increase their societal impact (Brand, 1999). Also industry actors from the coordination network, thus the same institutional level, referred more often to ENPOs indicating that such coordination networks with industry can help to strengthen the position of ENPOs in public debates.

In terms of the frames that were applied by ENPOs who did and did not participate in the negotiations only marginal differences were found. Most importantly, the participating actor groups were not very similar in their use of frames. Generally, all actor types who participated were less critical compared to not participating actors and also mentioned financial aspects of the agreement less often. In contrast, negotiating actors focused more on technical aspects of energy production, supply, and consumption as well as on the process of the negotiations. However, ENPOs did specifically contribute to the debate with an environmental movement frame that was used to a lesser extent by the other participating actors. Compared to non-institutionalised ENPOs, the distribution of frames

used by institutionalised ENPOs did not differ significantly. Therewith, the findings reveal that the changing institutional position of ENPOs is not reflected by the way they are positioned in the public discourse in terms of meaning creation. The findings do not specifically support the assumption that once institutionalised ENPOs are less critical and less able to take a stand that is distinct from other actors in the debate.

This case study allowed to assess effects of institutionalisation in a field setting ensuring external validity of the findings. At the same time, this specific case also limits generalizability. Firstly, participation in the Dutch agreement negotiations are a specific form of political institutionalisation which has also been referred to as the green polder model (Glasbergen, 2002). This model represents a relatively low degree of formal influence on actual political decision making because central agreements mainly inform later political decision. On a non-juridical, voluntary basis, however, the energy agreement has been considered as binding for the involved economic sectors (SER, 2013). Secondly, the most important national environmental organisations were involved in the negotiations. The comparison of negotiating and non-negotiating ENPOs might therefore also be influenced by other organisational factors, such as size, membership, or professional management. The level of PR expertise, in particular, has been suggested as crucial for assessing media presence of organisations (Yoon, 2005). To further develop the understanding of effects of institutionalisation on discourse opportunities it is important to expand this study to other contexts that include different forms of political institutionalisation and a greater variety of organisations, for instance, ranging from local to international ones.

Previous research suggests that frames of movement organisations oftentimes trigger media attention or are taken over by the media without a direct link to the source (Terkildsen, Schnell, & Ling, 1998). Without a comparison to organisational communications such as press releases, hidden forms of agenda building that might have been at work cannot be revealed. However, it is important to emphasize that this research did not focus on such agenda building processes but on actual forms of public attention that ENPOs receive and to what extent this is affected by institutionalisation. The prevalence of the media as subject actors might indicate

that the media take up the role as “the real directors of the public debate” (Terkildsen *et al.*, 1998: 57). This supports the idea that there is a need for movements to understand journalistic selection processes and adjust communication strategies to the media logic (Gamson & Wolfsfeld, 1993).

Some effects of institutionalisation, for instance regarding the use of frames, were similar for different actor groups. Being less critical, for instance, toward the energy agreement might thus be an inherent consequence of being part of the negotiations. For ENPOs in particular this tendency to support institutional decisions can be regarded as a mixed blessing. On the one hand, being part of agreement negotiations or more generally of political decision making processes increases their direct political power to thrive for social change. On the other hand, losing the position of the critical opposition might negatively affect societal support and more general the social legitimacy of these organisations.

Although the positioning of movements in public discourses can be regarded as a factor influencing public legitimacy, societal judgments ultimately might more strongly depend on the impact of movement claims within a discourse. One point of criticism frequently mentioned by non-participating ENPOs was that those ENPOs who did participate went too far in compromising their goals giving in to industry demands. This might indicate that also in this case institutionalisation led to more conservatism and mainstreaming (Zald & Ash, 1966). In addition to a potential legitimacy threat for the institutionalised organisations, this might be a threat for the national environmental movement as a whole because competition between movement organisations has been identified as a barrier for movement success (Gamson, 2004; Lee, 2014). While the research presented in this chapter could lay the foundation for an understanding of opportunities and challenges of institutionalisation for the public legitimacy of ENPOs, these relationships should be further tested empirically by assessing actual effects of varying discourse opportunities on various forms of movement support.

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## Appendix

**Table 5.6:** Interoder reliability measures

Variable	Krippendorff's Alpha	Percentage Agreement
Subject actor (recoded in 6 groups)	0.730	0.800
SER involvement of subject actor	0.766	0.915
Addressee A	0.706	0.291
Topic: EA (procedure)	0.490	0.745
Topic: Energy (technical)	0.586	0.806
Topic: Environment	0.836	0.939
Topic: Financial	0.723	0.903
Actor: Politics	0.605	0.842
Actor: Public	0.544	0.806
Actor: Business	0.822	0.915
Actor: ENPO	0.803	0.939
Actor: Science	0.869	0.988
Actor: Civil society	0.931	0.988
Risks: Consumer	0.745	0.988
Judgment: Issue position	0.730	0.764
Subject actor (recoded in 6 groups)	0.730	0.800
SER involvement of subject actor	0.766	0.915

## Chapter 6

# Online campaigning and offline lobbying: Public Affairs Strategies of Greenpeace Germany

Felix Krebber, Christian Biederstaedt and Ansgar Zerfaß

## Introduction

Digital communication seems to play an increasing role in *public affairs campaigns* by addressing policymakers, governments or the political system at large. Argenti and Barnes see the digital gap between business leaders, lobbyists, and lawmakers finally beginning to close (Argenti & Barnes, 2009, p. 219). Fleisher (2012) points out that we will see an “increased usage of (digital) channels by PA practitioners and stakeholders” (p. 7). Public affairs practitioners and researchers in Germany are even more optimistic. According to Bender (2010), representing interests in the political field will only be successful with the (additional) use and focus on social media channels in the future. Einspänner (2010) describes the Internet as a “substantial instrument” (p. 34) for achieving political goals and providing *Digital Public Affairs* with a new style of (digital) lobbying characterized by collectivity, personalization, transparency, authenticity and dialogue (p. 34).

From a theoretical point of view, these proposals mark a shift away from the traditional conceptualization of lobbying typically considered as non-public, non-mediatised and rather informal (Kleinfeld *et al.*, 2007; Leif & Speth, 2003; Lösche, 2007). As such, lobbying is distinguished from approaches like grassroots campaigning, public events, etc. However, social media research shows that patterns of personal communication can be transferred to the web suggesting such a possibility for lobbying as well.

A research gap in strategic communication can be closed by analysing these developments and interpretations both conceptually and empirically. This paper will do so by examining and discussing the role digital communication plays as an instrument of public affairs and lobbying, especially in direct communication between policy makers and interest groups. The study is based on a conceptual approach that combines theories of public affairs and lobbying with the concept of communicative styles (Zerfass, 2010, p. 188).

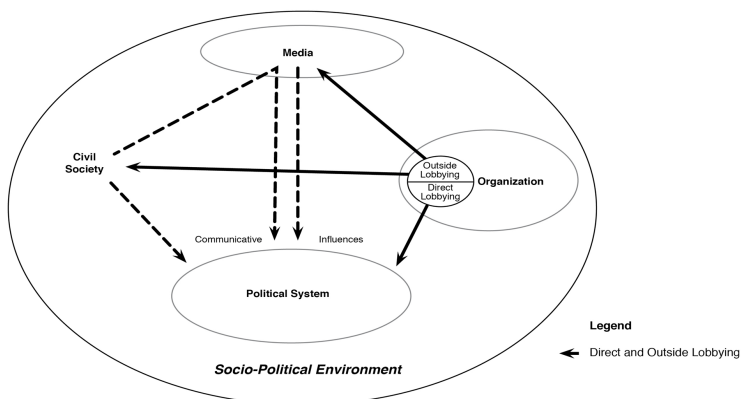
The empirical approach is a case study. The researchers have analysed the public affairs communication of Greenpeace, a global non-governmental organisation (NGO), in Germany – the most important country for Greenpeace according to members, donations and therefore international contribution.

NGOs can be defined as “private, non-profit, professional organisations, with a distinctive legal character, concerned with public welfare goals” (Clarke, 1998, p. 36). Within a broad variety of activities, influencing legislation and public policy is a central aim of NGOs. (cf. Fisher, 1997, p. 452) Campaigning and lobbying are techniques to do so. Therefore, NGOs are an interesting object of investigation to see which role digitalisation plays for their lobbying and campaigning activities.

## Lobbying and Communication

Röttger and Donges (2003) conceptualize public affairs as communicative activities undertaken by corporations and non-profit organisations addressing the political-administrative system and socio-political environment. The aim is to foster organisational success by influencing public opinion, regulatory frameworks and political decisions (p. 106). Showalter and Fleisher (2007) name activities in the field of public affairs. They describe lobbying, environmental (including issue and stakeholder) monitoring and scanning, grassroots, constituency building, electoral techniques, issue advertising, political action committees, public affairs and corporate social audits, judicial influence techniques, advisory panels and speaker’s bureaus, voluntarism, sponsorships, web activism, coalitions and alliances, and community investment as practices of public affairs (p. 109).

In a narrow sense as actions which address the political system, these activities can be categorized in two fields: direct lobbying on the one hand and indirect (Arntz, 2004) or, on the other hand, outside lobbying (Kollman, 1998). Direct lobbying is marked by the characteristics of non-public and immediate addressing (Kleinfeld *et al.* 2007; Leif & Speth 2003, see figure 6.1). Outside lobbying seeks to mobilize the public to influence policy decisions (Kollman, 1998). This mobilization is undertaken by public communication campaigns which can be defined as “purposive attempts to inform or influence behaviours in large audiences within a specified time period using an organized set of communication activities and featuring an array of mediated messages in multiple channels” (Atkin & Rice 2013, p. 3). Direct and outside lobbying strategies are *communicative* attempts to influence target groups. Zerfass (2010) describes three styles of communication that differ according to strength of influence. Informative communication doesn’t intend any influences and is ambivalent, argumentative communication seeks to convince substantially, persuasive communication tries to change a person’s beliefs and attitudes in line with the interest of the persuader. These styles comprise the analytic framework in this study.



**Figure 6.1:** Communication flows of direct and outside lobbying

## Digitalization

As mentioned above, digitalization is supposed to change the framework conditions for public affairs tremendously. Especially through the increasing use of social media, media landscapes have changed and new possibilities for articulation of members in civil society have risen. Howard (2005) regards a democratization of information through the Internet as changing the conditions for lobby campaigns:

“The market for political information is more open – in a sense, democratized – than ever before, in that more people buy and sell political information. Elite political lobbyists, grassroots movements, established political parties, and ‘after-work’ activists have access to the same informational market” (p. 158).

Fleisher stresses that a differentiated strategy regarding the use of social media in the context of public affairs is needed.

“It is very convenient and too tempting to some groups not to wander into public policy debates via Twitter, Facebook, corporate blogs, Wikis, and like channels. Nevertheless, organisations and public policy makers alike who participate via these channels will increasingly come to recognize that they will require an equal, if not even higher, level of differentiated PA communications competence as the more traditional channels augur” (Fleisher 2012, p. 7).

Fleisher proposes a strategically and tactical mixture of traditional media and social media in public affairs campaigns (p. 10). However, whether digital channels play a role in direct lobbying is questionable.

## Literature Review

Research in the field of digitalization and public affairs mainly focuses on outside lobbying. Brauckmann (2007) analysed public affairs strategies of nature conservation organisations in Germany and stated that using the Internet in a new era of campaigning has not begun yet. Past research in the USA shows a significant influence

of online campaigns on outside lobbying. Bergan (2009) found a substantial effect of grassroots email lobbying campaigns on voting behaviour of legislators in New Hampshire. Karpf (2010) describes the important role of email action alert campaigns to promote participation in e-petitions. He cautions against this tool as a “single-minded campaign effort” (p. 35) but instead proposes using and assessing it in a broader campaigning context. He argues against criticism of this type of engagement as “clicktivism” and “slacktivism” (Karpf 2010, p. 35).

Direct lobbying is also the focus of academic debate. Nah and Saxton (2013) examined the relationship between direct lobbying and social media usage of organisations. They found that “lobbying expenditures had an inconsistent effect, but was generally associated with less frequent social media updating and the sending of dialogic messages” (p. 306). This would suggest that “lobbying organisations are less likely to adopt social media, less likely to send social media updates, and less likely to send dialogic messages to engage their external publics” (p. 304).

While the effects of digitalization in outside lobbying have been examined quite well, there is a lack of research on digitalisation of direct lobbying. Höfelmann (2013) observed public affairs weblogs which address political decision makers. In the cases he observed, he found strategies of framing but not the dialogue predicted by Einspänner (2010, p. 34). Whether this instrument affects political decision makers remains unclear because only the content of the blogs was analysed and not any reactions of the recipients. Hemphill and Roback (2014) analysed the role of Twitter for direct lobbying. They learned that Twitter is “increasingly becoming a medium through which constituents can lobby their elected representatives in Congress about issues that matter to them” by using it in direct communication to “merely shout out their opinions on issues, citizens utilize a variety of sophisticated techniques to impact political outcomes” (p. 1200).

Despite these results, it remains an open question of whether direct lobbying by lobbyists has gone digital and what role digital media takes in public affairs in general.

## Methodology

The central question in this study is whether online communication can work effectively via public channels in the political system and therefore supersede traditional forms of lobbying or if this communications is – like the concept of “Digital Public Affairs” – “normative inflated and with hopes for a transparent, egalitarian and open communication between established players of the economy- and media system as well as individual clients, recipients, employees and interested citizens connected” (Zerfass & Pleil, 2015, p. 40). From this perspective, three research questions were proposed:

RQ1: How can online communication be located in the context of public affairs?

RQ2: Are personal and confidential conversations going to be replaced by digital communication?

RQ3: Which chances and limits can social networks offer as an instrument of lobbying in the political area, especially for NGOs?

The researchers have analysed the public affairs communication of Greenpeace, a global NGO, in Germany – the most important country for Greenpeace according to members, donations and international influence. Greenpeace is a traditional campaigning organisation that seeks to fulfil its mission through public and non-public communication. Nah and Saxton (2013) examined three strategic approaches of mission fulfilment: fundraising, lobbying and market-based strategies. Some organisations, such as the Salvation Army, attempt to fulfil their mission via a focus on fundraising. Other organisations, such as Greenpeace, focus on lobbying and advocacy to achieve their goals (p. 297). Thereby Greenpeace Germany is an ideal subject for study to analyse lobbying in a campaigning organisation. As a political player, Greenpeace makes it possible “firstly to get media attention, secondly to be that present there, that it gets recognized with its message and influence public perceptions” (Krüger & Müller-Henning, 2000, p. 9)

The organisation relies on the usage of “techniques and tactics of modern advertisement and brand communication” (Hofmann, 2010 p. 17) and also on a form of integrated communication which entails:



“a campaign conception (...), in which all communicative instruments, actions and content modules are put under the roof of an integrated idea and inserted in the frame of a consistent strategy conception” (Hofmann, 2010, p. 135).

By using this media and publicity approach, Greenpeace “belongs (...) to the most successful public players in Germany” (Hofmann, 2010 p. 9). As an innovative organisation with “special relations to the public, that it appears as a good example for communication processes” (Krüger & Müller-Henning, 2000, p. 11), Greenpeace Germany constitutes a suitable examination project for the theoretical and practical relevance of online communication in the context of public affairs within an NGO. Because it is assumed that Greenpeace Germany has a special power of innovation, it is interesting whether this NGO assesses this new and digital form of lobbying as relevant or not. From the evaluation of relevance of this pioneer organisation, first conclusions regarding the relevance of digital attempts to influence the political system can be made.

Qualitative guided interviews were chosen given the explorative character of the study. The “importance of expert knowledge for the reflexive transformation of modern industrial societies (is) barely controversial” (Bogner, Littig & Menz, 2002, p. 33). Their specific knowledge of roles and associated competence make experts particularly interesting for scientific research (Wohlrab-Sahr & Przyborski, 2009, p. 133). Through their organisational- and insider-knowledge, the staff at Greenpeace Germany that were interviewed for this research fulfil the criteria of an expert and stand “vicariously (ly) for a variety (of) to be asked actors” (Bogner *et al.*, 2002, p. 7).

Textual questioning from different perspectives were collected in the context of this study, including persons in charge of the executive and communication board as well as personnel from the sections of social media communication, public affairs and classic lobbying. Table 6.1 gives an overview of the interviews.

The interviews were assessed with a qualitative analysis of contents. After the theoretical frameworks which were used to determine the variables of interest and research questions (Gläser & Laudel, 2009, p. 203), the analysis of the interviews took place. Indicators and analysis units were set to compare the statements of the experts (Gläser & Laudel, 2009, p. 203). The raw texts of the ex-

**Table 6.1:** Interviews with experts of Greenpeace Germany

Position at Greenpeace Deutschland	Dates of the expert-interviews	Length	City
CEO	08/20/2013	56 min.	Hamburg
Head of political unit / lobbying office	08/16/2013	46 min.	Berlin
Assistant head of political unit / lobbying office	08/16/2013	68 min.	Berlin
Energy lobbyist	07/19/2013	52 min.	Berlin
Head of communication	08/30/2013	52 min.	Hamburg
Team leader press, research, new media	8/2/13	45 min.	Hamburg
Campaigns web-communicator	7/9/13	51 min.	Hamburg
Community manager	8/1/13	57 min.	Hamburg

perts were analysed in light of the research questions to extract the central statements. Following this, a categorization of the gained insights from all interviews was possible (Gläser & Laudel, 2009, p. 198; Scholl, 2003, p. 70). Finally, the summarized answers were theoretically assessed in light of the research hypotheses and their guiding questions.

## Results

A central empirical finding of this study is the addition of web elements to the classic arena of offline public affairs activities confirmed by all experts interviewed at Greenpeace Germany. The leader of Social Media, Research and Press team summarizes insights like this: “It can be possible that we make a web-based campaign, but it will never be purely web-based, but rather they will be happening with actions on the street.” Based on this, all experts confirmed in the interviews that single web-based campaigns are not possible at the moment. The head of communications sees clear limits in the exclusive use of social media:

“I think that social networks are overrated. [...] From my perspective a social network [...] alone can't create enough pressure to change anything.”

Not only does the NGO's executive-management but also the lobbyists and the social media experts feel that classic lobbying will remain very important as an instrument of the representation of interests. Even though the overall importance of web 2.0 increased within the organisation, as a lobbying instrument for political decision makers it remains unimportant and unusable. The head of the political unit of Greenpeace Germany confirms this and defines the

work within the social web from classic lobbying: “What the representation of interests within web 2.0 does, is not what we do in this sense of lobbying.” In addition, six of the interviewees indicated that a target group appropriately addressing politics via web 2.0 is not possible because politicians of vital importance and ministry officials have no social web profiles regarding their political roles or these profiles are not maintained by themselves.

Furthermore, the comparison of direct lobbying and the addressing of politics via web 2.0 channels shows that social media communication with political decision makers lacks trust, openness and honesty. The reason concerns mostly the transparency and thereby permanent monitoring of interactions in the social web which creates a “strange situation with politicians” (interview partner). The “confidante – as well as the personal contacts between politicians and non-politicians – can’t be reproduced on the internet” (interview partner).

This judgment is shared by all interviewed employees at Greenpeace Germany. A lobbyist of the NGO indicates the ethical difficulties of addressing a politician via a private profile:

“If an associate of a delegate has a private Facebook account [...] it is beyond moral decency for me to work against this man via his private account. [...] And I don’t think that it [digital lobbying] will substitute the personal conversation, because political work requires a minimum of trust.”

Similarities can also be found in the relationship between social media and mass media. The statement of a community manager is representative for the finding that mass media has still a higher status than web 2.0:

“Very important are TV and print. And I would say, the importance of online-media gets more and more accepted indeed, but they just don’t have the same significance like classic mass media yet.”

Other interviewed social media-experts share the same assessment. They moreover suggest that social networks need to be tested, evaluated and questioned again and again. On this point an interviewee, who is a member of the executive board, said:

“There are new forms of communication and we as a campaign organisation need to test to what extent those channels and forms of communication strengthen our overall social influence.”

As a result of the interviews, web 2.0-platforms indeed contribute to additional communication channels for the success of the campaign work – however, direct lobbying is still exclusively facilitating and negotiating possible solutions with policymakers. Social media work is considered to be only one part of many options that create public pressure within a broader campaign. This pressure is necessary to generally get access to politicians:

“We wouldn’t have any access, not even to speak to one politician if there weren’t actions, public pressure via actions” (interview partner, political unit).

The digital communication measures of Greenpeace Germany are strategically oriented to reach the targets of the organisation. The most important goal of the campaigns is expanding one’s reach. This means the large circulation of campaign information to users. Through mobilization measures like online-petitions, it is now possible to create even more pressure. On top of this, web 2.0 provides a fast and direct form of two-way-communication. The organisation tries to use dialogic communication, especially within Facebook and Google+, whereas Twitter is used mostly monologically.

In this dialogic communication lies the chance for relevant reference groups to be involved (stated by an interviewee working at the communication department) or users can give their input which also makes them partially producers. However, this possibility has only been used to a minor degree so far.

When making the decision on whether or not to use social networks, the channel depends on the content which needs to be transferred, says an expert on the communication team. Campaign content does not have to be transferred through web 2.0. Greenpeace communicates to specific peer groups and to the whole public which is similar to the general political public relations work.

A new dependence on campaigns and special themes was also discovered in the interviews. The prospective potential of range and mobilization of the web 2.0 also depends on whether campaign themes can gain enough attention to establish themselves versus other topics. An expert, responsible for internet and social media, states:

“It is in fact the case that [...] we are competing more with pictures of other sides during the last years and it gets harder gain attention with good content because the range keeps growing.”

The social media work of Greenpeace Germany also tries to give frequent impulses to classic mass media for them to report. The interviewed experts however stated that the sole presence of social media cannot create enough attention to seriously influence politicians and their decisions. Following an expert's statement, internet communication stands behind traditional mass media which can still mobilize the public at large today. In addition, the interviews made it clear that even if there is an online-strategy for public affairs, it is uncertain if sufficient involvement creates chances for success. Following the opinion of an expert in the field of the Internet and social media at Greenpeace Germany, the exclusive use of the social networks offers at least the chance to place pressure on decision makers for a short period of time. The general increase of social media for the NGO can be seen in the growth of staff.

## Discussion

When examining the first research question regarding if and how online communication can be located in the context of public affairs, the web 2.0-platforms and their use can be apprehend as an additional communication channel to assert pressure in public. A similar approach has been taken by organisations in their offline campaign strategies for a long time.

An involvement of large online user communities as Einspänner (2010) describes as “Digital Public Affairs” or “digital lobbying” could not be confirmed. Possible “Digital-Public-Affairs-activities” of Greenpeace Germany are rather focused on already existing campaign strategies and mechanisms of strategic online communication.

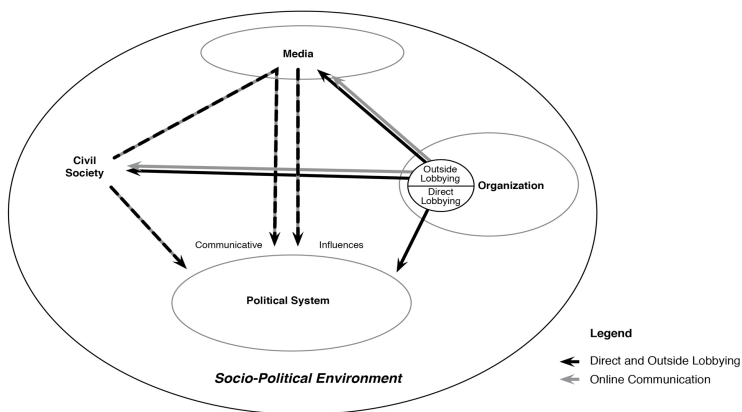
The key problem that blocks “digital lobbying” is the missing addressability of political players. A number of politicians and ministry officials do not even have social media accounts in their roles as decision makers. Whether a large number of them use those accounts personally and not with other staff members is another unanswered question.

Looking at the importance of public opinion making, digital channels are certainly not central for campaign success. As one of the most successful campaign NGOs of Germany, Greenpeace is currently not using purely web-based campaigns nor does it intend to in the future. The direct contact with decision makers continues to play an unchanged large role within campaign strategies.

Trust as the foundation of an influential relationship of communication between politicians and lobbyists is only possible in the private room of non-publicity. Politicians are not open and honest about certain issues and cannot outline internal problems and controversial subjects if that trust is missing. So far, web 2.0 cannot provide this trust and safety. Through face-to-face communication emotional exchange and possible negative and positive reactions can be perceived better than with an indirect approach via a variety of web 2.0-users.

Examining the second research question, classic lobbying and face-to-face-conversations with political decision makers are indispensable because the personal conversation allows for a wide repertoire of communicative influence (see Fig. 6.2).

While social media communication is used to inform for which it is well-suited, personal conversations are better for an argumentative and persuasive communication. Within the meaning of Zerfass’ communication styles (Zerfass, 2010), lobbying applies to all three forms while online communication only informs, however argumentative and persuasive communication applies with restrictions. Personal dialogue is not limited to a certain text length like Twitter determines. Those direct conversations are more suited for the development of argumentations and therefore have not lost any importance.



**Figure 6.2:** Communication flows of lobbying and online communication

NGOs also have obvious chances within the social web (see third research question). This includes for example the two-way-communication with web-users. The related feedback-function enables NGOs to test campaign content and to change the course of the campaign if necessary. In this context, users can contribute to the campaign and its target compliance with their own content. This strengthens the emotional attachment to the organisation and the motivation for further donations or active volunteer work.

The usage of web 2.0-platforms increases the range of influence such that interests and targets get as much attention as possible. The recipient-circle gets wider as more journalistic players of traditional media pick up these online-transferred messages. Nevertheless, the ranges are limited and restricted by the operators of the social networks. Reaching a larger public is therefore often only possible through financial payment. Other positive network chances on the social web can be considered: They offer the possibility of an easier coalition working with other organisations of civil society to achieve even higher attention and range.

This is also one of the biggest limitations because the civil society can only be mobilized to a limited extent. The number of topics that are simultaneously in the public debate are limited because they are still set by traditional mass media which itself has a limited adaption capacity – just like the public's attention. Furthermore the public debate is controllably confined.

The vicariousness of addressing the political area with arguments transferred to the political decision makers leads only to conditional influence. This is the reason why messages can be understood in totally different ways. In the worst case, digital partial publics could turn on their own targets and the actual aim of the campaign can be fumbled.

## Limitations and further research

As with any research, this study has some limitations. Research was done in a single case design, so results can only be generalized limit-edly. Moreover, Greenpeace Germany is a non-profit organisation. Similarities in style with other lobby actors, e.g. on behalf of corporations, could only be assumed and further research in this field would be useful. This study only examined the perspective of communicators in this process. Further research could include the recipient side of policy makers and their patterns of communication. Moreover it could be assumed that there are different styles of media usage in different nations. Therefore, results in similar studies and cases could vary from country to country.

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## Chapter 7

# Perceptions from the bottom up: Relationships between non-profit organisations and their corporate donors

Louise van Dyk

## Introduction

In the corporate sector success has been repeatedly linked to the ongoing and strategic process of stakeholder relationship management (Freeman & Reed 1983; Steyn & Puth 2000). Managing stakeholder relationships entails identifying and managing the needs of organisational stakeholders and relationships are described by the different dimensions of that relationship. The following dimensions are among those identified in corporate communication literature: commitment, trust, satisfaction, cooperation and the use of dialogic, open communication (Bruning & Galloway 2003; Grunig 2002; Jahansoozi 2002; Ledingham 2003; Ledingham & Bruning 1998).

Although fundamentally different from private sector business, the survival of non-profit organisations greatly depends on successful relationships with stakeholders as well. Arguably the most important external group a non-profit organisation has to deal with is their donors given that their livelihood depends on financial support from those donors. Through the organisational function of corporate social responsibility, corporate companies become contributors to the society and environment in which they operate and thereby become an important source of funding for non-profit organisations (IoDSA 2009).

In the study reported on here, the communication relationship between non-profit organisations and their corporate donors are described predominantly according to the perceptions of the donors and the management challenges resulting from the state of the stakeholder relationship explored. It is argued that understanding the perceptions of one's donors could contribute to non-profit organisations managing donor-relationship more successfully thereby securing more sustainable income streams.

## Theoretical Background

For an investigation into the stakeholder relationship between non-profit organisations and their corporate donors, it is firstly important to explicate the theoretical context of stakeholder relationships and secondly to understand the environmental context of donor relationships. In order to put the study into context these two themes will be covered in the current section.

### Stakeholder relationships

The stakeholder theory centres on the idea that organisational stakeholders, those groups that influence the organisation or is influenced by the organisation, should be considered in all organisational activities (Freeman 1984; Freeman 2001). Stakeholders could benefit or harm the organisation to the point that organisational survival depends on these individuals or groups (Freeman *et al.* 2010).

In order to expand on the theory credited to Freeman and elaborate on the pragmatic aspects of harbouring stakeholder relationships, theorists identified antecedents, indicators and outcomes of stakeholder relationships (cf. Broom, Casey & Ritchey 2000; Grunig & Huang 2000; Hon & Grunig 1999; Kim 2007; Ledingham 2003). Some authors focused on defining relational outcomes – the effects or results of a successful relationship and a benchmark for measuring stakeholder relationships. Goal achievement, loss of autonomy/shared control, commitment, trust, satisfaction and routine behaviour were some of the relational outcomes identified by authors like Grunig and Huang (2000) and Broom *et al.* (2000). Rela-

tional indicators – pointers to the state of a relationship – included aspects such as reciprocity, trust, credibility, mutual legitimacy, investment, cooperation, shared goals, interdependence, adaptation, summative constructs, structural and social bonds and passion (Grunig, Grunig & Ehling 1992).

Based on popularity, simplicity and reputation, the outcomes described by Hon and Grunig (1999) were selected as the theoretical base for this study. Hon and Grunig (1999) adapted outcomes of successful interpersonal relationships to grasp relationships in organisational settings. They measure relationships based mainly on control mutuality, trust, commitment and satisfaction.

### **Control mutuality**

Mutuality of control in a relationship is representative of agreement between the parties about power and influence in their relationship (Hon & Grunig 1999). Various relationship scholars identify power sharing as an important aspect of stakeholder relationships (cf. Jahansoozi 2002; Ledingham & Bruning 1998). In a relationship between two parties it is common that one party will have more power than the other and as long as there is agreement about the power distribution and as long as some degree of power lies with both parties, the relationship can be successful.

### **Trust**

Trust is a highly complex issue and is the relational indicator that most relationship scholars agree upon as being central to successful stakeholder relationships (cf. Grunig 2002; Jahansoozi 2002; Ledingham & Bruning 1998; Ledingham 2003). According to the operationalisation by Hon and Grunig (1999), trust consists of integrity, dependability and competence. Integrity refers to the belief that the other party is fair and just. Dependability indicates the conviction that the other party will make good on promises and competence implies that there is a belief that the other party has the ability to do what it says it will (Hon & Grunig 1999).

## **Commitment**

Commitment refers to the parties' perception on whether or not the relationship is worth their time and energy (Hon & Grunig 1999). The feeling that the maintenance and development of a relationship with the other party is valuable is an important differentiator between good and challenging relationships (Bruning & Galloway 2003; Ledingham & Bruning 1998).

## **Satisfaction**

The extent of fulfilment in the relationship is how satisfaction is determined (Hon & Grunig 1999). Enforced positive convictions and expectations motivate parties in a relationship to maintain and promote it.

## **Donor relationships**

Because stakeholder theory was developed for use in a corporate environment and the relationship between non-profit organisations and their donors are in a context much different from expected stakeholder relationships such as relations between a client and a service provider or an organisation and its suppliers. The specific environment of donor relationships should be considered when managing this specific relationship.

Social development non-profit organisations fit into the development sector as the providers of social services not sufficiently provided by the state in the hopes of affecting change in their communities (Lewis 2003; Rossouw 2010). From the perspective of donors, non-profit organisations are in an ideal position to mobilise funding they have available for social investment and act as an implementer of corporate social responsibility initiatives (Shumate & O'Connor 2010). Trialogue, a knowledge centre on issues of corporate social investment in South Africa, estimates that a quarter of all funding available to non-profit organisations functioning in South Africa will come from corporate sources (Duff 2013).



Notwithstanding their clear purpose to serve the interest of society, they are hindered by the nature of their mandate to serve their communities without distributing property or income to members or office bearers (DSD 2011). Because they cannot generate funds, like businesses do, they rely on externally funding their activities (Byrne & Sahay 2007; Helmig, Jegers & Lapsley 2004; Hodge & Piccolo 2005). A lack of stable income is one of the biggest challenges facing many non-profit organisations and their infrastructure and staff competence suffers as a result (Boafo 2006). It is also this lack of financial sustainability that creates the over-dependence on donors decreasing the non-profit organisations' autonomy and increases their sensitivity to demands by donors (Byrne & Sahay 2007; Helmig *et al.* 2004; Hodge & Piccolo 2005).

The context and its specific challenges have a bearing on the relationships people and groups in this environment have with each other and it is only logical to assume that it will influence relationships non-profit organisations have with their donors.

Using the literature review on stakeholder relationships and the contextualisation of the relationship between non-profit organisations and their corporate donors as point of departure, two research questions guide the inquiry:

RQ 1: How do corporate donors view their relationships with their non-profit organisations in terms of control, trust, commitment and other relational realities?

RQ 2: What communication challenges do the perceptions of donors highlight that would need to be considered in the way in which non-profit organisations manage donor relationships?

## Research Design

The relationship dimensions as described by Hon and Grunig (1999) formed the foundation of the empirical inquiry that included two methods; partially structured interviews and a survey. The dimensions of control mutuality, trust, commitment and satisfaction are operationally defined by Hon and Grunig (1999) and contained in both a suggested survey questionnaire (Hon & Grunig 1999) and an interview schedule (Grunig 2002).

Partially structured interviews were held with six key informants in the industry in South Africa (two managers of non-profit organisations, two representatives of corporate donors and two corporate social investment-consultants) using an expanded version of the Grunig (2002) interview schedule adapted to also stimulate discussion on some context-specific issues during the interviews. Using the findings from the interviews, newly formulated items were added to the Hon & Grunig (1999) questionnaire to form an inventory that, after expert panel review and pilot testing, totalled 106 5-point Likert items.

Gaining access to the survey population proved to be rather difficult as the individuals who are representatives of corporate donors seems to be 'hidden' in businesses with very little direct contact details available. The sample was drawn by means of various non-probability methods including convenience sampling (*Trialogue CSI Handbook* and a client list from a Black Economic Empowerment consultancy), as well as purposive and snowball sampling during internet searches for contact details of corporate social investment representatives. A total of 137 survey questionnaires were distributed via e-mail link of which 67 were completed.

Data-analysis consisted of exploratory factor analysis at construct level and reliability testing. The small realised sample prevented calculations of all the items combined and a separate factor analyses were done on construct level using an oblique rotation (Promax rotation) in order to establish the underlying sub-constructs. The exploratory factor analysis of the responses survey yielded 24 factors for the four relationship dimensions represented by 80 items in total. The factors that emerged from the analysis were tested thereafter for internal consistency. Cronbach's Alpha values of 0.6 and upward were considered an acceptable internal consistency (Abu-Bader 2011; CCS 2011) specifically because a diversity of constructs consisting of mostly latent variables was measured (Field 2009). In addition, for some factors emerging from the exploratory factor analysis, only two items were grouped into a factor. In two of these cases a Cronbach's Alpha value lower than 0.6 was considered acceptable, as Field (2009) indicated reliability analysis on very few items may turn up a lower Cronbach's Alpha value. Based on this statement by Field (2009) and the interpretative nature of the study as a whole, it was decided to that a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.5 (for two items)/0.6 (for three and more) were considered acceptable, a value of more than 0.7 is considered good, more

**Table 7.1:** Summary of relationship dimensions and contextual elements

Summary from donor survey	
Relationship dimension	Contextual elements
Control/Power (Mean:3.25)	Control mutuality (Mean:3.51) Acceptance of donor dominance (Mean:2.63) Sustainability and responsibility (Mean:2.62)
Trust (Mean:3.91)	Integrity and intention (Mean:3.61) Skills (Mean:3.34) Willingness to allow decision-making power (Mean:2.57) Consideration of the other (Mean:3.24)
Commitment (Mean:3.81)	Desire to relate and maintain (Mean:3.80) Loyalty and importance (Mean:3.50) Obligation to relate (Mean:4.14)
Relational realities (Mean:3.33)	Own transparency (Mean:3.18) Transparency of the other (Mean:3.32) Accommodation (Mean:3.97) Profit/Output demands (Mean:3.07) Expenditure reporting requirements (Mean:3.90) Understanding differences (Mean:3.11) Internal constraints (Mean:2.79)

than 0.8 is considered very good and higher than 0.9 is considered excellent. As a result of the reliability testing the number of items was reduced 60 items grouped into 17 factors. Based on the exploratory factor analysis, reliability tests and, where necessary, the literature and the qualitative results, a list of items was retained as valid and reliable for the description of stakeholder relationships between non-profit organisations and their donors as perceived by the donors.

## Empirical and Results

In order to describe the perceptions of corporate donors regarding their relationship with the non-profit organisations they fund, the frequencies in response to each retained item in the questionnaire are discussed. The discussion is presented based on the relationship dimensions and contextual elements for each dimension as summarised in Table 7.1.

## Relationship dimension: Control

### Contextual element: Control mutuality

In their responses to the survey questionnaire, 54.8 percent (N = 62) of donors agreed that they have enough say in decision making, 57 percent (N = 62) were in agreement that the non-profit organisations listen to their opinions and 70.5 percent (N = 61) perceived the non-profit organisations as regarding their opinions as legitimate. The majority of donors also agreed that they and the non-profit organisations they fund are attentive to each other and that non-profit organisations are cooperative (70.9% / N = 62). These perceptions of agreement about the degree of control donors experience confirms the qualitative findings that suggested that non-profit organisations willingly hand control over to their corporate donors as the power balance is in favour of the donors. These two quotes from non-profit managers reflect the powerlessness experienced by them in their relationships with donors:

*“It is donor-driven development – They sit in their offices and decide on what they think will work well and then they just drop it on you and say that this is what you must do if you want our funding” – Manager of a non-profit organisation*

*“We do what they say – they say jump, we ask how high... We do not have any control as an NGO ; we do not even try to have” – Manager of a non-profit organisation*

Notwithstanding the general agreement with statements about control mutuality, the donors were divided in their opinions about their influence on the decision-makers in non-profit organisations with 32.8 percent in disagreement, the exact same number 32.8 percent in agreement and a large proportion (34.4%) indicating neutral feelings about their influence on decision-makers. The qualitative findings indicated a need for corporate donors to exert control in their relationship with funded non-profit organisations in order to comply with governance guidelines. Their separated responses to this one item could be an indication that they do not necessarily see their control as influence, but rather as doing what is needed to realise their objectives. This need to work towards their own objectives can also be seen in the following qualitative responses:

*“Corporates are only attentive to community organisations to the extent where their objectives and impact are at stake”* – Corporate Social Investment consultant

*“We have clear outcomes that we wish to see and we require that they measure, track and report on them”* – Representative of a corporate donor

On the whole, the donor respondents displayed positive perceptions of *control mutuality* within the non-profit organisation-corporate relationships of corporate social investment. Although it is only part of the more complex notion of control within this relationship, the feeling of control mirrors the qualitative findings of this study. The divided response to the perception of donors regarding their influence on non-profit organisations reflects the perception that non-profit organisations are autonomous to some extent.

### **Contextual element: Acceptance of donor dominance**

The corporate donors who responded to the relationship survey indicated varying perceptions about their dominant position on the non-profit organisations they fund. The largest proportion was in disagreement with the statement that they as donors dominate their relationship with non-profit organisations (58% /N = 62), that they dominate because they provide money to non-profit organisations (58.3% /N = 60) or that they dominate because they are compelled by governance requirements (38.7% / N=62). It can, however, not be ignored that more than 20 percent of respondents indicated a neutral stance towards all the statements in this group. Much like the qualitative responses shown in the previous section, the donors experience their dominance rather as a means to the end of reaching their objectives. These two quotes illustrate the point:

*“When a proposal is presented to us by an NPO it is needs-based and is already an indication of what needs need to be attended to and when we approve that we respond to those needs”* – Representative of a corporate donor

*“There is a certain degree of control due to the agreements that we put in place which are legally binding”*  
– Representative of a corporate donor

The ambivalent survey results point to a difference in opinion about power and control within the relationship and echo the problem of power relations in this context, as seen in the qualitative results and literature (cf. Byrne & Sahay 2007; Helmig *et al.* 2004; Hodge & Piccolo 2005).

### **Contextual element: Sustainability and responsibility**

The largest proportion of donors was in agreement with statements about their responsibility in the relationship and their opinions about sustainability and participation of non-profit organisations. The two statements that refer to power and control in the relationship (but are less strongly stated than in previous elements) also yielded agreement by the largest proportion of respondents, indicating that the donors felt that they are managing the power they have in this relationship in a responsible way.

Although comparatively many respondents indicated neutrality (35.5% / N = 62 and 32.8% / N = 61 respectively), the largest proportion were still in agreement with the statements, “When we interact with the non-profit organisations, we try to go about our powerful position in a responsible way” (54.9% / N = 62) and “The non-profit organisations hold enough power in their relationships with us, for them to be able to raise their concerns” (60.7% / N = 61). The majority of the donors (67.8% / N = 62) were in agreement that some of the responsibility of including non-profit organisations in decision making rests with them as the donors. Linking to the responsibilities donors agreed on having in the context of this relationship, the majority of donors (61.3% / N = 62) agreed that donors try to secure sustainability for non-profit organisations, thereby recognising their bigger responsibility towards the developing society of South Africa. The acceptance of social responsibility reflects the sentiment found in qualitative responses, at the core of governance legislation in South Africa and in the spirit of benchmarks such as the King Reports on corporate governance (IoDSA 2009).

## Relationship dimension: Trust

Contextual element: Trust on the basis of integrity and intention

The integrity of non-profit organisations was largely perceived by donors to be intact, considering their relationship with each other non-profit organisations were generally perceived as being fair (62.9% / N = 67), honest (53.8% / N = 67), just (47.8% / N = 67) and guided by moral principles (53.7% / N = 67). Although the largest proportions of respondents were in agreement with the statement, the large number of respondents who indicated the neutral option regarding the fairness (29.9% / N = 67), honesty (31.3% / N = 67), justness (26.9% / N = 67) and moral core (32.8% / N = 67) of non-profit organisations is interpreted as an indication that the donors are not completely convinced of the integrity and intention of non-profit organisations.

Integrity, further explicated by perceiving the other party as being trustworthy in terms of keeping promises (Hon & Grunig 1999), also solicited agreement overall (although 29.9 percent and 40.3 percent of respondents respectively reacted neutrally). The majority of donor respondents, 64.2 percent (N = 67), were in agreement that non-profit organisations do their best to keep promises and 52.3 percent (N = 67) agreed that they can be relied on to keep promises. The latter is possibly lower because it reflects actual reliability while the former reflects intended reliability. This differentiation is also clear from the qualitative responses and well-illustrated in the following quote:

*"It is sometimes circumstances that do not allow them (non-profit organisations) to deliver on promises. One example that I can give you is [name of non-profit organisation], they depend on government to give them money, they could not pay their staff and the staff went on strike. They are not always in control of whether they can deliver as promised"* – Corporate Social Investment consultant

The intention and ability of non-profit organisations were also regarded in a positive light by their donors as 76.1 percent (N = 67) were in agreement that non-profit organisations strive to be successful, 65.6 percent (N = 67) were in agreement that they have the ability to serve their communities and 53.8 percent (N = 67) agreed that non-profit organisations have the ability to accomplish what they promise to do.

### **Contextual element: Trust on the basis of competence**

The largest proportion of donor respondents was generally confident about the skills/competence of non-profit organisations, with 49.3 percent (N = 67) in agreement with the statement. The majority of donors (55.2% / N = 67) also felt non-profit organisations are successful at their endeavours and 48.8 percent (N = 67) thought non-profit organisations can be left to work unsupervised. It is interesting that a large proportion of the respondents reacted neutrally or negatively to statements pertaining to the skills of the non-profit organisations. This sentiment can also be found in the interview responses as illustrated in the quote below:

*“We work with local people in our company that also do not have the capacity. We do not have the funding to hire highly qualified staff. Corporate companies really do not understand that, they think that an NPO should run just as smoothly as a department in their company where they pay very high salaries” – Manager of a non-profit organisation*

The ambiguity in survey results echoed certain qualitative findings, namely that donors sometimes question the competence and dependability of non-profit organisations and this confirms literature that identified the lacking infrastructure and other disparities between the corporate and social development sectors (Boafo 2006).



### **Contextual element: Willingness to let the other make decisions**

From the responses of donors it is clear that they are unwilling to let non-profit organisations make decisions on their part (51.5% / N = 66) or take decisions that may affect them as donors (56.1% / N = 66). A large proportion of respondents (25.8 percent and 28.8 percent respectively) responded neutrally to the statements, but generally the donors indicated that they are not willing to let non-profit organisations take important decisions in the relationship. These findings link with the findings on power and control issues within the relationship and is also experienced as such by non-profit participants in the qualitative inquiry of this study. This quote illustrates the lack of decision-making power experienced by non-profit organisations:

*"We do what they say – they say jump, we ask how high...  
We do not have any control as an NGO ; we do not even  
try to have"* – Manager of a non-profit organisation

The responses make it clear the donors do not trust non-profit organisations with decision -making power even if that decision-making power is not absolute, as per the definition of Hon and Grunig (1999).

### **Contextual element: Consideration of the other party**

The donor respondents revealed varied reactions to statements concerning consideration in the relationship. Of the 67 respondents, 47 percent were in agreement that non-profit organisations take their opinions into account when making decisions, but only 31.4 percent perceived non-profit organisations to be concerned with their donors when making important decisions. The majority of respondents (52.2%) responded neutrally to the latter statement while 33.3 percent responded neutrally to the former. Based on the findings it is clear that the donors do not specifically feel disregarded by the non-profit organisations, but they also do not feel confident about the consideration they are given from non-profit organisations.

Interpreting these findings together with the earlier finding that non-profit organisations do exert some degree of autonomy despite being less powerful in the relationship the findings here could also be interpreted as being part of non-profit organisations attending to their own agenda above that of their donors in some instances.

### **Relationship dimension: Commitment**

Contextual element: Desire to relate and maintain the relationship

Based on the survey responses, it is evident that donors generally regard non-profit organisations as being committed to relating to their donors and to maintaining their relationship. Non-profit organisations were perceived by 75.8 percent (N = 62) of the donors as seeking to maintain a relationship with their donors and 67.2 percent (N = 61) were in agreement that non-profit organisations try to maintain a long-term commitment to their donors. Judging the donor's desire to relate to non-profit organisations, 66.1 percent (N = 62) were in agreement that they would rather work together with non-profit organisations than not.

Within the context of this relationship (non-profit organisations receiving life-giving funding from donors) is it not surprising that non-profit organisations are committed to working with and maintaining a relationship with their donors. The dependency noted in literature and the qualitative findings confirm the findings reported here (cf. Byrne & Sahay 2007; Hodge & Piccolo 2005).

Contextual element: Loyalty and importance

A sense of loyalty from the non-profit organisations, a feeling of loyalty (when comparing non-profit organisations to other stakeholders) and perceptions about the long-term nature of the relationship were combined by the donor survey respondents to define this contextual element of the relationship dimension *commitment*.

This element of commitment, importance of the stakeholders and a sense of loyalty to them solicited wide-ranging responses from donor respondents. Though the largest proportion (37.7% / N = 61) of donors agreed that they commit to long-term funding, 27.9 percent disagreed and 18 percent were neutral. This goes to show that many donors do commit to long-term funding, but many do not. Despite varied responses regarding long-term funding, the majority of donors (62.3% / N = 61) were in agreement that there is a long-lasting bond between them and the non-profit organisations.

The responses to these two items combined indicated that the donors distinguish between long-term funding and a long-term bond, indicating that some may not commit to long-term funding, but do see the relationship with non-profit organisations as a long-term plan. Perceptions about the loyalty of non-profit organisations are mainly positive with 72.6 percent (N = 62) in agreement that they experience loyalty from them. Although they largely feel a long-term bond with non-profit organisations and experience loyalty from them, the largest proportion of respondents (46.8% / N = 62) responded neutrally, indicating that they do not specifically value the relationship more or less than other relationships.

The duration of the funding term was a divisive issue in the qualitative interviews, where parties agreed that funding cycles are generally annual and that funding for longer than three years is unusual. The non-profit organisations argued that funding terms hamper any possibility of sustainability and corporate donors argued that the funding cycles are based on tax years:

*“Sustainable impact does not come overnight and if you have annual funding cycles you cannot create sustainable impact with a child for instance – it is just crazy expectation”* – Corporate Social Investment consultant

*“You cannot create impact in twelve months and with a million rand”* – Corporate Social Investment consultant

### Contextual element: Obligation to relate

From the responses of donors the importance of corporate governance and the social responsibilities of corporate companies became apparent. A large proportion (90.4% / N = 62) of the respondents was in agreement that corporate companies should contribute to the society in which they operate and 90.3 percent (N = 62) of the

respondents were in agreement that it is important to comply with regulations and codes of corporate social investment. Slightly less, but still a majority (79% / N = 62) of donors felt that they keep these governance and social investment guidelines in mind when interacting with the non-profit organisations they fund.

The survey results supported the qualitative findings that indicated the obligation to relate to each other features in the perceptions of commitment within this relational context.

### **Relationship dimension: relational realities**

#### **Contextual element: Own transparency**

Almost half of the donors (48.4% / N = 60) were in agreement that non-profit organisations are free to access their financial reports, while a substantial 40 percent were in disagreement that this is possible. Mirroring the respondents' reaction on the openness of their financial statements, 44.2 percent (N = 61) believed that they (as donors) are financially transparent and 42.6 percent (N = 61) felt that they share information openly with the non-profit organisations while 32.8 percent and 36.1 percent were neutral regarding these items.

Based on the findings above, it is concluded that no outright claim of transparency on the part of the donors was made by the respondents as substantial numbers for each item responded neutrally or disagreed with statements about financial transparency. The qualitative findings indicate that transparency in this relationship is regarded as mainly required from non-profit organisations and the transparency of donors was never critically considered again showing to the power imbalance where the same requirements are not met by both sides.

#### **Contextual element: Other transparency**

Regarding the transparency of non-profit organisations as perceived by their donors, the majority were neutral when asked to respond to the statement, "The non-profit organisations are truthful about funding issues" while only 39.3 percent agreed with the statement. Almost the same majority as for the first statement (45.9% / N = 61) reacted neutrally about the openness of non-profit organisations about their real situation and whether they feel the non-profit or-

ganisations shares information openly (44.3 percent reacted neutrally). The responses of the donors reflect that they are generally unconvinced that the non-profit organisations are open and truthful and the non-profit organisations are possibly regarded as suspicious in this regard.

As the focus of the qualitative responses was on the transparency of non-profit organisations, the findings here echo those reported during interviews. The following quote puts a possible explanation strongly:

*“It is not in their (non-profit organisations) benefit to be (transparent). If I have approached you for one million rand for a programme, remember the risk, you can say yes or no to me. Then I apply to ten corporates. What happens if all ten says yes. Now I have ten million rand. NPOs will not necessarily tell their funders about this. That is why I say it is not in their best interest to be transparent and I don't blame them”* – Corporate Social Investment consultant

In this quote a defence from a non-profit organisation for deceiving their donors can be seen:

*“Some corporates, you (non-profit organisation) say you need R150 000 and then they give you R70 000. Now what are you supposed to do?”* – Manager of a non-profit organisation

It seems that the corporate donors in general have reason to doubt the transparency and honesty of their non-profit beneficiaries. The actions of non-profit organisations do not seem entirely unmotivated either illustrating a challenge of this relationship.

### Contextual element: Profit/output demands from donors

As accommodating differences is an important aspect of donor-non-profit organisation relationships, the perceptions on the profit-making nature of corporate companies, specifically the perceived understanding from non-profit organisations, is an important part of this stakeholder relationship. The donor respondents indicated that

they generally cannot agree or disagree that non-profit organisations understand their profit-driven nature with 45.9 percent (N = 60) and 42.6 percent (N = 61) selected the neutral option when given the statement “non-profit organisations understand that it is important for us to be profit-driven”.

From the qualitative results and the literature it is clear that the two parties are from different worlds. Corporate respondents indicated that they expect a return on their investment as their stakeholder demand it from them even if that return is social and not financial. From their perspective there is no other way to view this relationship while non-profit organisations cannot associate with the demands reported by donors.

### Contextual element: Accommodation

Donor respondents largely agreed with the statement that their funding of a non-profit organisation implies their support of that organisation's goals (80.3% / N = 61). The majority (82% / N = 61) were in agreement that they try to take the realities of non-profit organisations into account and 81.9 percent (N = 61) were in agreement that non-profit organisations and funders can work together for social development. It seems as if donors try to accommodate, support and work together with non-profit organisations, but the majority (70.5% / N = 61) think that the needs of non-profit organisations are greater than what they can satisfy.

Overall, the majority of donors felt that they accommodate the non-profit organisations by claiming to support their goals, taking realities into account and working together with non-profit organisations. The findings are also implied in some of the qualitative responses with this quote representing a general feeling amongst donors:

*“When a proposal is presented to us by an NPO it is needs-based and is already an indication of what needs need to be attended to and when we approve that we respond to those needs”* – Representative of a corporate donor

### Contextual element: Expenditure reporting requirements

Of the donor respondents, 86.7 percent (N = 60) were in agreement that they demand transparency from non-profit organisations about their operational requirements and a smaller but still substantial majority of 65.6 percent (N = 61) were in agreement that they require reports on the details of funding spent.

It is not surprising that donors require the non-profit organisations to be honest about their operational expenses and how funding was spent. This finding ties with earlier findings about the importance of the corporate donor's objectives and own mandate when engaging with non-profit organisations.

### Contextual element: Understanding differences

As in the case with previously discussed aspects about understanding and accommodating differences, almost half of the donors (49.2% / N = 61) responded neutrally to the statement, "The non-profit organisations understand the realities of the corporate world" with a substantial 27.9 percent disagreeing. The majority of donors at least agreed that both parties in the donor-non-profit organisation relationship understand the differences between them; a large proportion (36.1% / N = 61) reacted neutrally. From these responses it is clear that the donors are not convinced that the non-profit organisations understand their reality, neither are they confident about their own understanding of the context of non-profit organisations.

These results support the qualitative findings of this study, which indicated that the two parties are *worlds apart* and show limited understanding for each other's situations.

### Contextual element: Internal constraints for non-profit organisations

Literature on non-profit organisations indicates that they are hampered by various challenges such as limited resources (Boafo 2006), financial unsustainability (Hodge & Picollo 2005) and exposure to complex environments (Helmig *et al.* 2004). It is expected that the donors indicate internal constraints of non-profit organisations to be one of the realities of this stakeholder relationship.

The [non-profit organisations] themselves are the main cause of time constraints when it comes to implementing funded projects – 30 percent

From the qualitative data, the finding that non-profit organisations themselves cause many of their operational problems emerged. The survey responses indicate divergent views on this issue with the majority (45% / N = 61) reacting neutrally to the statement about the non-profit organisations being the main cause of time constraints when it comes to implementing funded projects. Moreover, more respondents were in disagreement than in agreement with the statement, showing that there was no clear consensus. Similarly, the largest proportion (44.3% / N = 61) of donors responded neutrally when indicating whether they perceive non-profit organisations as slow when acting on promises made. A large proportion (41%) indicated that they do not feel that non-profit organisations are slow.

## Discussion and Conclusion

The findings discussed in the previous section illuminate specific dimensions and elements relevant to the context of the relationship between non-profit organisations and their corporate donors. By reducing the data with exploratory factor analysis and reliability analysis, the relationship cannot only be described, but also viewed with the context taken into account as only those items deemed valid and reliable are considered. In this section the findings will be used to address the research questions to conclude the study by discussing the perceptions of donors regarding their relationship with non-profit recipients followed by the challenges and management implications of their perceptions.

Donors generally feel positive about their relationships with non-profit recipients and mostly their responses reflect their perceptions of their own role and expectations and that of non-profit organisations.

Donors generally feel that some of the power in the relationship resides with them (Mean: 3.51) and they believe that they act in a sustainable and responsible manner with their powerful position (Mean: 3.62,) while the donors also show lower agreement about their dominant position (Mean: 2.63).



Donors seem to trust the integrity, intention (Mean: 3.61), skills (3.34) and consideration on the part of the non-profit organisations while they also are unwilling to allow non-profit organisations to take decisions in the relationship (Mean: 2.57).

Donors want to relate to their non-profit organisations and generally feel non-profit organisations also have the desire to relate to them and maintain a relationship with them (Mean: 3.80). They also generally value their relationship with non-profit organisations, experience loyalty from non-profit organisations and seek a long-term bond with the non-profit organisations they fund (Mean: 3.50). Donors also reported that they have an obligation to relate to non-profit organisations (Mean 4.14) because of governance requirements.

Donors also perceive themselves (Mean: 3.18) and the non-profit organisations (Mean: 3.32) as generally transparent. They also believe they are accommodating of the differences between them and the non-profit organisations (Mean: 3.97) and generally agree that they require reporting on all expenses (Mean: 3.90). The lower mean scores here were for their perception regarding the understanding from non-profit organisations of their profitable nature and the output demands that flow from it (Mean: 3.07). They also seem less confident about the non-profit organisations' understanding of the differences between them (Mean: 3.11) and show a neutral opinion about the internal constraints of non-profit organisations (Mean: 2.79).

The overall mean scores for the relationship dimensions are positive although lower mean scores for some of the contextual elements and additional perspectives arising from qualitative data show relationship challenges. Some of the challenges visible include varied responses with reference to the dominance and power of donors and the unwillingness of donors to trust non-profit organisations when it comes to decision making. The positive aspects highlighted in the survey results comprise general affection perceived by the donors and agreement in terms of compliance commitment and the obligation to relate to non-profit organisations. The nature of stakeholder relationship management between non-profit organisations and their corporate donors is generally positive when viewed from the side of the donors and while relational challenges need to be addressed the relationship shows opportunities for sustainable development.

Visible in both qualitative and quantitative results and supported by the literature, it is clear that the relational challenges experienced by donors relate to the challenges faced by non-profit organisations in their general functioning and these limitations have bearing on their relationship with their donors.

The power imbalance in the favour of donors, a perceived lack of transparency of non-profit organisations about funding issues, and the divergent views on commitment all link to the limited resources generally associated with non-profit organisation management. The results also indicate that the questionable competence of non-profit organisations and time constraints in project execution are connected to challenges in recruiting and retaining competent staff. The perceptions of donors that non-profit organisations do not understand the realities of the business world and their reluctance to allow non-profit organisations decision-making power could be traced to general management and environmental difficulties faced by non-profit organisations. For non-profit organisations to turn this knowledge into an effective management strategy, it is important to know that they must understand the context of their donors and acknowledge that in all interactions from application right through to reporting and to also communication clearly about their own situational realities with their donors to facilitate a positive relationship with them.

Understanding and confronting the relationship challenges experienced by donors in their relationship with non-profit recipients in the context of corporate responsibility could guide the managers of non-profit organisations to manage this relationship and increase the likelihood of securing long-term corporate funds.

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## Chapter 8

# Audiovisual narrative in the advertising strategy and creativity of NGOs

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## Introduction. The need to attract and retain private aid

Effective communication is becoming an essential instrument for conducting humanitarian activities. Regarding human rights, the latest Amnesty International report (2016) took nearly 500 pages to set out the details of situations of conflict, discrimination, repression and attacks on human dignity in the five continents.

In the economic sphere it has been more difficult in recent years to attract state funds for charitable initiatives. The first decades of the twenty-first century are proving to be times of change, of profound social transformations, which are particularly evident in the media. A special effort is needed in dissemination and promotion, both of the institutional brand and of the largest possible number of corporate actions.

The debt crisis in the countries of southern Europe has had a marked influence on the decline in fundraising. In Spain the reduction in state budgets for international cooperation has made it necessary for institutions dedicated to charity work to look for new methods of attracting funds. According to data for 2012, for example, the budget allocation for international cooperation stood at 1981 levels (Agudo, 2012), although these figures have been gradually recovering from 2015.

The focus for raising money has shifted to private contributions, as recommended in reports on this sector in Spain, which have been drawing attention to the high dependency on state finance, stating that it reached a level of over 70 percent of the NGO budgets (Fundación PwC, ESADE & Obra Social La Caixa, 2014, p. 7).

Attempts are being made to diversify contributions, ranging from individual, private donations to humanitarian causes from hard-pressed household budgets, made by sending an SMS text message, to business involvement through aid agreements, sponsorship, etc. Large companies continue to benefit from such actions in terms of the effect on their image and the idea of Corporate Social Responsibility, as in the case of bank foundations. The support of the banking institution ING Direct for a charitable activity by UNICEF, details of which are given below in the case analyses, is a good example. We are dealing here with a policy of investment in intangibles by private organisations that can afford it. What is at stake in all these actions, or in their absence, is corporate reputation, a structural concept associated with the behaviour of the institution and its responsibility in management, representing the sum of actions rather than the results of a specific activity (Villafañe, 2004, p. 28).

According to the Coordinator of Development NGO in Spain, the reduction in funds undergone by the sector between 2010 and 2015 reached 40 percent, in a process notable for the humanitarian commitment of the Spanish public:

“One of the Sector’s great strengths is its social base. With 1.9 million people, DNGO have substantial public support. Although this figure has decreased by 8 percent compared with 2008, the fall is largely due to the fact that 28 NGO have ceased to exist and also to a reduction in contributions from private institutions and one-off donations. On the other hand, there has been a striking level of commitment from people associated with our NGO who continue to collaborate, as well as volunteers, who have actually increased by 7.5 percent, in contrast to the positive increase of 24 percent worldwide. This figure is particularly significant bearing in mind the serious consequences of austerity policies close to home and demonstrates the firm commitment of our society to solidarity among peoples”. (CONGD, 2015, p.1)<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://coordinadoraongd.org/2015/05/informe-del-sector-de-las-ongd-la-solidaridad-ciudadana-por-encima-del-compromiso-politico-con-la-cooperacion/>



Similarly, the contribution of the public has also been notable according to the data provided by the Fundación Lealtad (Loyalty Foundation), an institution arising from the promotion of donations to charity organisations in Spain, which reports an increase in membership since 2008, albeit concentrated among the largest Development Nongovernmental Organisations (DNGO) (2015, p. 32). In this respect, organisational communication in the Third Sector can take advantage of the value of social networks for constructing and consolidating this social capital (Durán Bravo & Fernández Fuentes, 2010, p. 599). There is nothing new in regarding the human dimension as a possible form of capital (Becker, 1964; Bordieu, 1985; Coleman, 1988).

At the same time, a number of developing countries are taking responsibility for managing these initiatives, despite erratic economic progress, depending on the part of the world involved, in a social and economic phenomenon that is changing the dependency relationship of the North-South axis. How significant these role changes in humanitarian aid are has yet to be defined and studied in depth, although emerging economies are certainly designing a new architecture of aid in the area of cooperation, in a model still to be consolidated, as in the case of India, China and Brazil, which could be regarded as “emerging donors” (Ayllón Pino, 2010, p. 7).

As a result of the economic situation the charity sector in Spain has undergone a reduction in workforce and a greater degree of specialisation is needed. As González Álvarez (2012, p. 249) points out, professional improvement requires training, ethics and excellence as essential elements in a gradual raising of the standards of communication departments which is occurring unevenly in Spanish NGO. This question, centring on the professional profile of the communication strategy of NGOs is a matter of concern from the research point of view (Soria Ibáñez, 2010). Improvement in communication is accompanied by progress in issues related to management, such as transparency itself, and it is essential to review the strategy in every communication action performed, both internally and externally.

The aim of this research study, arising from reflecting on and investigating the charity communication scenario described, is to analyse the content of communications carried out by NGO in Spain, that is, the creative dimension of what is nowadays a permanent narrative, confirming the currency of the term *storytelling* (Jenkins, 2003), in a sphere of activity where there is precisely an abundance of stories to tell. Digital society anticipates these narratives by linking together a network of constant hypermediations (Scolari, 2008).

The field of audiovisual creation remains a decisive element in the quality of web presence, especially when use is made of the potential for interactivity in digital media, which have made palpable the idea of media convergence, associated with the concept of participatory culture, highlighting the active dimension of perception. This context entails a paradigm shift and an uneven distribution of roles:

“The term, “participatory culture”, contrasts with older notions of passive media spectatorship. Rather than talking about media producers and consumers as occupying separate roles, we might now see them as participants who interact with each other according to a new set of rules that none of us fully understands. Not all participants are created equal. Corporations – and even individuals within corporate media – still exert greater power than any individual consumer or even the aggregate of consumers. And some consumers have greater abilities to participate in this emerging culture than others”. (Jenkins, 2008, p. 3)

As a way of approaching this complex, changing situation, this paper analyses two specific cases, the recent campaigns of the Spanish DNGO Manos Unidas and the national committee of UNICEF in this country. These are representative examples from their sector, put forward as starting points for considering the potential of audiovisual narrative in digital culture.

## Theoretical background: web-based strategic communication

Fulfilling the aim of reaching one's target audiences more effectively requires an effort to coordinate institutional information and advertising, developing narrative strategies suited to Web 2.0 and 3.0, taking the first to refer to websites based on interactivity and on regarding the audience as "prosumers", as has been remarked (Toffler, 1980), while the second is based on applying optimisation strategies to those active audiences, making use of constant interpretation of the data provided by the Internet on the issues that concern the public. The merging of information and advertising can clearly be seen in hybrid genres such as brand journalism or content marketing (Sanagustín, 2013).

In the charity sector, the humanitarian rationale requires that an ethical distinction must be made, treating the audience as people instead of consumers, citizens rather than customers. Perhaps the same terminological treatment should also be applied in the business sphere if we aim to consolidate sustainable socio-economic models. Having made this conceptual adjustment, it is important to emphasise the active facet of such audiences, the goodwill of millions of people who continue to make charitable activity possible through their selfless contributions. The sum total of small caring gestures is truly remarkable in times of economic hardship. Social advertising, in this sense, can make great use of the concept of commons or shared resources and the potential of the participatory dimension of the Web, that is, the ability to engage people in horizontal dynamics of "collective participation and communal strengthening" (Gumucio Dragón, 2012, p. 41), making dialogue a core principle of the new model (Chaves Gil, 2012, p. 68).

It has not always been possible to use innovative techniques in creating audiovisual and hypermedia content (Arroyo Almaraz, Baños & Van-Wyck, 2013), but under the necessity of achieving real effectiveness and reducing production costs, valuing return on investment (González Lobo, 1998, p. 71; Mattelart, 2000, p. 49; Ortega, 1999, p. 187), advantage is being taken of the new opportunities that the new digital media have to offer. An example is the use of Digital Signage in some campaigns in 2015<sup>2</sup>, such as that of Fashion Revolution, which encourages consumers to stop buying

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<sup>2</sup> The top 12 digital signage campaigns 2015 (El publicista nº 339, p. 29).

clothes from manufacturers that exploit their workers, for which the BBDO agency devised a social campaign that turned a vending machine into a public awareness dispenser. The machine was installed in Alexanderplatz in Berlin, and when users inserted 2 euros to buy a cheap garment a video was shown on a 22-inch screen with shocking scenes of textile factories, so that in the end the user chose between donating the 2 euros to Fashion Revolution or taking the garment. The same digital medium was used in the Racing Extinction campaign in the summer of 2015 at the Empire State, turning the building into a spectacular billboard or hoarding to draw attention to animal rights, and also by the George Patterson Y&R agency for the NGO Ladder, using interactive box signs in several stations on the Melbourne underground to donate a journey and make it possible for underprivileged children to return to their homes.

All these out-of-home actions ended up being spread on a massive scale via Instagram, YouTube, Facebook and Twitter, creating an impact on millions of people.

However, in most cases advertisers opt for the more traditional campaign format based on an audiovisual narrative and a direct appeal for donation as the only action required, without intermediate gamification or interactivity options.

The question these organisations ask themselves about their audiences is whether they should only be asked to send an SMS or fill in a membership form, or whether other more elaborate attraction and retention strategies should be used. Ideally, however, the two options should be compatible. To achieve this, transmedia strategies are being and will continue to be used, because they make it possible to exploit the potential of a transmedia narrative, which involves making use of interactivity without losing sight of the value of emotion (Martínez-Rodrigo y Segura García, 2011, p. 21).

Despite the social significance of NGO there is undeniably a clear parallel with the procedures characteristic of business marketing, based on “[...] attracting and keeping profitable customers” (Kotler, 2002, p. 31), in a sector whose actions take place within a sphere of such responsibility and human sensitivity as international cooperation. The end result and the empathy of the audiences addressed by each Development Nongovernmental Organisation (DNGO) are still essentially underpinned by the actual content, that is, by the informational and advertising narrative, by that permanent story-

telling. Analysis of story and discourse remains valid as a starting point, although we must take into account the opportunities offered by transmedia culture if we wish to reach a diagnosis, bearing in mind the new approach centring on “media production, promotion and circulation” (Jenkins, Ford & Green, 2015, p. 23).

Realising how abstract our analysis is if we do not consider the real perception of what is, now more than ever, an open-ended work (Eco, 1979), it is essential in this process to take account of the natural empathy aroused by showing the human drama, especially when an audiovisual and digital medium is used as the medium of representation. Bearing this factor in mind, the audiovisual content of NGO could be improved from the point of view of creativity, particularly in connection with creative effectiveness. We can be sure that if creative advertisers are not aware of the possibilities communication technologies have to offer, they will never be able to apply them properly to support creative ideas (Arroyo Almaraz, 2005, p. 11).

## Research Design: communication and narrative in two charity campaigns

As well as considering the process and using the indispensable techniques of marketing, the perspective of content analysis (Bardin, 1986; Krippendorff, 1980) and specifically audiovisual narrative analysis (Bordwell, 1996; García García, 2006; García Jiménez, 1993; Sánchez-Navarro, 2005) becomes a means of reflecting on and diagnosing the corporate image and communication effectiveness of these organisations, given that the connections between audiovisual discourse analysis and other areas of social communication, such as strategic communication, advertising and public relations, are not as plentiful as they should be.

This research paper presents a case study designed to show some trends in visual and audiovisual creation, as well as suggesting lines of work, in that type of argument, for diagnosing audiovisual narrative in charity advertising. One of the organisations, of a social and humanitarian nature, is the Spanish DNGO Manos Unidas (“Joined Hands”). The other is UNICEF. They are part of the top 10 international cooperation agencies in Spain. Both agree to devote their work in Spain at fundraising that make possible their joint intervention in the Third World.

In our view both of them, to a large extent, represent the trend in the sector. Both of them have at some point developed campaigns involving a high degree of interactivity, although in their more recent actions a simplification of their communication strategies can be observed, that is, a return to the basic patterns of an effective campaign based on the narrative and discursive quality of their audiovisual production.

## Empirical and Results: Manos Unidas and UNICEF

### **“Plántale cara al hambre” (“Face Up to Hunger”), by Manos Unidas**

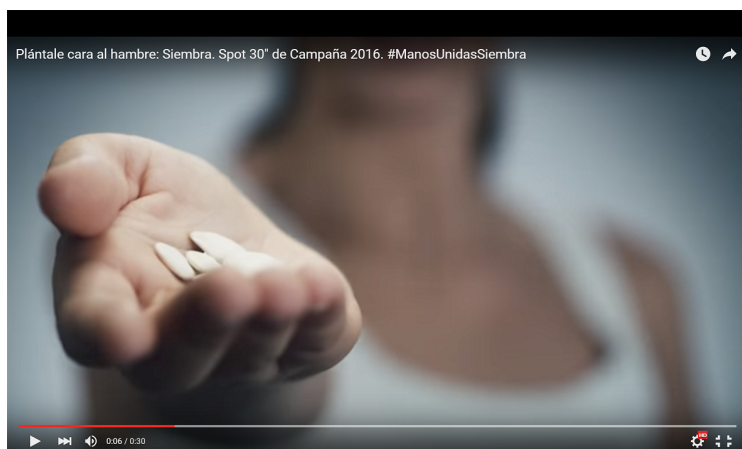
Manos Unidas (“Joined Hands”) is a Spanish Catholic Church association for providing aid, promotion and development to the Third World, and also a Catholic and secular volunteer Development Non-governmental Organisation (DNGO), according to its own definition on its institutional website.<sup>3</sup> With over 43 million euros raised in 2014, 87.1 percent of this income in the consolidated figures for 2014 came from private sources, more than 40 percent being contributed by members (Manos Unidas, 2015, p. 7). In this respect it is one of the leading Spanish organisations, according to the parameter under consideration, as is UNICEF España. It is therefore a DNGO less dependent on state support than the average for the sector, which is currently around 50 percent. The key to its viability is thus maintaining its private support network.

Although this DNGO has undertaken occasional campaigns of a distinctly interactive nature, taking advantage of the possibilities of mobile devices<sup>4</sup> (Marfil-Carmona, 2013 and 2014), the annual campaign concentrates on subject-matter developed through a range of media, both for information and for advertising, but it also includes educational material and a complete dossier (Manos Unidas, 2016) on its institutional website. In 2016 this DNGO has focused on fight-

<sup>3</sup> Information available at <http://www.manosunidas.org/quienes-somos> (Date consulted: 27/02/2016).

<sup>4</sup> Particularly noteworthy examples are the #FoodShareFilter campaign and #efectos de la pobreza (effects of poverty), information on which is available at <http://www.manosunidas.org/foodsharefilter/> and <http://www.manosunidas.org/noticia/efectosdelapobreza-la-nueva-campana-denuncia-y-sensibilizacion-manos-unidas> respectively (Date consulted: 27/02/2016).

ing hunger, with the #ManosUnidasSiembra campaign (directly defined with its *hashtag* for social networks) and the slogan “Plántale cara al hambre” (“Face Up to Hunger”). This is a promotional campaign combining a documentary and informational format, in its audiovisual dimension, of approximately 5 minutes’ duration,<sup>5</sup> with 20-second<sup>6</sup> and 30-second<sup>7</sup> TV advertisements (Figure 8.1), following the traditional television advertising lengths that this organisation has been making uninterruptedly since 1995.



**Figure 8.1:** Plántale cara al hambre (“Face Up to Hunger”). 30” advertisement. Manos Unidas. Screenshot. Source: <https://youtu.be/eUAuA5IS6rs0> (Date consulted: 28/02/2016).

<sup>5</sup> Manos Unidas. Plántale cara al hambre. 2016 campaign video. Available at <https://youtu.be/ZvgC3xkEPxg>

<sup>6</sup> Manos Unidas. Plántale cara al hambre. 20” advertisement, 2016. Available at <https://youtu.be/CYJs51hAcIg>

<sup>7</sup> Manos Unidas. Plántale cara al hambre. 30” advertisement, 2016. Available at <https://youtu.be/eUAuA5IS6rs>

As a first observation, a notable feature, in the context of the NGOs is the overall campaign concept, which in itself includes every one of the promotional actions, ranging from traditional media planning to educational initiatives.<sup>8</sup> The basis of this DNGO activity in Spain is precisely promotion for fundraising.

A content analysis of this campaign reveals a balance between the informational and institutional meaning and the more advertising-related content, represented primarily by the graphic piece of the poster and the TV advertisements available on the official YouTube channel. The complete campaign video offers an appropriate balance between discursive resources typical of a contemporary production style, such as Time-lapse, accelerating slower processes whose progress is imperceptible to the human eye, which serves in both the informational and the advertising format to represent development and show a metaphor of the idea of a seed growing.

With filmic effects and an aesthetic option of saturation and back-lighting in the treatment of colour, the outstanding feature of the grading is the darkening or cache effect in the corners. However, these images are accompanied by an informative commentary and an extradiegetic soundtrack which lends rhythm to the sequential development, in an emotional crescendo culminating in the campaign message, after the voiceover has explained the argument based on sowing, reaping and sharing from 2016 to 2017, and ending with a brand reference, both in the soundtrack and in the computer graphics and graphic notation. In short, it involves the omniscient focus of a narrator who explains the situation that has made the campaign necessary, exploring the actual strategic framework put forward by the institution.

The advertising pieces, however, play metadiscursively on the soundtrack itself and its contrast with silence. From the narrative point of view, they present a choric vision through multiple focuses corresponding to profiles of the campaign's target audience itself, that is, people of all ages who find themselves being addressed by a character of a type similar to that audience, since those who per-

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<sup>8</sup> All the information on the 2016 campaign, the 57th by Manos Unidas, is available at <http://www.manosunidas.org/plantale-cara-al-hambre-siembra/index> (Date consulted: 27/02/2016).



form this conative function, expressed by looking directly at the camera, are men and women of various ages and profiles. The text reinforces the idea with the expression “it is in your hands”, “face up to hunger” and “sow”, verbs of a vocative nature which are still effective in contemporary advertising.

However, the campaign does not include any added process of gamification, mobile applications or other options for participation beyond collaboration through the usual channels to make a financial contribution to Manos Unidas, which seems to indicate the need to specify what is required of the audience to enable this DNGO to pursue its activities.

In this institution's strategic communication model, at least as regards its annual campaigns, the audience is seen as a very important brand advocate, since it is offered the tools needed to become an active agent in spreading the communication campaign, by being provided with banners, radio slots, posters, press packs and photographic material to be freely published in any media outlet or website. It is an invitation to the blogosphere and social activist sites to collaborate in dissemination, an action that lays the groundwork for possible joint creation of the campaign itself in the future, beyond the graphic piece, which is the result of an annual competition open to public participation. The debate in many institutions, aware of the potential for participation that the Internet offers, is over how far to involve their audiences through social and creative intelligence.

## **UNICEF: Storytelling from a humanitarian emergency**

The second case to be examined is that of the transnational DNGO UNICEF, made up of 36 national committees belonging to the United Nations Children's Fund. In Spain it is a very active organisation, focusing exclusively on stimulating awareness and raising funds to promote the education and protection of children in the world. According to its fund management report, in 2014 UNICEF España

obtained more than 88 percent of its budget from private funds, and membership fees accounted for over 60 percent.<sup>9</sup> Like Manos Unidas, it is an institution that has to consolidate and reinforce its links with direct contributions from the private sector, especially from members.

The analysis focuses specifically on its promotional activities in Spain, which follow a course that may coincide with the trend for the sector. Its communication strategy does not concentrate on an annual campaign that forms the basis of its promotional activity, or at least that stands out over its other initiatives as clearly as with Manos Unidas. Instead, UNICEF responds to humanitarian emergency situations, undertaking campaigns and actions, as in the case of the Syrian refugee crisis in 2016, which is having disastrous results for the most vulnerable members of the population, such as children.

UNICEF conducts some permanent promotional actions, on an integrated basis, which offer possibilities for interaction to raise funds directly, such as the micro-site [www.quenoparendebailar.com](http://www.quenoparendebailar.com), for a campaign in 2014, an example of transmedia development, allowing users to select music to get children to participate in a party, focusing the object of desire in this narrative on the action of dancing, as a symbol of humanitarian, social and educational actions for Third World children, since “[...] for many children in the world, every day they go to school is a party”. It is a campaign to support schooling, thanks to an agreement with the financial institution ING Direct, which obtains a return on its investment not only through enhancing its image, but also the opportunity to collect data on possible customers and obtain new accounts. The project includes use of a computer, mobile devices, downloading the song on iTunes or Spotify, as well as sharing a music video on Facebook or Twitter. Cumulative total visits for ING Direct España on YouTube stood at 168,295 on 27/02/2016, which indicates the potential of this kind of initiative.

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<sup>9</sup> Information available at <http://www.unicef.es/memoria/2014/gestion-de-fondos> (Date consulted: 27/02/2016).

As regards involving its audiences, this DNGO traditionally has a network of ambassadors, prestigious personalities from the world of sport or culture who lend their image for active dissemination, such as Ana Duato, Pau Gasol, Fernando Alonso and Imanol Arias, among others.<sup>10</sup> In addition, there are other initiatives on the Web that enable audiences to form links and take direct action, such as the website <http://www.enredate.org>, devoted to teachers and schools with resources available on the Internet.

From the point of view of interactivity, whereas with Manos Unidas it was striking to find internauts treated as possible advertisers making use of the items available to them, UNICEF provides a permanent support structure for a range of campaigns, essentially consisting of delegating management of the initiative to sympathisers. On the website internauts are offered the opportunity to create and design their own charity challenge, setting fundraising targets, personalising a web space for promotion and monitoring contributions in real time.

The idea is to connect some personal event, such as a birthday or a sports competition, with launching a channel to enable financial donations to be made by the contacts of the person who has decided to create their own charity challenge. The initial versions of this campaign included the possibility of deciding which area of UNICEF's activities the money was to be assigned to. The important point is to treat the public as true prosumers who can take an active part in creating their own campaign space and in disseminating it through social networks, a way of inverting the roles in the traditional process of advertising communication.

A more recent campaign, centring on aid to refugees and immigrants in 2016,<sup>11</sup> implements the more traditional contribution model of having a central campaign video and calling on internauts and television viewers to become members or collaborate directly via an SMS message. In this case, even though it is based on a specific action, the organisation deploys a wide range of narrative pos-

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<sup>10</sup> Information on the ambassadors and friends of the Spanish UNICEF committee is available at <http://www.unicef.es/conoce/colaboradores/embajadores> (Date consulted: 27/02/2016).

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.unicefayuda.es> (Date consulted: 27/02/2016).

sibilities, presenting the stories of various children and, naturally, providing authentic details to reinforce the empathy of the largest possible number of people, as with the story of Hakim,<sup>12</sup> aged three, the fictional name of a real child whose family fled from their home in Syria because of the fighting and had to witness many killings.

In the case of the advertisement broadcast on television and available on the Internet,<sup>13</sup> the striking feature is the informational tone of the images, which show the situations of various children, with a discursive development consisting of short takes, generally close-ups and mid shots, in which a number of refugee and migrant children are looking directly at the camera. From the narrative point of view it is notable for the careful selection of scenes, which show the harshest reality with a meticulous graphic and technical treatment, on the same lines as the press graphic and the out-of-home advertising poster (Figure 8.2). We see a filthy street in a refugee camp, detailed shots of a bonfire lit to keep warm, since the television advertisement refers explicitly to the winter cold, as well as scenes inside tents. A collective action is developed with a choric character, the refugee children, whose object of desire, to survive and overcome the situation, is a shared aim. The actions in many of the shots are not particularly significant. Apart from warming themselves or wrapping up, many of the children seem to look at the camera waiting for help, a visual treatment characteristic of this organisation's advertising. Indeed, many of the campaign headlines or micro-campaign slogans refer explicitly to "a crisis with a child's face".

The visual approach combines a set of scenes shown in an objective manner in the image, with careful treatment of the graphic dimension and the quality of the photography, while the sound combines the omniscient narration of a speaker describing the situation, in a restrained, decorous tone, with a soundtrack that lends it a more emotional and dramatic sense. Finally, the message asks you to become a member. In short, it is a relatively traditional campaign format, centring on the one action required of the audience, which is to ask for help, underpinned by a constant fragment of storytelling in which a succession of stories are narrated in the first person, based on real characters, but with fictitious names.

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.unicef.es/colabora-refugiados-siria> (Date consulted: 27/02/2016).

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.unicefayuda.es> (Date consulted: 27/02/2016).



**Figure 8.2:** Reflections of a new world. Photograph of the UNICEF campaign poster. Source: Rafael Marfil-Carmona. Out-of-home campaign in Granada (Spain). Visual quotation from UNICEF 2016 campaign.

In this respect, an important point is the support and sequencing value of social networks, in which some professional photographers collaborate by providing a human gaze through photojournalism in the areas where UNICEF is active. An example is the creation of social photography groups in networks of a more visual character, such as Medium.<sup>14</sup> This is a choric development involving brand advocates who can make very valuable contributions to the task of raising public awareness, in a model developed by other NGO such as Médecins Sans Frontières.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> <https://medium.com/photographie-et-changement-social> (Date consulted: 27/02/2016).

<sup>15</sup> An example is their photo gallery, produced in collaboration with photojournalists. Available at <http://www.msf.es/multimedia/entrada> (Date consulted: 27/02/2016).

As we can see, although UNICEF has a permanent platform for interactivity and participation, and moreover one which divides up the narrative task of consciousness-raising into multiple stories, the basis of the campaign continues to rest on a carefully-made video advertisement, with a testimonial tone, whose only demand on its potential audience is to collaborate or become a member. We might say that it is a classic campaign format.

To sum up, in both the campaigns examined here we observe that formats of a traditional character are maintained, supplementing the video advertisement with other informational actions on social networks, in which a constant process of storytelling is conducted, reducing the action these DNGO demand of the public to the essential point of collaboration.

## Conclusion and discussion

The process of setting out, reflecting on and analysing two specific cases, a Spanish DNGO and an international organisation in its division in Spain, leads us to put forward a series of final considerations concerning the role of the content itself and the discursive essence of the campaign with the widest potential for the communication strategy of NGOs in both its informational and advertising dimensions.<sup>16</sup>

Firstly, asking for help and private collaboration, in other words for personal donations, is the paramount objective for charity organisations, which have seen a reduction in the revenue that state institutions devote to international cooperation. Those that have relied more heavily on subsidy must reduce the percentage of their income derived from this source, while NGOs whose viability is based on private donations must consolidate and enhance the loyalty of that social mass of financial support, normally by attracting new members and keeping those they have.

Another important conclusion is that in the sphere of NGOs the possibilities of digital interactivity are still being explored. In the last few years interesting and innovative initiatives have been undertaken, based on participation, digital signage and gamification, focusing on the use of out-of-home digital media, mobile devices and social networks. In many cases, however, these experiences are

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<sup>16</sup> Part of the content of this research study forms part of the doctoral thesis of Rafael Marfil-Carmona at the University of Granada.

used only for specific actions, to support the main campaign, which continues to follow a traditional pattern, based on an audiovisual and graphic piece for the press or out-of-home, in which the only action demanded by the institution is financial collaboration, and especially the possibility of becoming a member of the NGO.

What is becoming more dynamic every day is support on networks of various kinds, ranging from the most widely used, such as *Facebook* and *Twitter*, to others of a more visual nature, such as *Instagram*, *Flickr* or *Medium*, in which active storytelling is developed in support of the campaign, based on the graphic quality of collaborating photographers, contributions of individual stories of the beneficiaries of the campaign and a broader range of data or testimonies, toning down the advertising aspect and giving the dissemination of this content a discursive style based on truthfulness and the ability to show the human drama in a more objective way.

There are some incipient initiatives that are beginning to treat the audience as an active partner in the actual design of the campaign, either through a platform for personalisation and contributions, turning internauts into brand advocates, or making all the campaign material openly available, as an incentive for bloggers and social activists to design their spaces on the Web as another medium for providing advertising support.

All this is still happening in a diffident and incipient way, at a time when all the potential for digital interactivity is being explored but official campaigns avoid distracting recipients with any requirement other than direct collaboration. In our view, it is a matter of commitment to effectiveness in essentials, cautiously combined with developing more innovative individual campaigns.

We believe that the possibilities of 2.0 and 3.0 communication will gradually be incorporated actively and openly into NGO ' information and advertising in the next few years, in what is still a period of transition in the key features of strategic communication. The potential for more effective transmedia development, as well as regarding audiences as true prosumers, will progressively be introduced into the corporate communication model of charity institutions. Just as the option of traditional meaning is currently perceived from a narrative point of view, ensuring the perceptual pregnancy of the message and the final result, these organisations will not hesitate to implement more far-reaching changes in the near future, since the media for reaching the public are changing very rapidly, and therefore institutional discourse will engage more fully

in dialogic and participatory models. Involving the public in the actual viability of NGO is an indispensable factor. Thousands of actions to mitigate human drama and suffering are at stake. Despite the difficulties, the public will continue to be prepared to build a better world.

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## Chapter 9

# Strategic Communication applied to Catholic Church: the internal factor

Sara Balonas

## Introduction

The scope of this paper is to present an innovative internal communication strategy applied to non-profit organisations, such as religious institutions. Strategic communicational principles led to the design of a Vocational Pastoral Teams Kit, implemented in the north of Portugal, to reinforce the consciousness of a Christian vocation in the local community. The Vocational Kit was implemented by the Diocesan Secretariat for Vocation – an active entity, part of the Portuguese Catholic Church, an organisation dedicated to promote awareness of the vocational meaning of life. This Kit is part of a communication plan conceived to motivate the priests in their mission, to reinforce their interaction with local members of the community connected to the local churches. The priest is the main promoter, his task is to advise catechists; animators (youth groups, preparation for Confirmation, Acolytes); parish community (pastoral family, charitable pastoral) and Christian religion teachers.

In order to promote a better understanding of this case study, a theoretical framework will be developed based on Organisational Communication and Strategic Communication theories that highlight insights about the internal dimension and the local contexts. Operational concepts such as communication plans and the key factors for their implementation were also discussed.

The results of the strategic communication plan will be shared along with the main conclusions that stress the value of an inside out vision on strategic communication for non-profit organisations.

## Strategic communication in a liquid time

At a time of intense overlap of communication, organisations can no longer continue focusing on purely tactical, informative or episodic communication. Otherwise, they run the risk of losing connection with the publics and to lose reputation or legitimacy. The Edelman Trust Barometer<sup>1</sup> describes the situation concerning trust and reputation at a global scale. This annual report has been designed to measure relationship between citizens and the main institutions (Government, Media, NGO's and Private Sector). The 2015 report stresses that "the number of countries with trusted institutions has fallen to an all-time low among the informed public."<sup>2</sup> Strategic communication seems to be an opportunity for those institutions, if we consider it a means to achieve and preserve the founding purposes of the organisation, aligned with its mission and its vision. A management principle is applicable to all sort of organisations – business, state and third sector, what means non-profit organisations, such as religious ones.

Therefore, in a liquid time, in which societies are strongly questioning dogmas and paradigms, communication is increasingly in the centre of the equation for those organisations. Setting goals, audiences, messages, priorities and channels as well as to develop convergent communication actions according to the organisations' vision, became the "new normality".

The present article corroborates the school of researchers for whom communication is the essence of the organisation (Ruão, 2008) influencing and being influenced by the organisational environment and those who are part of it. "To speak of organisation is to speak of communication. The two may be more than merely coterminous. They may perhaps be two aspects of the same thing", wrote Thayler in Mumby's book preface (1994, p.X). Tompkins defend that the communication forms the organisation (1984) – undoubtedly.

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<sup>1</sup> Edelman Trust Barometer is a annual report developed by Edelman, a global communications marketing firm. Since 2001, this entity measures citizens' reputation and trust on main institutions (Media, Government, NGO's and private sector). A survey is annually applied in 27 countries, addressed to the general public and the public informed.

<sup>2</sup> accessed <http://www.edelman.com/insights/intellectual-property/2015-edelman-trust-barometer/> "Religion may become extinct in nine nations, study says" by Bason Palmer, BBC News, Dallas <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-12811197>

But it should be seen as a “phenomenon inherent in the nature of the organisations that happens in different dimensions such as human, instrumental and strategic, and under strong cyclical influences and economic, social, political, cultural and technological” (Kunsch, 2009, p.112).

To understand the contribution of strategic communication, we have necessarily to revisit the notion of organisational communication, a central concept in the present article. Looking at this discipline makes us understand better what is going on in the organisation structure, particularly in the internal dimension angle. Although organisational communication emerged in the 1940s, according to Redding, one of the founders of the discipline (see Ruão, 2008), its consolidation occurs the moment one considers communication as “a central process of the organisation’s life, and that even revealing natural similarities with any act of human communication, also integrate particularities resultant of the context in which it occurs”, as pointed by Ruão (2008). A view in line with the definition proposed by Mumby for whom organisational communication must be seen as the process of creating collective and coordinated structures of meaning, through symbolic oriented practices to achieve organisations’ goals (2001).

If organisational communication is related to the ability of people to generate and share information within an organisation, allowing to cooperate and organize themselves (Kreps, 1990), the strategic dimension is focused on the purposeful use of communication by an organisation to fulfill its mission (Hallalan *et al*, 2007, p.3). This is the essence of strategic communication.

The communication field tends to fail to be perceived as having a purely tactical function and becomes more recognized in its strategic role. Being strategic means to set goals and identify the means to achieve them. Kunsch says strategic communication also contribute to spread organisations’ values and actions in order to achieve its ideal in a world context, under the support of ethical principles (2009).

A key concept for understanding strategic communication of and in organisations is *alignment*. "Communication is aligned with the overall strategy of the organisation to improve its own positioning strategy" (Argenti *et al.*, 2005, p.83). Strategic communication is, therefore, intrinsic to the strategy of the organisation. But it can only exist if their top managers and decision-makers are aware of that. There is a highly interdependent relationship at the highest level of the organisation's hierarchy, for the proper development of strategic communication.

According to Zerfaß and Huck, strategic guidelines are characterized by their contribution to the key processes of the core actions that lead to the success of the organisation. "Strategic communication form meanings, builds sense of trust, creates reputation and manages symbolic personal interactions with internal and external stakeholders in order to support organisational growth and to ensure a free space of action" (2007: 108). Thus, strategic communication prepares organisations for an uncertain future, in contrast to the episodic communication efforts towards short response, as a band aid. Argenti *et al.* (2005) explain that "companies that continue to have a tactical approach, short-term communication with its stakeholders will find increasingly difficult to compete. Develop an integrated, strategic approach to communication is the key to success." (p.83).

Specifically, strategic communication deals with informative content and persuasive discourse, as well as interpersonal communication, when used in context to achieve the organisations' mission (Hallahan *et al.*, 2007, p.17). It is emphasized here the competence to critically reflect the organisation in changing contexts, as shown below. The practice of strategic communication is the one that involves, develops, stimulates and generates the attitude in and for the organisation, promoting a change, a new behaviour, not simply stating what happened in the organisation (Marchiori, p. 2011).

## **Catholic Church challenges**

For the subject in analysis – strategic communication in religious organisations, focused on the internal dimension – we will adopt the postmodern perspective provided by Deetz (2001), proposed in the systematic framework of visible research trends in current studies, when it refers to "(...) organisational communication studies



concerned with the asymmetries, marginality and outbreaks of organisational resistance" (see Ruão, 2008, p.730) to the extent that the case study highlights the internal tensions in the implementation of the Secretariat of Vocations mission, a fundamental issue for the sustainability of the Catholic Church. Its responsibility is to approve and guarantee the "human resources" essential to spread the Christian doctrine – namely priests but also consecrated people.

Initially, the case is addressed from the perspective of the resistance that priests responsible for implementing a vocational program have demonstrated along the years, connected with the relevance of a communication plan aligned with a vision of strategic communication. Subsequently, the case is discussed focusing the role of internal members as actors in the legitimization process of the Church's in its community and on the overcome of constraints to fulfill the original mission.

This case must be understood contextualized with a significant set of changes in Christian societies. "More than one sixth of the world population is Catholic, but the Church of Christ has been losing influence (Gomes, 2010, p.200). Religion seems to be reducing its importance as an aggregator element of societies, not only in European countries but also in Australia, New Zealand or Canada.

A study conducted by the British Social Attitudes (BSA) reveals two utterly different results between 1985 and 2010. Every year, British Social Attitudes researchers recourse to a significant sample of British, asking them if they belong to any particular religion, and if so, which one. The first study, carried out in 1985 revealed that 63 percent of the British people considered themselves Christians while 34 percent answered they had no religion. A non-significant minority belonged to non-Christian religions (The Guardian, 2010).

Twenty-five years later, in 2010, the BSA published its annual report revealing a new reality: only 42 percent of British identify themselves as Christians while 51 percent declared they had no religion.

Although other studies don't show such a reduction, as the census data, it is impossible not to feel that this latest discovery of the British Social Attitudes defines a cultural change.

The most relevant factor is perhaps, the celerity of this cultural change. "It isn't very far from the time when everyplace was closed on Sundays, since most people used to go to some kind of church, bearing in mind that all students knew and sang hymns and studied the Bible even if they didn't believe, and that public figures couldn't but be attentive Christians" (The Guardian, 2010).

Religious institutions are aware that they are more distant from communities. There are several reasons for this fact such as the change of the level of schooling, the relationship with parents that no longer runs as before and socially traditional prayer places that are not required to be attended anymore. There is a cultural change from obligation to optional in education, leading to a change from Christianity as a tradition, to Christianity as a choice (Brierley, 1991). As pointed by Oliveira & Wiesenber, "in many European countries, churches are challenged due to process of deinstitutionalization" (2016: 110). The secularization process (Wilson, 1966) or the multi-religious offer (Pierucci, 1997) help to explain challenges Catholic Church is facing.

## **Catholic Church communication with the outside**

Despite this context, the Catholic Church has always understood the relevance of symbols and of communication in its relation with the faithful. It is an ancient issue.

New times mean new challenges. We live in a time of intense renovation concerning the way the Catholic Church interacts with its citizens, trying to find new ways of attracting the faithful. The example came from above. In 1967, Pope Paul VI devoted particular attention to the media launching the first *World Communications Day*. Announcing the initiative, the Pope called the attention of "all men of good will to the vast and complex phenomenon of modern media such as press, cinema, radio and television (...) Thanks to these wonderful techniques, human society has achieved new dimensions: time and space have been overcome, and man became a citizen of the world, co-participant and witness of the most distant events and of the vicissitudes of all mankind" (Pope Paul VI, 1967).

In 1990, John Paul II, known for his ability as an excellent communicator, wrote an article about "The Christian message in today's computer culture." In 2002, the message for the *World Communications Day* focuses on "Internet: a new forum for proclaiming the Gospel." Following the motto, the succeeding Pope Benedict XVI, wrote about communication in the digital era. In 2006 he broached the theme "The Media: A Network for Communication, Communion and Cooperation." Later, in 2009, he wrote an essay on "New Technologies, New Relationships. Promoting a Culture of Respect, Dialogue and Friendship." In 2010, he pursues the same item: "The priest and the pastoral in the Digital World: the new media, a means of spreading the Word." Finally, in 2011, he titrates the message of the World Communications Day as follows: "Truth, advertising and authenticity of life in digital age." In a consistent way, Benedict XVI stimulates the church to take a place in the digital space. This urgency has been suggested by the Vatican since the early 90's.

Sustained by this assumption, the Church walks confidently the pathways of the internet, to reach the digital generation. It also appeals to the use of "enhancement technologies" (Kerckhove, 1995) as the iPod and iPhone. The portal Pope2You, created by the Vatican, appeared for the celebrations of the 43rd World Communications Day, May 2009.

New paradigms and the notion that a proximity speech is in order leads the Church to adhere to the new digital media and interactive. Today, we are witnessing the use of internet as a missionary tool, whether through websites, or through social networks *Facebook*, *Twitter* or *Youtube*, a theme already exposed in previous studies (Balonas: 2010, 2011).

Religion is renewing its discursive interaction with the outside world, creating new bridges of contact, seeking for more followers. Fulfilling its mission. Portuguese religious institutions are also aware of the power of new mediators, therefore they have been hiring communications experts to plan and implement new strategies for communication targeting the younger.

This framework will be transferred to the Secretariat for Vocations' context, in which communication issues within the organisation are the central object of analysis.

## Vocational Pastoral Teams Kit case study – the inside dimension

Despite the visible efforts to refresh the relation with the outside world, Catholic Church face some constraints concerning vocational purposes, that means, suggesting young people to follow ecclesiastical life. Therefore, a deeper look is required, from the inside out.

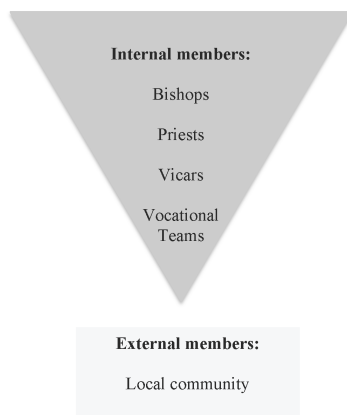
It is no longer enough to change the way the Church communicates with the outside. Those organisations must also change the internal way of thinking and doing, in order to enhance their legitimacy and to motivate all stakeholders in the complex process of adherence to religion.

The present case study emphasizes that the speech and the contents have to be rethought at the internal level, within the catholic community. Moreover, a strategic communication dimension must be convened to help the Church to accomplish its mission at a local level.

### **Brief description**

In order to comprehend the main issue – the strategic communication internal dimension in church organisations – it is critical to understand the specific situation and its constraints. As mentioned before, this case study stresses the organisational theories in which the context is taken into account in the analysis.

In particular, a deeper look on the human communication processes is useful. As Thayler emphasizes “to ‘understand’ what is going on and to participate in it in some way, one must already have understood how it is organized-whether it is a game, a conversation, a trip across town, or a board meeting. It is that understanding, that sense one has of how things are organized and how one fits into them, that makes human communication possible (see Mumby, 1994, p.X).



**Figure 9.1:** Internal hierarchical positions of influence and flows

The Diocesan Secretariat for Vocations is an active entity part of the Portuguese Catholic Church organisation. Its main mission is to “be the subject of specific vocations in the various pastoral sectors of the Church and parishes”<sup>3</sup>. In other words, its mission is to promote awareness of the vocational meaning of life. In order to accomplish its mission, the Secretariat for Vocations has launched the Vocational Pastoral Teams several years ago. Its aim is to reinforce the consciousness of a Christian vocation in the local community.

How does Vocational Pastoral Teams act? Local members of the community connected to the local churches become a team composed of catechists; animators (youth groups, preparation for Confirmation, Acolytes); parish community: (family pastoral, charitable pastoral) and Christian religion teachers. Those teams are encouraged by the parish priest to spread the vocational message outside. The priest is the pivot; he is tasked to advise them.

Under the priest guidance, those groups should develop a range of activities in the community related with Christian routines and even engagement of young people identified as potentially geared to religious life. It is a communication process highly dependent on the human relationship, one-to-one or in small groups, from the inside to the outside.

<sup>3</sup> Mission described in the official website. Accessed <http://www.seminariodobompastor.pt/secretariado-das-vocacoes#a-pastoral-vocacional>

The priest it is, undoubtedly, the main promoter. But it is, at the same time, the main constraint. The problem is identified in the following flow of communication – for the priest to the Vocational Pastoral Teams.

Over the years, the Secretariat for Vocations director, main responsible for this action in the communities, began to conclude that the priests considered this a very difficult task, in all aspects: the team constitution, the team motivation and its actions in the community. Even messages of internal criticism, written in manuals for the priests, were not successful, such as “although it should be considered as a natural and essential dimension of the Church’s pastoral (the Vocation Pastoral Team) is relegated to second plan, while other activities seem to be considered more priority” (Diocese do Porto, p.12).

## **The communication plan: design, implementation and results**

By instruction of Diocesan Secretariat for Vocations responsible, Priest Jorge Madureira, a local strategic communications company has designed a specific internal communication strategy.

The strategy main goal is to motivate and to boost the Vocational Pastoral Teams. It has been guided by the context analysis, the communications flows understanding and also the access to the main communications supports used on the process until that time and focused on the reinforcement of Secretariat mission.

The strategy aims to influence the priest’s perception, attitude and behavior. The priest should be motivated for this role by increasing the importance of this task and by helping his action with the adequate supports to boost the Vocation Team. Therefore, a Vocation Team Kit was conceived and produced in a clear, direct and persuasive language, presented in a portable format, with suggestive images and innovative design.



Figure 9.2: Script cover "Wake Up for Vocation"

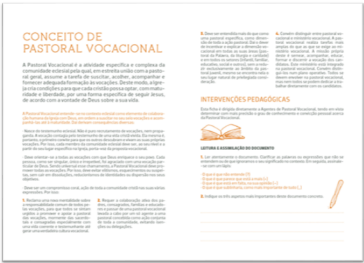


Figure 9.3: Worksheets

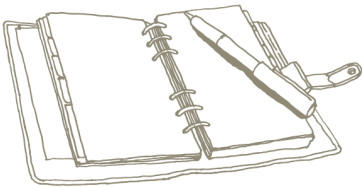
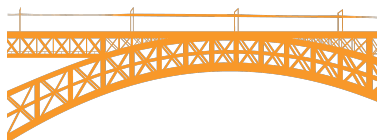
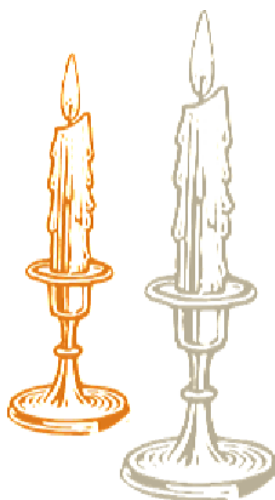


Figure 9.4: Kit's visual elements



**Figure 9.5:** Kit's visual elements



**Figure 9.6:** Kit's visual elements



**Figure 9.7:** Kit's visual elements



Moreover, the project has the direct involvement of the Bishop, which has addressed a motivational message at the beginning of the Kit and has announced the program in internal meetings, directly to the priests.

The Vocation Team Kit was launched in 2012 and is still been used every year. As the main responsible for the Secretariat for Vocations refers, the initial reaction was not euphoric, but at least “positive in general, although many priests reacted with indifference” (Interview to Priest Jorge Madureira, 2015).

After 3 years using the kit in 477 parishes, Madureira believes the kit is considered a valid instrument and acknowledged to boost vocational ministry in Christian communities.

## Discussion

### **The reinforcement of legitimacy at an internal level**

As stressed, the will to act depends largely on the ability of the priest. During several years, to launch the process of creating teams, the priest receives a script in a dense, small print text – the document that guides the teams’ training action.

Due to increasing resistance, it was considered necessary to find new ways to motivate the priest, believing that, provided with the right stimulus and support materials, could feel more accompanied on his mission. To accomplish this aim, a communication strategy for internal communication has been developed. The main concern was how to find a way to motivate the pivot of the action – the priest – and make the creation of vocational pastoral teams a matter of prime importance on the agenda.

The strategy was based on three pillars:

1. Hierarchical presence: the involvement of the Bishop;
2. Engagement: setting an annual program – creating tasks for the priest to guide the team;
3. Communication tools: defining the team’s work resources – something that could turn easy to start action on the field, through an appealing image and easy to read content.

The Bishop involvement is a crucial decision, because it emphasizes the importance of the establishment of vocational pastoral teams. Above all, it can be interpreted as an order, in an indirect speech act. In the script (the script is part of the kit) Bishop D. Manuel Clemente refers: “The families and Christian communities are an essential basis for vocations. Everything that is done to encourage and support this direction is timely and priority.”<sup>4</sup>

The Bishop underlines the parish priest role: “The priest is primarily responsible for the pastoral care of vocations in the communities he presides. The most important thing you can do is take each of the faithful to discover what God wants from them: laity, consecration, and priesthood? He can’t and shouldn’t do everything alone, it’s good to be assisted by a team of vocations, also featuring with catechists, parents, responsible for movements, religious, etc.”<sup>5</sup>

Finally, the Bishop stresses the strongest argument: “I’m really convinced that many vocations haven’t been awoken due to an absence of community discernment.”

The Bishop’s text is clear about the responsibility of the priest in this process in the text that is part of the script that includes practical guidelines about how to organize teams, in a simple and appealing language, contrasting with previous scripts with intricate texts and small type characters.

The second strategy pillar element concerns the innovative integration of worksheets to guide the meetings that the priest must promote with vocations team (see figure 3). In the folder that contains the script, there are 4 worksheets for different phases of the year. The kit also provides a CD with a PowerPoint template that allows the priest to use a projection motivate the team.

Finally, we emphasize the creative approach. The kit is supplied in a polypropylene folder with rings, which allows priests to add information and create more worksheets during the year. The images are simple metaphors – as the bridge to signify dialogue, candles to represent the light of those who discovers a vocation, notebook suggesting tasks to accomplish and the alarm that symbolizes that it is time to act.

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<sup>4</sup> Bishop message written in the Vocational Pastoral Teams Kit. Accessed <http://www.seminariodobompastor.pt/aplica.asp?CategoriaID=349&Cor=2>

<sup>5</sup> *idem*

The adopted plan aims to reduce intentionally the priests' resistance. It is mainly based on human communication once a certain internal authority (the Bishop) is present but also a motivational "push" through communication supports is given. The kit is perceived as a "facilitator in communities that have a sufficient knowledge of the pastoral organisation of the Christian community" (Interview to Priest Madureira, 2015).

### **Legitimacy through ambassadors**

Concerning churches legitimacy, Oliveira & Wiesenber (2016) defend "that arises only through the involvement of members in the strategic communications (...) as well as their communicative action – what is called nuclear ambassadors. Accordingly, *effective action is always limited* and therefore also the management function *per se*." (p. 113).

The case in discussion shows an ambiguous situation: members of the Christian community can be considered external stakeholders but, once they are involved in the Vocational Pastoral Teams, they may be considered internal members. Therefore, they are recognized as "*ambassadors and multipliers in their environments* and legitimize the organisation constantly through their communicative actions" (Oliveira & Wiesenber, 2016, p.113) and explain, partly, how communication can influence legitimization processes through ambassadors.

### **Applying the inside out communications flows**

Taking the main communication flows pointed by Oliveira & Wiesenber specifically considering churches as organisations, – internal legitimization from the inside out and external legitimacy – the vocation teams kit seems to reinforce those flows, as described:

**Table 9.1:** Adaptation from the four communication flows of churches legitimation (Oliveira & Wiesenber, 2016)

<p><b>1st Flow</b> internal legitimization</p>	<p>Priest empowerment by the bishop at the eyes of internal members.</p> <p>The importance of internal members for the constitution of the organisation, implied in the Vocational Pastoral Team kit.</p>
<p><b>2nd Flow</b> from the inside out</p>	<p>Through worksheets and guidelines embedded in the Vocation Team Kit, members of the community are engaged with the Church, therefore, involved to act on behalf of the organisation enable to bring the communication process to the public sphere.</p>
<p><b>3rd Flow</b> from the outside, inside out</p>	<p>The lack of interest for the vocational talks in the outside community capture the organisations attention.</p> <p>The difficulty assumed by the priests along the years is a consequence of the resistance found in the context.</p>
<p><b>4th Flow</b> external legitimization</p>	<p>Finally, the communication process must lead or, at least, contribute to organisations legitimization in the community. Either it has been successful or it must be adapted. Accordingly to the main responsible for the Secretariat for Vocations, the kit has contributed to enhance presence in the Christians communities.</p>

The relevance of the proposed framework lies on the actual vocational crisis faced by the Church, as already mentioned, which demands for new communication practices at an external but, mainly, at an internal level. All these dimensions must always be faithful to the organisation mission. The Vocational Teams Kit case indicates evidence to corroborate this. The main responsible for the Secretariat of Vocations stress the increasingly number of Vocational Pastoral Teams in Christian communities and vicariates, leading to

the following conclusion: “I think I can set up a direct relationship with the developed communication materials. We are in inventory process of the new teams” (interview to Priest Madureira, 2015). Since the Vocational Pastoral Teams Kit was implemented, in 2012, the seminaries population remains stable, according to Madureira (2015).

## Conclusions

The main purpose of the Vocational Pastoral Team Kits’ case is to bring contributions towards the internal dimension relevance concerning religious institutions, in intersection with organisational communication theories and strategic communication in the religion context, taking the human communication processes into account. The case allows us to highlight the following aspects:

- a) Strategic communication in postmodern times – looking at the internal tensions

Based on the organisation’s mission and guided by the importance to be given to the internal and external environment (Ruão, 2008; Kunsch, 2009), the perspective suggested by Deetz concerning the constraints and asymmetries becomes relevant in a liquid time.

- b) Strategic Communication in 360 degrees

It is shown that the solution not always lies in an awareness campaign to the community to embrace the vocation of the Church but rather in internal communication. It is especially important to understand interpersonal communication, looking at the people who build the organisation and its role to further develop the appropriate communication processes (Hallahan *et al.*, 2007).

Recognition of the communication process from the inside towards the outside have been considered a relevant exercise, following the four communications flows proposed by Oliveira & Wiesen-berg (2016) thus helping to explain how the legitimization can occur.

- c) The involvement of top management in communication

There is a highly interdependent relationship at the highest level of the organisations' hierarchy for the proper development of strategic communication, as the present case reveals. The alignment concept is valued here (Argenti *et al.*, 2007) as well as a certain idea of authority through indirect speech acts, assumed by the Bishop, the highest hierarchical person.

d) Production of meaning: it matters how is communicated

Communication supports are set only after all the strategic process is concluded. However, communicating through images and words for proper production of meaning cannot be devalued in the process. If communicational channels and supports fails, the process of creating collective and coordinated structures of meaning, defend by Mumby, failures.

This case is presented as a local problem. Yet, it is common in the Christian communities (Brierley, 1991; Wilson, 1966). As stressed before, there is a certain crisis in religion, due to a "new order" in a postmodernism society. Consequently, there is a vocational crisis that leads to the obvious – decrease of priests or devoted persons. This is, we may say, a sustainability issue for the Catholic Church.

Nevertheless, in order to fulfill effectiveness, as Oliveira & Wiesen-berg defends (2006), the situation diagnosis must be done at a local level, assuming that "Situative-Approach" shifted the emphasis to the organisational environment in which the organisation is embedded" focused on the organisation legitimacy and not in its efficiency (p.112).

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## Chapter 10

# Constructing organisational identities on the web: A case study of the presidency of religious affairs

Billur Ülger and Gürdal Ülger

In his article titled “From Individual to Organizational Identity”, Gioia (1998) begins his words by pointing to the importance of the notion of identity:

“Identity is arguably more fundamental to the conception of humanity than any other notion. That is a strong statement, but consider some of the key questions that we might use to assess the reach of the concept: What other issue is quite so important than answering the nebulous question, Who am I? What other concern is quite so captivating than dealing with the ongoing, life-long Project of assessing identity and figuring out how one relates to others and the surrounding world? What other question so influences understanding and action so heavily...? I can think of no other concept that is so central to the human experience, or one that infuses so many interpretations and actions, than the notion of identity” (p. 17).

Therefore, it is not surprising to see that identity also is central to organisational studies. Over the last 15 years organisational identity has become a prominent paradigm and has begun to be associated with the strategic management of organisations (Marwick & Fill, 1997; Ravasi & Canato, 2013). There are a number of studies on organisational identity, particularly investigating various issues on strategic decisions (e.g., Ashforth & Mael, 1996; Dutton

& Dukerich, 1991; Ravassi & Phillips, 2011), organisational change (e.g., Humphreys & Brown, 2002; Ybema, 2010), reactions to environmental changes (e.g., Ravasi & Schultz, 2006), organisational commitment (e.g., Bartel, 2001; Foreman & Whetten, 2002), and technology and innovation (e.g., Ravasi & Canato, 2010).

Recently, leading scholars in the field have brought to the fore discussions on the link between organisational identity and religion, focusing especially on the role of religion in the implementation of practices of non-profit organisations (e.g., Berger, 2003; Clarke & Jennings, 2008; De Cordier, 2009; Kirmani & Khan, 2008; Petersen, 2012; Tracey, 2012). However, there are still unexplored certain aspects of the identity-religion relationship in these organisations, and the perspective which assumes that identity is a constructed phenomenon has also generated considerable attention. Moreover, the existing literature concentrates mostly on Western Christianity, and rarely investigates other faiths and parts of the world. Thus this study collecting and analyzing empirical evidence from a Turkish non-profit organisation in the field of religion will fill a gap in the literature.

The paper consists of four parts. We begin by reviewing some of the key literature on identity and organisational identity. We then evaluate the existing literature on religion and organisation emphasizing some of the issues by this body of work. In the second section, we put forth our research design including selection of the organisation, method, and findings. In the third section, we discuss and conclude our findings relating them to the literature background. In the fourth and final section, we suggest the limitations of our study and directions for future research.

## Theoretical Background

Our literature review is organised into two parts. First we look at the conceptual framework of identity, organisational identity, and identity construction as important assets of organisational studies. Next we present an argument on religion and constructions of religious identities.

## Identity, Organisational Identity, and Identity Construction

The concern for identity on the social science historical front is not new. It has its origin back to the fifth Century BC when ancient Greek philosophers such as Socrates, Platon, and Aristotle dealt with the essence of individualal identity questioning who a individual was and what his/her place in the world was. In *Republic*, for example, Platon argues in metaphorical form that identity constitutes what is core to one's being, a true self that somehow distinguishes him/her from other individuals. Other thinkers such as Goffman (1959) and Erickson (1964) who tended to explore this true self in the twentieth Century adopted a holistic approach and concentrated on the function of other individuals an individual is interacting with. What they basically indicated was that individuals learn to assign themselves socially constructed labels, "(...) some set of essential characteristics... defining their self-concepts" through interactions with others (Gioia, 1998, p. 19) complying with Tajfel's (1978) definition of social identity as "(...) that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (p. 63). For those with this perspective, individuals become emotionally attached in their distinctiveness, to highlight their distinctiveness in relation to others (Tajfel & Turner, 1985) and, thereby, engage in a kind of game in which they not only see themselves distinct but also allows them to act as if they are distinct (Goffman, 1959; Gioia, 1998). Implicit and important in this viewpoint is that identity not only constitutes a way of classifying one that distinguishes him/her from other individuals, but it also makes him/her feel himself/herself similar to a class of individuals with whom he/she most closely associates himself/herself or with whom he/she would likely to be associated (Erickson, 1964), which are the effective ways of enhancing his/her own self-esteem (Tajfel, 1982) that results from a basic need to view himself/herself positively (Steele, 1988).

Like individuals, organisations can be viewed as entities having some set of essential characteristics that differentiate them from others in their fields of work. According to Albert and Whetten (1985), organisational identity is the set of values and beliefs shared between stakeholders and managers about the central, enduring, and distinctive characteristics of an organisation. It influences the mean-

ings of events and governs actions considered to be within the realm of possibility (Which are acceptable? Which are legitimate?, etc.) (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991). Theory and research (e.g., Albert & Whetten, 1985; Whetten, 2006; Whetten, Foreman, & Dyer, 2012) suggest that the answers to the questions of “Who are we really as an organisation?” and “Who do we want to be?” are important parts of defining organisational identity. Organisations, like individuals, employ some categorization scheme with the help of those questions and then locate themselves within that scheme (Gioia, 1998) that expresses their unique and distinctive nature. The notion of scheme implies that organisational identity is a discursively formed phenomenon (Brown, 1994; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003) and that it exists to the extent that individuals believe it does (Ashforth & Mael, 1996; Puusa, Kuittinen, & Kuusela, 2013). Accordingly, Mönkkönen and Puusa (2015) suggest that organisational identity “(...) is a volatile social construction that bases its existence and significance largely on the interpretative preference of” (p. 3) stakeholders “(...) who both shape and are shaped by” (p. 3) organisations through dynamic dialectic processes. When stakeholders perceive an overlap between their self-identity and presented organisational identity that meets their needs for self-definitions (Swann, 1987; Scott & Lane, 2000), they identify with the organisation.

This facet of organisational identity evokes Kuhn's (2006) and Young's (2007) determination of discourses as the main instruments of identity construction. According to Thomas, Wilson, and Leeds (2003), discourses contribute to the construction of social relationships in addition to the development of identities and systems of belief and truth. Likewise, Ülger and Ülger (2015) suggest that before any interpretation is possible, organisations need to locate themselves textually. Mönkkönen and Puusa (2015) emphasize this idea in the concept of dialogue which etymologically combine the words *dia* and *logos* referring to “(...) ‘joint accumulation of the world’” (p. 4) complying with Bakhtin and Emerson (1993) who define truth as a creation through communication and social interaction processes with others.

Such a discussion motivates us to focus on the relationship between the notion of religion and identity construction before considering the Presidency of Religious Affairs in Turkey in terms of identity construction.

## Religion and Constructions of Religious Identities

Social interpretations of religion have a long history that lies from Aristotle to old Chinese philosophers. For instance, Morris (2000, p. 111) cites the sentence in the ancient Chinese Book of Rites (circa third century BC): “Ceremonies are the bond that hold the multitudes together, and if the bond be removed, those multitudes fall into confusion”. This sentence indicating that the Chinese aristocracy were aware that rituals served a social function leads us to briefly review the main ideas of the classical sociological writers-Marx, Weber, and Durkheim as they relate to religion.

The key ideas underpinned Marx's (1972) analysis of religion are far from considering the role of religion as a notion that enables individuals from all social backgrounds to have the sense of solidarity. According to him, religion is reproduced by a property-owning class who owns the means of production. In broader terms, Marx (1972) calls religion the opium of individuals, which masks the exploitation that imbues the lower social class with the requirements of capitalism, and which, thereby, legitimates the interests of the elite. Similarly, Weber points out that ideas and practices of the dominant status groups provide the basis of the cultures of capitalist societies (McKinnon, 2010). It is his contention that “(...) each religion has a primary status group with a particular lifestyle and prestige, whose members associate with one another but exclude those from other groups” (Tracey, 2012) with different life styles. In a different vein, Durkheim's (1995) interpretation of religion focuses on a distinction between the sacred and the profane. The sacred is set apart from everyday activities, while the profane is used for a particular purpose. Yet, it is also Durkheim's argument that things are not intrinsically sacred; they become sacred through the meanings ascribed to them by religious communities in the circumstances that are repeated over time. Tracey (2012) illustrates the issue with a Christian's drinking a glass of wine. According to him, while he/she is having it in a bar, he/she would not consider the wine to stand for the blood of Christ as he/she would do in the context of a church communion. The sacred, thus, is a collective phenomenon that is converted “(...) into a set of categories which form the basis of a system of meaning or logic in a particular society” (Tracey, 2012, p. 91).

The discussion to this point highlights the difficulty in making a single comprehensive definition of religion. However, coming from the Latin root *religio* that stands for a relationship “(...) between humanity and some greater-than-human power” (Hill *et. al.*, 2000, p. 56), religion has three core features (Wuff, 1997): (1) A supernatural power to which individuals are committed, (2) A feeling present in the individual who believes in this power, and (3) Rituals carried out in relation to that power. Also included in these features are clear and codified procedures (McNamee, 2011) which is called the routinization of charisma by Weber (1978). For example, Hall (2007, p. 199) suggests that churches have “(...) developed administrative structures that are often similar to those of business entities”. Wuff (1997) identifies this as the reification of religion in modern societies through the transformation from an abstract phenomenon to a firm objective process due to definable systems such as theological traditions and denominations, a viewpoint that reminds us of Durkheim’s comprehension of the sacred as something having a collective meaning ascribed to it by a particular community. The above mentioned features concerning religion are also the common ground of the arguments of Marx, Weber, and Durkheim due to their implication of the presence of dominant groups and their propagative acts of the sacred. Drawing upon the work (titled *Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion after September 11*) of Bruce Lincoln, Petersen (2012) offers perhaps the most suitable viewpoint for religion:

“Religion consists in a discourse whose concerns transcend the human, temporal and contingent, claiming for itself a transcendent status; a set of practices aimed at implementing this discourse by creating a proper world and proper human subjects as defined by the discourse; a community whose members construct their identity with reference to a religious discourse and its attendant practices: and finally institutions, or structures, that regulates religious discourses, practices, and community, reproducing and modifying them over time” (p. 129).



In this perspective, anything can be reproduced as religion. That is, something is “religion” when religious meanings are ascribed to it through discourses, practices, communities, and structures (Woodhead & Heelas, 2000). For example, something is Muslim when it is constituted as such through discourses, practices, communities, and structures that are related to the traditions, rules, symbols, figures, and stories of Islam and that assert the recognition of a transcendent authority by reference to (1) Allah- an Arabic name of God, (2) the Qur’an- the holy book of Islam, composed of 114 chapters containing some 6000 verses, and (3) the *Sunnah*- one of the three divisions within Islam; the other two are Shia and Ibadi (Petersen, 2012). Thus, a dress, a TV serial, a food, or a specific type of marriage can be Muslim if legitimized by reference to authorities in Islam. Complying with this viewpoint, once the visual of the Marvel hero Spiderman performing the ritualized Muslim prayer *salat*, which is performed five times a day (Örümcek Adam’a namaz kıldırıldılar, 2013, p. 1) was inserted in the examination of the Religion course by a primary school in Ankara, Turkey (see Figure 10.1). Although this became the cover subject of the comics magazines mocking fanatic Islam those days, this was, doubtless, an attempt to build an area of overlap between two parties- between individuals and an authority, as a basis for common motives and for “(...) acting together” (Burke, 1950, p. 21), which Burke (1950, p. 21) calls *consubstantiality*.

This is the basic assumption that underlies the point of departure of this study. That is, the analysis of the organisational identity of a religious organisation cannot simply be about determining the role of Islam in its practices, but should be about investigating into the construction of Muslim identity, focusing on how it Islamizes or do not Islamize things and what kinds of Muslim identity it constructs to create an atmosphere for common motives for its stakeholders, while at the same time considering the structures, actors, and practices shaping this identity.

Within this context, the two research questions are suggested:

- RQ 1: How do certain practices, structures, and communities construct religious discourses just like contemporary political and economic structures do?
- RQ 2: How do social and historical processes lead to that particular construction?



**Figure 10.1:** The cover page of *Gırgır*-one of the comics magazines in Turkey. The figure illustrates the cover page of *Gırgır* showing Marvel heroes performing the ritualized Muslim prayer *salat* with a Muslim man. Source: *Gırgır*, March, 13-20, 2013, no: 11

## Research Design

### Selection of the Organisation

The Presidency of Religious Affairs which was founded in 1924 in Ankara, Turkey and which its historical root originated from “Şeyhülislamlik” – an institution that had the highest religious authority during Ottoman time, was selected in order to shed light on a range of construction strategies related to Muslim identity. Core principles of the organisation, in its own words, are “To carry out work on Islamic belief, worship and ethics, enlighten society on religion and administer places of worship... in line with the principle of secularism, by staying out of all political views and thinking and aspiring to national solidarity and integration...” (“Basic principles and objectives.” 2015, p.1). What urged us to focus on this organisation was the positioning of its existence as a necessity, as stated in its brief history: “It is obvious that, in any case, a corporal identity is needed to carry out religious affairs pertaining to faith, which is an indispensable element of social life” (“Establishment and a brief history.” 2015, p. 1). This perspective is important as it articulates a framework for viewing its function as a means of persuading stakeholders to comprehend the strengths and unique qualities of being a Muslim and to establish the added value of religion into the centre of their lives.

### Method

In order to conduct our research we adapted Cheney’s (1983) four company-level strategies to this work dealing with communication in the field of religion:

(1) “The common ground technique” (p. 148): The organisation communicates to the individual that it shares the same values (e.g., having a concern for fairness) and goals (e.g., cooperation), and offers him/her an organisational identity (e.g., through company-sponsored clubs),

(2) “Identification through antithesis” (p. 148): Uniting against a common “enemy”; this occurs when outsiders are portrayed as threats to the organisation. Through those portrayals, organisations implicitly emphasize identification with “insiders” as an attempt to provide unity and collective acceptance of organisational values,

(3) “The assumed or transcendent ‘we’” (p. 148, 154): This strategy is used when it is affirmed that the organisation and its stakeholders share the same interests. Evidence of this strategy includes the uses of the personal pronouns *we/our* and *they/their*, and

(4) “Unifying Symbols” (p. 154): This strategy which concentrates on form rather than content is used to stress the importance of organisational symbols such as logo and trademark.

The discourse in the official website ([www.diyamet.gov.tr](http://www.diyamet.gov.tr)) of the Presidency of Religious Affairs was investigated based on the above mentioned four criteria. It should be noted that because most of the pages in the website are not accompanied by images, we chose to concentrate mostly on verbal encoding rather than the non-verbal one.

Table 10.1 provides a sample of the transcription method, which was used for each *diyanet.gov.tr* text as a basis for the identity construction analysis.

It is noteworthy that while our analysis of the website of the Presidency of Religious Affairs is not sample-to-population generalizable, it contributes to theoretical framework of how non-profit organisational identities are constructed. Besides, our approach has broad applicability, and may be used to investigate not only websites, but also corporate means of communication such as magazines and annual reports.

**Table 10.1:** A sample of the transcription method

Sample Title / Date	Identification Strategies Type	Example
Press State-ment/01.11.2014	1. The Common ground technique	In view of a flood of reactions conveyed to the Office of the President of Diyanet[1] against a character in a new TV serial called the False Imam[1] which is being aired on a TV channel it has become necessary to issue the following statement.
	2. Identification through antithesis	The character depicted in the TV serial as the “false imam” has deeply hurt all our religious officials who have social respectability. We believed that such scenarios were left in the past yet it is impossible for us to approve typecasting that defames the Islamic robe and the turban worn by the imams and the values that these attires stand for.
	3. The assumed or transcendent “we”	In the lightest terms we would like to regard the latest incident as a result of lack of attention and carelessness that amounts to fall in the high level of respect shown to religious values by our media in recent times. (continued)

Sample Title / Date	Identification Strategies Type	Example
The Office of the Head of Diyanet is sending its imams to Iran and allowing them to perform mut'a marriages/13.03.2014	1. Identification through antithesis	Today some social media users are systematically and immorally claiming that "the Office of the Head of Diyanet is sending imams to Iran and allowing them to perform mut'a marriages (temporary marriage in Shia Islam when a man and woman contract a mut'a for a limited period of time)". These are baseless claims that are simply immoral slanders.
		The slanders and claims have centered around the publication of a book on the life of our Prophet by the Office of The Head of Diyanet. Those behind these slanders have tried to create the impression that "Diyanet is allowing mut'a marriage" pointing to a sentence in the book which asks a question in the section which describes the superstitious types of marriages that existed during the period of ignorance before the Prophet. Despite the fact that these claims have been denied in our social media accounts the systematic campaign has continued.

Sample Title / Date	Identification Strategies Type	Example
		It is clear that those conducting this ugly and baseless slander campaign aim to divide the society into camps through sedition without any respect to values.
The Office of the Head of Diyanet is sending its imams to Iran and allowing them to perform mut'a marriages/13.03.2014	2. The common ground technique	There is no religious reference in our community on this issue and the views of the Office of the Head of Diyanet are very clear regarding mut'a marriages.
	3. The assumed or transcendent "we"	We refer them to the conscience and vast foresight of our dear nation.

## Results

From the survey of the website, we have identified the common ground technique, identification through antithesis, and the assumed or transcendent "we" as the most pervasive identification strategies. It is clear that through these strategies the Presidency's identity is introduced as a secular and modern organisation which is always on the lookout for unification and fairness for Muslim Turks both in Turkey and around the world- but in a way that does not corrupt the values and principles of the historical background of the religion. This is very visible and concrete especially in its remarks regarding its affirmation to act in accordance with the the Constitution of 1982, that is, "(...) with the principle of secularism, by staying out of all political views and mentalities..." ("Establishment and a brief history." 2015, p. 2). This is also explicit in some of its basic principles and objectives ("Basic principles and objectives." 2015, p. 1):

“To take substantial information based on the Quran and Sunnah, that are two fundamental sources of religion as a basis while enlightening society on religion,

To take into consideration Muslims’ 14 centuries long religious experience and value modern life and common heritage of mankind”.

A strong issue to emerge from this is that harmony and synthesis seem to be the discursive means through which the Presidency builds credibility and objectivity in relation to the teachings of Islam. However, some kinds of divisions such as a split among sects and the dialectic between traditional and modern, are inseparable from the understanding of religion. For example, although Muslims are united on the important points of the religion, a split exists among three sects- Sunnah, Shia, and Ibadi, as mentioned above. The main split is between Sunnah and Shia Muslims. The Sunnahs who constitute about 85 percent of Muslims worldwide believe that the Muslim community must be led by the Qur’an and the example set by the prophet Muhammad complying with the definition of the word *sunnah* in Arabic as “example”. Shias, who constitute just under 15 percent of the Muslim community, believe in the guidance of the Qur’an and the example set by Muhammad. But they also give prominence to the teachings of their current and historical religious leaders. The Shias assert that religious and political authority should be led by a direct descendant of the Prophet. After Muhammad’s death, they supported the leadership of Ali, the son-in-law of Muhammad, whereas most Muslims respected Abu Bakr, the first caliph in Islam, who led the Muslim community as a political leader. Since the institution of the caliphate was abolished by the resolution adopted by Turkish National Assembly in March 1924, the key differences between the two sects today have to do with ritual practice. For example, Shia Muslims have their distinctive prayer rituals and respect more to saints and pilgrimages. This is what lies behind many Sunnahs’ treating Shia customs with suspicion (Gulevich, 2004).

These details are important as they provide insights into the Presidency’s discourse that incorporates the interplay of religion with history and politics in disguise and that impute a more communicative power to the organisation to construct a Muslim identity that is restricted to Sunnah customs. This portrays a religion that provides the dominant basis for submission and obedience to God,



presenting an explicit motivation for the consideration of different branches of Islam as a generic “other”. Thus stakeholders are encouraged to identify with a so-called unifying power praising Muslims who donate their time to be an “insider” and giving the impression of a sense of community also among Muslim Turks living abroad and people of different religions who are interested in Islam. The organisational discourse, therefore, sometimes becomes ironic. In “Basic principles and objectives” (2015, p. 1), for example, we recognize the clash of binary oppositions communicating the idea of collectivity in a rather ironic way:

“To offer services according to the principles of citizenship without distinction of sect, understanding and practice regarding religion,

To introduce Turkey’s experience and heritage in the field of religion abroad, enable Islam to be correctly understood, closely follow discussions about religious understanding and practice in both EU member states and Turkey and give accurate information to the public opinion in the West on this matter”.

Here the statements that stress divisions among sects [(“(...) without distinction of the sect...”) and the social-political division of the world [“(...) the public opinion in the West...”) portray the binary oppositions of the Sunnah versus the Shia and the West versus the East, and thereby, reinforce the foregrounding of the fundamental values of the Presidency. Thus, it is evident that the combination of “(...) modern life and common heritage of mankind” (“Basic principles and objectives.” 2015, p. 1) does not always mean to be a unifying agent when a religious organisation is of concern.

Congruently, as noted in Table 10.2, even the need to issue the statements regarding a character in a TV serial called the *False Imam* that “defames” (“Press statement.”, 2015, p. 1) the clothing worn by imams and claims about the Presidency’s approval of temporary marriages as in Shia Islam is a good example that strengthens the idea of the dissatisfaction with cultural diversity.

Furthermore, in our study, the usage of unifying symbols are restricted to the Presidency’s logo, videos of hajj- a journey made to Mecca (in Saudi Arabia), the birth place of the prophet Muhammad, at the same time every year according to the Muslim calendar, during the first ten days of the month called *Dhu al-Hijjah*, and umrah-

a journey made to Mecca at any time of the year, as well as photos that usually degenerate to cliché in discourses related to Islam. The Presidency's logo is composed of a circle which represents the whole world and humanity and in which there is a smaller circle that stands for a mosque. The divided upper circle of the mosque shows a dome which is a dominant feature for mosques and which signifies the vault of heaven (Dickie, 1978). The 24 pieces above the main circle represent the foundation year of the Presidency while the images on the two sides of its inner part indicate the “d” for diyanet (“Diyanet logosunun anlamını biliyor musunuz?” 2005, p. 1) (see Figure 2).



**Figure 10.2:** The logo of the Presidency of Religious Affairs. Source: [www.diyanet.gov.tr](http://www.diyanet.gov.tr)

The types of photos that appear in the website are: long shots of mosques and people including children who perform salat, medium and long shots of former presidents, close up and medium shots of the hosts at Diyanet TV programmes, medium and long shots of some of the TV programmes, and long shots of religious publications both for adults and children. The female hosts at Diyanet TV programmes cover their hair and wear loose-fitting clothing. Their faces and hands are visible. The male hosts are displayed in front

of Arabic writings although Arabic is not our native language. This cultivates our perception of the Presidency's adherence to the conservative belief that the Arabic language is very important in Islam as translation would change the meaning of the original words in Qur'an which is composed by God in Arabic.

It is also noteworthy that in the left cluster of the main page of *diyanet.gov.tr* there is the Muslim calendar which is similar to the calendar that was in use in Arabia during Muhammad's day. While today's internationally accepted calendar which is known as the Western calendar takes the earth's yearly orbit around the sun as its primary cycle, the Arabian one was rooted in the cycles of the moon (Gulevich, 2004). We argue that, on one hand, the usage of this calendar besides the Western one is typical of a religious organisation. But on the other hand, this is a verbal manifestation of the fact that contradicts the modern through the portrayal of the binary opposition of the Eastern versus the Western. Thus, the Presidency creates a more authentic and credible perception of the past.

## Conclusion and Discussion

The above analysis of *www.diyanet.gov.tr*, based on Cheney's (1983) identification strategies, has provided empirical insights into the identity of a religious non-profit organisation, exploring the ways in which this organisation understands Islam. We have argued that religious organisations tend to construct identity through discourses, practices, communities, and structures just as companies do. Our emphasis here points mostly to the textual discourse in the website of the Presidency of Religious Affairs that acts as an organic intellectual, in Gramsci's (1982) words, seeking to impose its hegemonic collective identity constructions on stakeholders. Thus, the findings of this analysis may be summarized by the viewpoint echoing Marxist historicism that suggests ideas cannot be understood outside their social and historical context, apart from their function and origin.

To understand that viewpoint is to see the function of religious organisations as the arbiter and defender of the acceptable and the legitimate. Our interpretation is also motivated by the fact that unifying symbols in the website visualize the other three identification strategies, namely the common ground technique, identification through antithesis, and the assumed or transcendent "we". Within

this context, the Presidency of Religious Affairs conveys a sense of the unity and diversity of Muslim practices, thus comes to suggest, in Durkheim's account of religion, the binary opposition of the sacred versus the profane. Here the Sunnah, for example, is the sacred as a phenomenon converted by an authority into a category that forms the basis of the logic in Turkish society whereas the Shia is the profane. To take another example, covering the hair is the sacred whereas uncovering is the profane. In this sense, reconsidering the example of the serial the *False Imam*, the Presidency's being one of the most influential pressure groups which were on the lookout for the the serial's banning from public broadcast makes us question to what extent something is sacred or profane. Because, according to the producer of the serial, this is the transformation of a character who is against religious teachings but who experiences and learns the religion at the end ("Kertenkele dizisinin yapımcısı eleştirilere cevap verdi." 2014, p. 1). The character gives up his bad habits such as drinking too much alcohol and stealing in the process of learning the religion. However, this "no tolerance" policy of the Presidency, which is supposed to make the values and symbols of the religion safe, cannot bear the profane even to that end.

Thus, what has become clear to us in our research work is that, repeatedly, the Presidency's stance here is an ironic one compared to the teachings of Islam that necessitate inner peace and social harmony. It provides Muslim Turks with a focus of religious loyalty and respect for the world which is thought to have been fashioned by God. Thus, all those oppositions are actually a struggle to hold the majority together in order to prevent them from falling into confusion and losing the feeling of rootedness, which may be both intended and unintended as Cheney (1983) puts forth.

Therefore, this study, we suppose, offers a better understanding of the facets of how identity is communicated through texts to facilitate stakeholder identification with the issue- in this case, with certain religious values which are familiar and which generate security and belonging. Stakeholders, thereby, can distinguish themselves from "others" and feel identified with the "faithful" as a socially acceptable way of enhancing their own self-esteem.

## Limitations and Implications for Further Research

Like any research, this study is not without its limitations. Firstly, although especially advanced forms of semiotics such as the social semiotic theory of multimodality which focuses on the interplay of textual (e.g., written documents and spoken words) and meta-textual (e.g., pictures, photographs, video, and symbols) components offer acceptable explanations for available for analyzing identity construction, they were not taken into consideration as the web pages with verbal encoding lack the non-verbal one, and vice versa. Thus, further research focusing on a more acceptable website format would be desirable.

Secondly, the verbal encoding of the Presidency's website is mostly comprised of guidelines made up of short and mediocre sentences. Therefore we based our study mostly on the pages titled "Basic Principles and Objectives", "Establishment and Brief History" and press statements. Future studies should therefore consider websites that incorporate more detailed textual elements in order to investigate the relationship between organisational management and identity construction.

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## **Part III**

# **Case Studies**



## Chapter 11

# Public Information and Communication for public participation in Spain

Alejandro Alvarez and Isabel Ruiz-Mora

## Introduction

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have overcome barriers of time and distance. Before these were developed, it was very hard to generate an instantaneous interaction and sharing content between users was complicated. Nowadays, users have unlimited access to the media, to a massive amount of information and are able to share almost everything (Crespo and Zafra, 2005); this represents a substantial opportunity to improve democracy.

ICTs improve citizen participation in democratic processes and on the other hand, they revitalize democracy. Accordingly, one of the most important characteristic of ICTs is as a link between citizens and governments. The intended purpose is “electronic transparency” which happens when public information is real and available for citizens (Garcia-Costa, 2007).

Borge (2007) agrees with the idea that ICTs improve democracy, because they facilitate the relationship between citizens and governments and they speed up the transfer of information. Using ICTs, both citizens and governments give and receive information, avoiding traditional mass media and political parties. In this way, the relation between them is optimized; citizens can receive direct and appropriate answers from governments and can have control over them. This is also possible because of the circulation of information between citizens and organisations. In fact, open government is reached when citizens can access information using the Internet in an “affordable, legible, understandable, structured and reusable

way by any individual or legal entity” (Calvo, 2013, p.72). In this sense, as citizens, we can shape public opinion, we can participate and we can assert our rights. Furthermore, political corruption is avoided and public administrations are more efficient (Calvo, 2013). Official web sites are the most used tool for that.

Using ICTs government representatives share information with citizens and make the information available for everyone. This situation is essential in democratic processes. Voters need information about government representatives and when they have this information they are prepared to judge, reward or punish their conduct at specific times, such as elections. This is the best way to control political management in democracies (Borge, 2007, p.28).

ICTs are not just a tool which governments can use to inform citizens, they can be used to improve public communication. ICTs allow two-way exchanges (communication) without mediators between citizens and government representatives. *E-participation* “open(s) new and unthought horizons in recent democracies” (García, 2007, p.4), and it allows voters to get directly involved in public management. In other words, this new way of participating could contribute to the construction of a new and more direct democracy, beyond the democracies we already know; but there are still limitations with access to technology and knowledge of how to use it for participation purposes (Borge, 2007), as well as public trust in politicians (Castells, 2010).

Using ICTs citizen participation could potentially take a variety of forms, such as on-line consultations, forums, referendums, demands, emails, letters... It is possible to improve the quantity and the quality of public communication with real participatory experiences. The obtained result would be increased citizen participation in democracy (Borge, 2007).

However, politicians in general find it difficult to communicate with citizens using the Internet. They use the Internet for announcements and not for dialogue (Del Rey Morató, 2007). The on-line publication of information doesn't change the structure and the management of political processes. The internet is not considered by citizens as an efficient tool to question government representatives. Nowadays, politicians consider citizens as a valued instrument to spread information. So, government representatives use digital media as a notice board or a political party newsletter (Del Rey Morató, 2007) but they don't offer the necessary information about their management.

Currently the exchange of information is not optimal. Voters don't know what government representatives do and politicians don't know how voters think. We can state that citizens' access to information is partial; government representatives inform only on what they think is interesting and traditional. Media become mediators, choosing the topics and paying attention to sensational stories (Borge, 2007).

As a consequence we identify this situation as "bad practice" and many opinion surveys show that there is an increasing distance between politicians and citizens (Minguijón and Pac, 2012). This is expressed in the decline of citizens' participation in associative activities and in their negative opinions about government. Citizens are not interested in public matters and they do not feel committed to participation (Minguijón and Pac, 2012). Most citizens do not trust politicians, governments or parliaments. Corrupt practices have damaged their legitimacy, and citizens do not agree with decisions adopted by politicians (Castells, 2010).

The presented research analyses and reflects on this social context. The principal goal is to contribute to knowledge about the role of public information and communication in a process of social accountability. To do that, we examine the different resources and digital communication practices of 230 city councils (over twenty thousand inhabitants), achieved through their official web sites (including the Autonomous Communities of Andalucía, Aragón, Canarias, Galicia and Madrid). We analyse responsibilities, the composition of government, salary of key figures, job schedules, minutes, public accounts and records of different government bodies. Furthermore, we examine the available information about Government Plans, including Urban Planning and different municipal plans, their budgets and their implementation. We also explored annual reports and financial management reports.

The main hypothesis states that city councils' official web sites do not offer information about the management of government to citizens. They do not promote citizen participation or citizens control over democratic process (Molina, 2015).

## Theoretical Background

The field of social communication in society is a result of different conflicts and polarizations such as: local – global; heterogeneity – uniformity; exclusion – participation; democratization – hegemonomies. These dichotomies acquire a special significance in democratic systems, public administration and the citizens' right to inform and to be informed. It is not only a public manifestation of public communication; it also contributes to social cohesion and the construction of citizenship (Castells, 2010). In fact, the latest theories and policies produced by the United Nations (Ego, 2013) consider information as an individual and collective right to be guaranteed by constitutions. Access to qualified information and ICTs for citizens is essential when it is intended that citizens take an active role and contribute to social, economic, political and cultural developments. According to Borrastero and Llimós (2007), the communication process can take a political dimension, when it is understood as a common area for the construction of social meanings or questions about social order.

Citizens' participation is not possible if there is no access to information. Information is the result of reception, perception and data-processing (Camacho, 2003). This premise sets out that an effective and efficient citizens' participation is possible when the democratization of information is achieved. If that happens, citizens' participation will be a positive action for the construction of society; citizens will be involved in political decisions that affect their daily life; they will take an active role in their communities and they will think in future as a collective (Camacho, 2003).

In this regard, the development of new technologies could have helped communication between governments and citizens, making it more direct and fluid. But this did not happen, so democratic practices and citizen's participation have not increased (Moreno, 2012). However, the field of scientific knowledge about the uses of ICTs to promote citizens' participation to achieve accountability and transparency in public institutions has been showing important progress (Cáceres, 2014).

Besides, corrupt practices have damaged governments' legitimacy and commonly citizens do not agree with decisions adopted by politicians (Castells, 2010). Studies show that there is ever greater distance between politicians and citizens (Rodríguez-Virgili, López-Escobar and Tolsá, 2011; Velasco, 2008; Fundación BBVA, 2006; El-



gueta, 2003). In the last study about the main problems for Spanish citizens (CIS, 2016), corruption appear in the third position (47.8%) and politicians in the fourth position (20.8%). Most citizens do not trust politicians, governments or parliaments (Corral, 2011). Citizens' participation is weaker, citizens are not interested in public matters and they do not feel committed to participation (Moreno, 2014).

There are some opportunities offered by the Web 2.0 such as the possibility to create communities, to discuss matters of public interest and to share information. Such opportunities can become real if they are combined with a good and qualified communication process, and if governments provide diversity and in-depth information (Álvarez-Nobell, 2011 and 2013).

Hence, public information and communicative programmes can take an important role in the relation between governments and civil society. The results of such a programme may or may not help to increase citizens' participation; this may or may not lead to improved transparency of public institutions and to accountability of governments (Rodríguez *et al*; 2014). Paradoxically, without information and without accountability there is no possibility of reaching an independent and critical public opinion; a public opinion which could argue for different ideas and could hold and introduce them in the broad agenda of public matters.

Many studies demonstrate in a reflexive and analytical way the benefits and potentials of accountability processes in contemporary societies in general, and in Latin American societies in particular (Cáceres, 2013 and 2014). These studies include Olvera and Isunza, (2004), Ackerman (2005); Fox (2006); Guerrero (2006) and Schedler (2008). These authors agree that accountability processes involve state agents and citizens in a different dynamic in which governments' actions achieve transparency when they are assessed by public opinion.

Accountability must be understood as rules, procedures and practices for public institutions to "inform about their decisions and justify them to society (answerability)", and that includes citizens' right to demand public control and their right to "sanction and remove public officials whose actions have dishonoured their public duties" (Schedler, 2008, pp. 12-13). In institutions accountability process can appear in two ways. Firstly as accountability mechanisms in horizontal or vertical direction, such as the separation of political power systems, checks and balances, as well as competitive

and periodical elections - (O'Donnell, 2001). A second way involves extra-institutional controls, when "citizens and civil organisations (may) question politic/public policies, government representatives' decisions or report their illegal activities, problems and new issues" (Peruzzotti, 2006, p.47).

In these extra-institutional controls (informal and indirect controls) the objectives are to influence public opinion and to activate institutional mechanisms for "social accountability". In this way, a proactive participation of civil society can contribute to the availability and accessibility of public information in a democratic process. Public information must be understood as a human right and as a necessary condition to reach transparency and accountability in public institutions and to achieve effective citizens' participation (Cáceres, 2014b).

The required approach to those situations could be understood from a number of dimensions in the management of communication (Borja and Castells, 1997; Colombo, 2005; Almansa, 2009; Canel and Sanders, 2009). These include relations between governments and mass media, government communication campaigns, issue management, internal communication in public administration, professional skills for government representatives and communication management in crisis situations or disasters. Canel and Sanders (2010) suggest that when the communication process is focused on establishing relations between governments and citizens, and it is not focused on gaining votes, the citizen is appreciated in a different way. In this sense a broader perspective appears focused on the possibility of reaching a long-term relation between governments and citizens.

## Research Design

The present research is based on a novel approach. It is not only about diagnosing official web sites and its content; it also aims to promote social change, to motivate citizens to demand a change.

To carry out this research used the geographical e-tool “The Infoparticip@ Map” an innovative tool whose purpose is to motivate governments and government representatives to make improvements in public information and communication, and to encourage citizens to respond. We have used The Infoparticip@ Map to analyse how web sites of Spanish city councils are used by politicians, and also by citizens, considering three main actions from our theoretical framework:

- Promoting citizens’ participation for the construction of citizenship
- Improving accountability and transparency in public institutions
- Encouraging dialogue and communication with citizens

This e-tool was firstly experimented with in Cataluña city councils (Spain) between 2012-2013 and this was carried out by the research group “Periodismo y Comunicación para la Ciudadanía plural” (LPCCP) at Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona (UAB). At the time (2012), 947 official web sites were analysed and the results were presented in the ‘Good Practices Map for Local Public Communication in Cataluña’<sup>1</sup>. The results showed that the public information in official web sites was poor and insufficient. This first assessment in Cataluña helped to define the new “Infoparticip@ - Map” and to reach a broader approach. The second assessment (2013-2014) included the autonomous communities of Andalucía, Aragón, Canarias, Galicia, Madrid and again, Cataluña (second assessment). This e-tool can be used for every city council in Spain or other countries around the world.

We analysed the public information published in official web sites of 230 city councils, using 41 indicators related with our three research-actions. These indicators aim to answer four questions:

1. Who are the government representatives?
2. How do politicians manage the public resources?
3. How do politicians inform citizens about their management?

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<sup>1</sup> Original title “Mapa de Buenas Prácticas de la Comunicación Pública Local en Cataluña” <http://www.infoparticipa.cat/bones-practiques/index.html>

4. Which tools are used by the governments to promote citizen participation and to control the democracy process?

These 41 indicators are based on the good practices map; current legislation; civic societies organisations, for example Transparency International; and previous theoretical contributions (Moreno, Molina and Corcoy, 2003).

The cited indicators were used to identify if city councils offered basic information on their web sites. Every indicator is equal to one point, so, the maximum score is 41 (100%). The results were registered in an analysis chart to quantify the score achieved (based on the positive indicators obtained). The results are about different e-resources of city councils in Spain, where every citizen is able to assess the public information published in official web sites and demand necessary improvements.

These results are geo-referenced and they are colored: if the obtained score is higher than 50% it will appear green; if the obtained score is between 25% and 50% it will appear yellow and if the punctuation is below 25% it will appear white.

The information below includes a comparative analysis of the results obtained. It presents an assessment (including two assessments in Cataluña) about the public information published on the official web sites of 231 city councils, with over 20,000 inhabitants, in 6 autonomous communities: Andalucía, Aragón, Canarias, Cataluña, Galicia and Madrid. It analysed 89 city councils with over 50,000 inhabitants and 141 city councils with a population between 20,001 and 50,000 inhabitants

**Table 11.1:** Number of city councils with over than 20.000 inhabitants in the analyzed Autonomous Communities. Source: INE (2012)

Population	Cataluña 1st and 2nd approach	Canarias 1st approach	Andalucía 1st approach	Madrid 1st approach	Aragón 1st approach	Galicia 1st approach	Total
Over 50.000	23	8	29	20	2	7	89
Between 20.001 50.000	40	20	52	12	2	15	141
TOTAL	63	28	81	32	4	22	230

**Figure 11.1:** Infoparticip@ map. Source: Infoparticip@

## Results

The results of this project include the analysis of 230 city councils with over 20,000 inhabitants in 6 autonomous communities of Spain. The data obtained is based on the first period of assessment, which was carried out in the above autonomous communities, from 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2013 to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2014, and which were published on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2014 on the web platform. Cataluña city council's first period of assessment was carried out between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012 and 15<sup>th</sup> May 2013, and its second period of assessment was carried out simultaneously with the first one of the other city councils (23<sup>rd</sup> May 2013 to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2014).

The data presented in Table 11.2, include the results of the assessment of 89 official web sites in city councils with over 50,000 inhabitants in the mentioned autonomous communities. It can be observed that 63 city councils are coloured green (71%) which represents a good score in the indicators applied. It is important to mention that 26 city councils (29%, almost one-third), have not passed the assessment and 4 city councils (4%) have not even reached a score over 25% (they were coloured white). From our point of view this situation is worrying because we are talking about the biggest city councils in Spain and its capital city.

It can be seen that in the group coloured green, only 14 web sites (16%) have reached 75% in their score in the first period of assessment, and 49 web sites (55%) have passed the evaluation but they have not exceeded 75%. In the Cataluña assessment, 23 city councils were analysed with over 50,000 inhabitants and their official web sites. In the first period, only one city council was coloured yellow and in the second period, every city council was colored green and 13 of them have exceeded 75%.

Our in-depth analysis shows differences between the individual autonomous communities. Canarias and Galicia, with over 50,000 inhabitants, do not present any official web site with a 75% score in the assessment. The official web sites with more than 75% in their score (dark green coloured) are Cataluña with 39% (9 out of 23 web sites) in the first assessment and 57% in the second; Aragón shows 50%, but this community only had 2 city councils to be considered in this analysis; Madrid shows 15% (3 out of 20) and Andalucía with 3% (1 out of 29) and represents the principal autonomous community with the lowest score.

**Table 11.2:** Results of the assessment of 89 official web sites, in city councils with over 50.000 inhabitants in every Autonomous Community analyzed. Source: Infoparticip@ -Map, until 28th April 2014

Punctuation	1st approach of assessment					TOTAL	Cataluña		TOTAL
	Andalucía	Aragón	Canarias	Galicia	Madrid		1st and 2nd approach of assessment	1st and 2nd approach of assessment	
Over 75% dark green	1 (3%)	1 (50%)	-	-	3 (15%)	5 (7.5%)	9 (39%)	13 (57%)	14 (16%)
From 50% to 74% light green	10 (33%)	1 (50%)	5 (62.5%)	6 (86%)	14 (70%)	36 (54.5%)	13 (57%)	10 (43%)	49 (55%)
From 25% to 49% yellow	15 (52%)	-	2 (25%)	1 (14%)	3 (15%)	21 (32%)	1 (4%)	-	22 (25%)
Under 25% white	3 (10%)	-	1 (12.5%)	-	-	4 (6%)	-	-	4 (4%)
TOTAL city councils between 20,001 and 50,000 inhabitants	29	2	8	7	20	66	-	23	89

**Table 11.3:** Summary

Punctuations	City councils over 50.000 inhabitants		City councils between 20.001 -50.000 inhabitants	
Over than 75%	14	63 (71%)	5	32 (23%)
From 50% to 74%	49		27	
From 25% to 49%	22	26 (29%)	85	109 (77%)
Under 25%	4		24	
	89		141	

The official web sites coloured light green dominate the chart. They obtained between 50% and 74% in their score. Percentages by autonomous communities are Galicia (86%), Madrid (70%), Canarias (62.5%), Cataluña (57%), Aragón (50%) and Andalucía (35%).

The official web sites which were coloured yellow (under 50%) reached between 25% and 49% in their good score. Each one of the communities Andalucía and Canarias (25%), Madrid (15%), Galicia (14%) Cataluña autonomous community had obtained a good score in the first period of assessment (4%). In the second period there was no official web site with that score. Note: Aragón did not present this score.

There are 4 city councils with over 50,000 inhabitants which were colored white (and did not pass). They did not reach the 25% level, Andalucía had 29 official web sites and 3 of them (10%) did not pass, the Canarias had 8 official web sites and 1 of them (12.5%) did not pass.

As seen in Table 11.2, of the city councils with over 50,000 inhabitants, Andalucía and the Canarias Autonomous Communities had achieved the lowest score. In Table 11.3, it is observed that the city councils with this population density, includes Madrid, the six capital cities of the six autonomous communities and 21 capital cities of the 22 provinces (one of them, Teruel is under the 50,000 inhabitants,). In the Infoparticip@ – Map, 4 cities of Andalucía, 1 city of Galicia and 1 city of Aragón were colored yellow because they did not pass the assessment.

In the following table (Table 11.4) we analyse the official web sites of 141 city councils between 20,001 and 50,000 inhabitants. The results show that 109 official web sites did not pass the assessment (77%) and 32 official web sites (23%) passed.



Considering those 32 web sites which passed the assessment, only 5 of them reached a 75% score. In the other hand, considering those web sites that did not pass the assessment, 24 of them got a score of 25% – coloured white – and 85 of them scored between 25% and 49% – colored yellow.

In Cataluña Autonomous Community, 40 official web sites of city councils between 20,001 and 50,000 inhabitants were analysed. In the first period of assessment 17 web sites did not pass (42.5%); in the second period, this decreased by 20%, now only 9 web sites did not pass the assessment (22.5%). Considering the official web sites which passed the assessment, the second period showed increased numbers, from 4 to 9 web sites approved; finally, considering those official web sites which reached a score under 75%, there was also an increased number, from 19 web sites to 22 web sites.

After a detailed analysis of the Autonomous Communities, it is evident that Andalucía, Aragón, Canarias and Galicia Autonomous Communities, with a population between 20,001 and 50,000 inhabitants, do not have any official web site which reached 75% of the positive indicators. Only 1 city council of the Madrid area and 4 city councils of Cataluña, reached the 75% of the positive indicators. The number of official web sites that exceeds a score of 50% but does not reach 75% is minimal.

Considering the first period and analysing 141 official web sites, the majority of them did not pass the assessment; those web sites represent 67% of the total. It is important to mention that there are city councils coloured white that reached a score under 25%: Andalucía (31%), Galicia (27%) and Canarias (20%).

If we compare these results with table 11.2, we can state that smaller city councils have obtained the worst scores, clearly affecting the way these public institutions promote and facilitate public information and public communication among citizens.

A higher number of Autonomous Communities (68%) were coloured yellow (scoring between 25% and 49%); it is important to mention that in Cataluña's second period of assessment, the official web sites decreased (22.5%).



As can be seen in Table 11.5, in which we present a summary of this analysis, when population decreases the number of official web sites that fail this assessment improve, increasing from less than one-third to more than three-quarters. Note that those city councils with populations between 20,001 and 50,000 inhabitants are considered medium to large sized, compared to most city councils in Spain.

Our results for the Autonomous Communities also indicate significant differences between them: Andalucía and Canarias Autonomous Communities obtained the lowest score, but on the other hand, Madrid and Cataluña obtained the highest one.

**Table 11.5:** Summary

Autonomous Communities and provinces	Cataluña	Canarias	Andalucía	Madrid	Aragón	Galicia	Total
Over 50.000 inhabitants	4	2	8	1	2	5	22
Between 20.001 - 50.000 inhabitants	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
TOTAL	4	2	8	1	3	5	23

## Conclusions and discussion

The emergence of the Internet has caused a new challenge for politics, mass media and citizenship; nowadays public debate is online (Del Rey Morató, 2007). These changes allow citizens to increase their abilities to transform society and control political, economic and administrative governments' entities (Alberich, 2004).

Responsible citizen's participation is possible if citizens are allowed to monitor public management and have the tools needed to make their contributions to governments. If citizens haven't got the basic information about their government's representatives, their managements and decisions, it is very difficult to promote the deepening of the democratic system (Rodríguez *et al*, 2013).

This study shows that the main city councils do not provide the information and minimum resources required to promote citizen participation. Consequently, the findings and results obtained confirm the hypothesis: city councils' official web sites do not offer information about local government management to citizens or/and mass media. Published information about key politicians is insufficient on a basic level (for example their names, their political party etc.) or including more detailed information (biographies and curriculums). Also, a very low percentage of those official web sites offer information about roles and functions of government bodies. This situation has a direct impact on citizens' ability to know politicians and their duties.

A large number of city councils offer basic and historic information. Other information however is not published although these are necessary to reach government's transparency. Such information (to reach transparency) would include government strategic and global plans, budgets and their implementation, annual reports and remuneration of politicians. Especially in economic matters, information is needed to monitor government's representatives and avoid the current distrust of government entities. Besides, most official web sites do not offer the possibility of checking their daily agenda and decisions adopted by government representatives.

In the city councils analysed, politicians' e-mail addresses are often not published and as a result citizens are unable to get in contact with politicians in a direct and simple way. Only those city councils that have reached a high level of transparency have other mechanisms of citizens' participation applied, such as politicians' email and their agendas. Citizen participation cannot be limited to highlighting problems; it has to be broadened and deepened.

Knowledge, control and assessment of public administration allows citizens to be more responsible and to get involved with the government, making contributions to the democratic system and not only in times of elections.

It is necessary for citizens to know how public authorities act, what responsibilities they have, to ask freely and form their own opinion. In an increasingly complex society, the exercise of freedom of expression requires more access to data and sources. This dimension is even better understood in relation to local and public communication where matters of everyday life are resolved in this local arena in relation to national and global issues.

Transparency is already on the political, media and public agenda. Therefore, the development of a research project that links local public communication, accountability, management and participation is appropriate. Through public information, citizens can participate in public life with their knowledge and can influence its development, preventing and controlling administrative inefficiencies, correcting errors, denouncing arbitrary and improving local coexistence. It is also essential that government provides full and timely information that can be used as a primary source for communication professionals from private and public media.

This study promotes public communication and public information using accountability as a citizens' right to demand public control and ICT's to facilitate citizens' participation. We have demonstrated how digital tools (when they are properly used) are available to assess public institutions but also, to demand and to promote transparency. Citizens can boost public communication using ICT's if they are really encourage by public institutions.

These results provide municipalities with a guide to good practice for local communication by listing the minimum requirements for good public communication, as well as the structure and information architecture (focused on 4 main strategic lines). Where a culture of transparency is adopted good practices expand, while the information architecture is transformed. City councils, often without resources, are open to change when they know the route, share the objectives pursued and understand citizen participation in the network society.

The aspirational goal is the revival of a civic culture that would serve to regenerate public life in the Spanish municipalities. The research contributes also to the regeneration of journalism because sources of government information are sanitized. Without sources of quality, equality of access, open layout content and citizen participation, it is not possible to reconstruct political journalism.

An uninformed society is exposed to the emergence and success of populist options or widespread discrediting of politics and journalism. Public communication must understand that the population size does not matter but the ability to offer concrete information of public interest.

In short, this is an opportunity to get political, social and cultural objectives involved in journalism in open societies. In this field, we are calling for action by journalists, non-governmental organisations and any actor of local life.

New media have accelerated the possibility of this accountability in real time and on any scale. In our case, we wanted to know the ability to influence local institutions (mainly municipalities) and other nearby institutions through the intensive use of technology.

In particular, the design of communication policies is the result of a combination of economic, political, social and technological factors. In the political sphere, communication policies study the legal and political conditions affecting the development of civil liberties. It is necessary in a social and democratic society that public authorities provide citizens the right to know how key figures act.

To this extent, society knows the interests of those involved in public communication and can evaluate the results, conditions improved democratic system. The new technologies of information have led to a more open, accountable and collaborative society, transparent and sensitive, more democratic and less hierarchical.

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## Chapter 12

# How important is civic engagement for public transportation communication?

Bruno Asdourian and Virginie Zimmerli

## Introduction

The traditional forms of social and political engagement of volunteering in NGOs encounter a significant decline (Worth, 2013). Far from reaching the end of militancy (Ion, 1997), new forms of engagement are revealed through the networking of individuals (Martinot-Lagarde & Hériard-Dubreuil, 2008) willing to cooperate and share their expertise without expecting a financial compensation (Béraud, du Castel & Cormerais, 2012). These new practices could be further detached from the organisational framework and occur episodically as illustrated by the notion of slacktivism (Christensen, 2011) or micro-volunteering (Kacprowicz & Borowiecka, 2014). Non Profit Organisations should, hence, meet the challenge of interpreting the nature of these new generations of citizens and adjust their activities and communication strategies accordingly. Under this perspective, the integration of an open data strategy appears as a wind-fall capable of relaunching and fostering online volunteer engagement (Wymer, Knowles & Gomes, 2006) particularly in regards to the ideal of transparency and participation (Asdourian, 2015).

The communication between users of digital media and public or non-profit organisation involved into an open data policy are represented through a democratic way with upwards and downward flows. This fact occurs mainly because of the increasing participation of citizens (Deuze, 2006) and the public deliberation (Wright, 2012; Held, 1996; Sunstein, 2001). This kind of movement appears within the social media and mobile application opportunities which promote new modalities of thought and expression, new ways of knowing (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Current scientific literature on digital technologies deals with the case of organisations which disseminate internal data to a crowd of citizens (Chig-

nard, 2012) and take into account its ideas, help and judgments (Surowiecki, 2004). These actions demonstrate a dual role. They not only contribute to development of a civic society oriented towards a civic engagement of citizens (Uldam & Vestergaard, 2015; Lee, 2015; Oh, Bellur & Sundar, 2010; Thompson, 1995) but also perceive open data projects as one of the significant variations of political engagement (Dahlgren, 2009). Thus, organisations involved into an open data policy need to comprehend this cultural context and to communicate specifically to participative citizens.

The overall purpose of this study is, above all, to determinate the tasks and their levels of importance by attaching certain cultural factors at an open data policy. Such factors, can shape civic agency, have an effect on citizens' engagement and participation and emphasize the role of an open data policy via social media and mobile devices. Besides, through this study, we propose a communication mix between organisations and citizens which will promote the engagement in an open data policy. At this point, an important question emerges: what are the characteristics of information flows and of the communication relations exchanged between these actors?

Relying on the methodology of the case study (Geneva Public Transport) conducted in this paper; this research explores the communication context that occurs between an organisation involved into an open data project, certain mobile experts who create mobile applications as well as the users of such applications.

In the following sections, we set up the theoretical framework which incorporates a participative model and a civic cultural framework. Then, we provide an analysis of the concepts of open data and the utility of the crowd enriched with data from interviews and an e-survey. Various measures of concrete actions based on Dahlgren's notions of cultural factors, are also suggested and discussed. In that way, we propose a communication mix model implemented in an open data policy. Finally, the paper describes the managerial contributions as well as the possible limitations of this study.

## Literature review

The literature review is carried out into two sections. The authors, at first section, determine the theoretical framework of the civic engagement principle thus to define and analyze the potential tasks emerged from this principle. Then, at the second section, is presented a reflection on the transformation of the utopian vision of an open data project into real and concrete.

### **Framework built to analyze tasks related to civic engagement**

The theoretical framework interplays the participative related AIP model (Carpentier, 2011) and the Civic Culture Framework (Dahlgren, 2009) in order to categorize tasks performed in the relation between citizens and public transportation organisation involved into an open data policy.

Carpentier (2011) describes civic agency and participative environment in the public sphere through three distinctive notions: "Access", "Interaction" and "Participation". In fact, "Access" and "Interaction" could be defined as possible conditions for the participatory processes. These three notions are also interlinked with the following areas: technology, content, people and organisations. "Access", of course, is the main component for the media technologies since it allows people to access media content. In the context of organisations, "access implies gaining a presence within media organisations, which generates the opportunity for people to have their voices heard (in providing feedback). If we focus more on media production, access still plays a key role in describing the presence of media (production) technology, and of media organisations and other people to (co-)produce and distribute the content" (Carpentier, 2011, p.28). "Interaction" is related to the establishment of socio-communicative relationships. Finally, "Participation" focuses on power and decision-making. The AIP model will be implemented, in this paper, in order to identify the tasks performed at internal level (within the organisation studied) but also at external level (between citizens). It will also serve to delineate the link between organisation and citizens (see methodology of Carpentier, 2014).

Dahlgren (2009) indicates elements of a civic culture which depict the suitable environment for an agency: "Knowledge", "Values", "Trust", "Spaces", "Practices" and "Identities". As for "Knowledge", tool that triggers the participation process, Dahlgren puts emphasis on its crucial aspect: knowledge acquisition. This fact helps, at this point, two types of citizens emerge. The first kind of citizens includes those who "tend to rest more on established background knowledge – which may even become outdated and ossified as ideological truths" (Dahlgren, 2009, p.110). Besides, the second type of citizens deal "with new information and thereby revising knowledge" (Dahlgren, 2009, p.110) while possessing the traits that render them "able to make sense of that which circulates in public spheres" (Dahlgren, 2009, p.109). In this way, new media play "key role in regard to civic knowledge [because] new media technologies promote new modalities of thought and expression, new ways of knowing" (Dahlgren, 2009, pp.109-110). "Values" are linked with the notion of democracy and with the principles of tolerance and willingness. Two categories of values are distinguished by Dahlgren: first, substantive values referring to equality, liberty, justice, solidarity, and tolerance; secondly, procedural values attached with the notions of openness, reciprocity, discussion, and responsibility/accountability. The most active citizens demonstrate an enthusiasm for democratic values, thereby; more engagement and action are stimulated and generated. Regarding the element of "Trust", Dahlgren claims that networks, social movements or political parties need, at least, a modest level of trust. For Mayer, Davis and Schoorman (1995) the nature of "Trust" connotes those citizens having confidence in each other (in a two-way communication). "Spaces" criteria are perceived by Dahlgren as "contexts in which [citizens] can act together" while he insists that new communicative contexts are easily generated by new media. These media create links between online and offline activities such as political interventions. "Practices" interact with "Knowledge", "Trust" and "Values" dimension of civic cultures. By practicing, citizens build their civic identities around a specific ideology adopted through networks. "Identities" are a protean and evolve through experience. Consequently, "people's subjective view of themselves as members and participants of democracy [is] build on knowledge and values [...] can be reinforced by trust, and embodied in particular spaces via

practices – pursuing issues by the use of civic skills – that in turn serve to reinforce identities " (Dahlgren, 2009, p.119). Thus, the sense of being an empowered agent and a member of communities are considered as valuable conditions to make some political interventions.

## **From an utopian vision of open data projects to real**

An open data philosophy results in a provision of data, previously considered as private. Correspondently, the public can use and exploit these data "without copyright restrictions, patents or other mechanisms" (Noyer & Carmes, 2013, p.137-138). Open data is linked to the culture of "free" – i.e. free software – (Lessig, 2004). This logic lessens the boundaries between organisations and the general public; particularly its category of: "professional amateur" or "pro-am" (Martin, Foulonneau, Turki & Ihadjadene, 2013) called "experts". This category of public, acts on a collaborative and ethical basis (Lin, 2004; Himanen, 2004). Thus, this logic of open data intertwines with the principles of utopia and myth (Couldry 2015; Ricoeur, 2005; Flichy, 2001), consequently, the free access to information and knowledge is promoted (Powell 2015; Mansell, 2013).

The open data and web 2.0 stimulate the emergence of values constructed by the blend of collective intelligences (Rheingold, 2002). In his book "The wisdom of crowds," Surowiecki (2004) embraces the principle of the emergence of additional value resulting from the aggregation of the parties. He asserts that the more information a group possess, the more its collective judgment improves. However, Surowiecki claims that collective intelligence is evident mainly through the combined presence of amateurs and experts in social groups composing these crowds. The utility of expert communities for the company is also present in the principle of crowdsourcing (Howe, 2008).

The mission of crowdsourcing is to procure the creation of new ideas by external experts in business communities that can work together face to face and / or by digital social media (Levine, Loch, Searls & Weinberger, 1999; Von Hippel, 2005). The crowdsourcing includes various forms (collaborative, cumulative, competitive and coopetitive) according to the levels of interaction and competition of participants (Renault, 2014). In a community of experts oriented

in a collaborative form, such as the case study provided below, the values of sharing and trust are considered as key components (Watson & Hagen, 2015) – versus to a competitive form. The methodology applied in this study allows us to quantify the levels of importance of these values.

## Research questions

Conducting a literature review, the following three research questions were established to guide the data collection and analysis:

- RQ1: What are the tasks related to cultural factors in an open data policy?
- RQ2: What are the levels of importance of the tasks related to cultural factors in an open data policy?
- RQ3: Which kind of communication mix between organisation and citizens could promote engagement in an open data policy?

## Method

In this paper, we conducted an empirical case study research design (Yin, 2003) in order to obtain deeper insights into the possible factors affecting the actors' culture of participation in a context of open data. Subsequently a qualitative and a quantitative data analysis were performed.

### Case and data collection

Data sets were collected from members of Geneva Public Transport (in French: Transports Publics de Genève as well as from creators and users of the UnCrowdTPG mobile applications. *Transports Publics de Genève* (TPG) operates the public transportation system in Geneva Canton with trams, buses and trolleybus. TPG is the first public transport organisation in Switzerland involved in an open data project. The group Quality of Life (QoL) – from Geneva University – has created the mobile application called UnCrowdTPG. Winner of the Open Geneva competition, organized by TPG, UnCrowdTPG enables its users, since July 2014, to give their opinion



on the overloading of vehicles (Souche, 2009). This application integrates the data of public transport users in order to detect the traffic affluence in real time. Hence, it allows citizens to change or postpone their urban travel. In test phase and without wide publicity, this application has been downloaded more than 100 times and has hosted about 300 visits in a three months period. The qualitative part of this research approach was developed through an explorative approach. It was based on a collection of data extracted from interviews. We conducted four interviews of approximately 45 minutes with each of the stakeholders of TPG, QoL and users of the UnCrowdTPG mobile application.

Following a thorough literature review, an e-survey was designed to include 49 civic acts related to 3 civic agencies and promoted by 5 cultural factors. All of the items in the e-survey were presented as statements to which contributors were asked to state their personal perceived importance on a seven-point Likert scale of 1 to 7 (1="Not at all important", 2="Low importance", 3="Slightly important", 4="Neutral", 5="Moderately important", 6="Very important", 7="Extremely important"). A brief description of our study and the link to the e-survey were sent from August to October 2015 to 12 Twitter accounts of the reference persons and organisations specialized in the open data thematic (i.e. @OKFN, @OpenDataMonitor, @schignard, @OpenDataZurich, @HackathonWatch, @Open-dataCH, @giorgiop5, @katewac, @shalf, @loleg, @ecolix, @andreasamsler) ; 7 specifics Twitter hashtag dedicated to open data or open innovation (i.e. #makeopendata, #hackdays, #hackathon, #opendata, #hackzurich, #openinnovation, #innovation) ; and to Master students from Fribourg and Geneva Universities. Some of our messages including a link to the e-survey were retweeted to many followers. The e-survey was completed by 22 persons (5 contest organizers, 3 mobile applications developers and 14 mobile applications users). The results were analyzed using the online tool Qualtrics.

# Findings

## Analysis and results from interviews

The interviews and the e-survey of this study have provided useful insights to comprehend the important factors appealed to the Open data Communication mix; created to enforce the engagement of citizens. The extracted data has allowed us to formulate suggestions for establishing a relation of contribution built upon Dahlgren's theory of cultural factors and particularly the principles of Trust and Knowledge. This was achieved by correlating messages and high number of participative related content. The interpretation of the interviews permitted us, also, to establish an overview of the relation between organisation, data experts and mobile application users.

## Analysis and results from e-survey

Regarding this overview, 49 tasks were created to define the relation between all actors involved in a collaborative relation. Results from the e-survey indicate the mean values of all of these tasks according to a level of importance. Table 12.1 illustrates the mean values of all tasks arranged, based on their mean values (highest starting from up).

**Table 12.1:** Ranking of the mean value of all tasks

Tasks (ranking)	Mean
Information on the open data project	6.14
Gradual improvement of the application (in beta mode) through feedback	6.08
Individual distribution of local data, advice and ideas for improvement in real time	6.08
Collaborative crowdsourcing Background	6
Facilitating the opening of internal borders	5.93
Ties with other similar organisations on the topic of open	5.86
Judgment/ Evaluation of the quality of the commitment of the creative team and the relevance of the result	5.86

Tasks (ranking)	Mean
Collaboration (Techies & Manager of competition on open data)	5.86
Networking dialogues between experts and users	5.85
Access to the content of the organisation	5.85
Manager as good listener	5.79
Users donating proposals of improvement	5.79
Business-expert users together around a utopian project	5.79
Access to a network (bridging)	5.77
Determine open data formats	5.71
Translation of complex data into an understandable statement	5.71
Willingness to share, improved practices (tech- savvy spirit, civic engagement)	5.71
Computer specialists as proponent of open (data innovation)	5.64
Employee participation in valuing the process of open data	5.64
Selection of project management teams animating the contest	5.64
Data donation from organisations	5.62
Discussions for the creation of an innovative speech	5.57
Generating ideas to be developed	5.57
Strong technological and combinatorial skills: transdisciplinary approach	5.57
Dissemination of the concept of open utopia	5.57
Information on resources people	5.54
Access to tutorials and skills	5.54
Content production via the opinions / evaluations / recommendations of users	5.43
Access to internal raw data	5.43
Networking dialogues between experts	5.36
Requests for new datasets for additional services	5.36
Participation in the dissemination of an innovative discourse between the services concerned	5.36
Creation of mobile applications	5.36
Retrieving information provided by the experts and users of the mobile application	5.36

Tasks (ranking)	Mean
Retrieving information generated by the citizens about the mobile application	5.36
Information about the tools available for creating applications	5.23
Creation of content through the uses of applications	5.21
Selection of teams of experts participating in the contest	5.14
Participation in the creation of a digital innovation	5.14
Interaction via mobile applications	5.14
Decision making process to hold an open data contest	5.07
Crowdsourcing through competitions	5
Recovery of users' data by innovators	5
Access to mobile tools (citizens)	4.92
Production, dissemination and reception of advertising content to enhance the image of an innovative company	4.86
Access to the imaginary of sharing	4.62
Software /available for the development of Mobile applications	4.38
Participation of members of the company to highlight the themes of reflection to participants during the contest	4.36

In order to simplify the interpretation of the findings, related items of the e-surveys were aggregated within the following five categories: (1) Knowledge, (2) Values, (3) Trust, (4) Spaces and (5) Participation. Table 12.2 illustrates the 49 tasks classified into five categories perceived by Dahlgren (2009) in his book "Media and political engagement: citizens, communication and democracy". Some tasks might be placed into more than one category; however, for heuristic purposes this e-survey embraces Dahlgren's notions.

**Table 12.2:** Tasks categorized into five Dahlgren's categories

Tasks	KVTSP Dahlgren
<p>Computer specialists as proponent of open (data innovation)</p> <p>Manager as good listener</p> <p>Determine open data formats</p> <p>Information on the open data project</p> <p>Information on resources people</p> <p>Information about the tools available for creating applications</p> <p>Access to a network (bridging)</p> <p>Access to tutorials and skills</p> <p>Ties with other similar organisations on the topic of open</p> <p>Software /available for the development of Mobile applications</p> <p>Networking dialogues between experts</p> <p>Networking dialogues between experts and users</p>	K
<p>Dissemination of the concept of open utopia</p> <p>Facilitating the opening of internal borders</p> <p>Data donation from organisations</p> <p>Individual distribution of local data, advice and ideas for improvement in real time</p> <p>Access to the imaginary of sharing</p> <p>Retrieving information provided by the experts and users of the mobile application</p> <p>Retrieving information generated by the citizens about the mobile application</p> <p>Recovery of users' data by innovators</p> <p>Decision making process to hold an open data contest</p> <p>Willingness to share, improved practices (tech-savvy spirit, civic engagement)</p>	V

Tasks	KVTSP Dahlgren
Collaboration (Techies & Manager of competition on open data) Business-expert users together around a utopian project Collaborative crowdsourcing Background	T
Access to internal raw data Access to mobile tools (citizens) Crowdsourcing through competitions Interaction via mobile applications	S
Discussions for the creation of an innovative speech Production, dissemination and reception of advertising content to enhance the image of an innovative company Requests for new datasets for additional services Gradual improvement of the application (in beta mode) through feedback Employee participation in valuing the process of open data Participation in the dissemination of an innovative discourse between the services concerned Selection of project management teams animating the contest Selection of teams of experts participating in the contest Judgment/ Evaluation of the quality of the commitment of the creative team and the relevance of the result Participation of members of the company to highlight the themes of reflection to participants during the contest Creation of content through the uses of applications	P

Tasks	KVTSP Dahlgren
Content production via the opinions / evaluations / recommendations of users Creation of mobile applications Generating ideas to be developed Translation of complex data into an understandable statement Users donating proposals of improvement Strong technological and combinatorial skills: transdisciplinary approach Participation in the creation of a digital innovation	P

Top tasks were coined as those items presenting a mean value higher than 6.0 based on the use of a seven-point Likert scale. Respondents of our e-survey considered as highly important to following item also illustrated in Table 12.3 (mean value and related category are described into the brackets):

- "Information on the open data project" (6.14 – Knowledge): The organisation embarks on the establishment and the diffusion of internal and external information related to open data procedures. Thus, documents, internal exchanges, web pages including core information and links towards tutorials for the development of software and open data formats are disseminated. The objective is to make accessible the information on the philosophy and open data practices. At this point, the criterion of Knowledge plays a crucial role.
- "Individual distribution of local data, advice and ideas for improvement in real time" (6.08 – Values): Citizens offer data issued from their perceptions and amelioration proposals. This task requires the Values of sharing and giving.
- "Gradual improvement of the application – in beta mode – through feedback" (6.08 – Practices): The practice of permanent technical improvements is conducted by the developers of mobile applications through the interactions of its users.

- "Collaborative crowdsourcing background" (6 – Trust): The developers of the mobile application collaborate between each other (high level of interaction, and low level of competition) in order to generate intelligible and comprehensive open data offered by the organisation. The ultimate objective is to facilitate the daily life of citizens. This could be achieved if and only the citizens express Trust and confidence on the functioning of the application by indicating the information related to the level of traffic congestion of the transport they use.

Low tasks were defined as those items indicating a mean value lower than 4.5 based on the use of same seven-point Likert. A lower importance was evident to: "Software available for the development of Mobile applications" (4.38 – Knowledge) and "Participation of members of the company to highlight the themes of reflection to participants during the contest" (4.36 – Practices).

To intensify the detection of potential trends and to facilitate data interpretation, a simple depiction of the achieved data was performed, aiming to illustrate the ranking of the five categories (Table 12.3). The rankings are based on the average of the mean values of the items within each category where the items were given equal weight. The ranking of the Dahlgren's categories, in a context of open data, was the following: (1= highest – 5=lowest): (1) Trust, (2) Knowledge, (3) Values and Practices and (5) Spaces (Table 12.4).

**Table 12.3:** Tasks categorized into five Dahlgren's categories and ranked through each of them

KVTSP Dahlgren	Tasks	Mean	Global Mean
K	Information on the open data project	6.14	5.57
	Ties with other similar organisations on the topic of open	5.86	
	Networking dialogues between experts and users	5.85	
	Manager as good listener	5.79	
	Access to a network (bridging)	5.77	



KVTSP Dahlgren	Tasks	Mean	Global Mean
K	Information on the open data project	6.14	5.57
	Determine open data formats	5.71	
	Computer specialists as proponent of open (data innovation)	5.64	
	Information on resources people	5.54	
	Access to tutorials and skills	5.54	
	Networking dialogues between experts	5.36	
	Information about the tools available for creating applications	5.23	
	Software /available for the development of Mobile applications	4.38	
V	Individual distribution of local data, advice and ideas for improvement in real time	6.08	5.43
	Facilitating the opening of internal borders	5.93	
	Willingness to share, improved practices (tech- savvy spirit, civic engagement)	5.71	
	Data donation from organisations	5.62	
	Dissemination of the concept of open utopia	5.57	
	Retrieving information provided by the experts and users of the mobile application	5.36	
	Retrieving information generated by the citizens about the mobile application	5.36	
	Decision making process to hold an open data contest	5.07	

KVTSP Dahlgren	Tasks	Mean	Global Mean
V	Recovery of users' data by innovators	5	5.43
	Access to the imaginary of sharing	4.62	
T	Collaborative crowdsourcing	6	5.88
	Background Collaboration (Techies & Manager of competition on open data)	5.86	
	Business-expert users together around a utopian project	5.79	
S	Access to the content of the organisation	5.85	5.27
	Access to internal raw data	5.43	
	Interaction via mobile applications	5.14	
	Crowdsourcing through competitions	5	
	Access to mobile tools (citizens)	4.92	
P	Gradual improvement of the application (in beta mode) through feedback	6.08	5.43
	Judgment of the quality of the commitment of the creative team and the relevance of the result	5.86	
	Users donating proposals of improvement	5.79	
	Translation of complex data into an understandable statement	5.71	
	Employee participation in valuing the process of open data	5.64	

KVTSP Dahlgren	Tasks	Mean	Global Mean
P	Selection of project management teams animating the contest	5.64	5.43
	Discussions for the creation of an innovative speech	5.57	
	Generating ideas to be developed	5.57	
	Strong technological and combinatorial skills: transdisciplinary approach	5.57	
	Content production via the opinions / evaluations / recommendations of users	5.43	
	Requests for new datasets for additional services	5.36	
	Participation in the dissemination of an innovative discourse between the services concerned	5.36	
	Creation of mobile applications	5.36	
	Creation of content through the uses of applications	5.21	
	Selection of teams of experts participating in the contest	5.14	
	Participation in the creation of a digital innovation	5.14	
	Production, dissemination and reception of advertising content to enhance the image of an innovative company	4.86	
	Participation of members of the company to highlight the themes of reflection to participants during the contest	4.36	

**Table 12.4:** Ranking of the Dahlgren's categories in an open data policy

Category ranking	Cultural factors	Mean value
1	Trust	5.88
2	Knowledge	5.57
3	Values	5.43
3	Practices	5.43
5	Spaces	5.27

**Discussion and proposition of an Open data Communication mix model**

The objective of this study is to determinate the tasks and their levels of importance by attributing cultural factors inside an open data policy. Consequently, it is proposed a communication mix between organisation and citizens capable to promote engagement in an open data policy. This study has revealed the significant importance of the Trust and Knowledge categories. Our findings indicate that the key characteristics of a well-defined open data context enhancing of citizens democratic participation, rely on symmetrical and horizontal interactions.

The symbiosis of Trust and Knowledge could be characterized as a valuable method to foster a participative creation of mobile applications by experts, data or even by feedback transmitted from end users. We propose that organisations involved into an open data project could undertake the following missions. First of all, they could try to reinforce the principle of Trust; secondly they could lay more emphasis on the notion of sharing knowledge through open data projects.

The four tasks that have been considered as "highly important" mean values are related to the four following categories: Knowledge, Practices, Values and Trust. However, respondents to the e-survey indicated a lowest importance to tasks related to the category "Spaces".

According to the number of tasks belonging to each category, "Practices" appeared to have a numerous items in comparison with "Trust" which includes a lower number of items. The level of importance for the first three tasks of these categories is equivalent; however, with a high number of items, the "Practices" category indicates a lower ranking mean value. If many "Practices" items were evoked by interviewees, many of them could be defined as not important at all (for instance: "Participation of members of the company to highlight the themes of reflection to participants during the contest" or even "Production, dissemination and reception of advertising content to enhance the image of an innovative company").

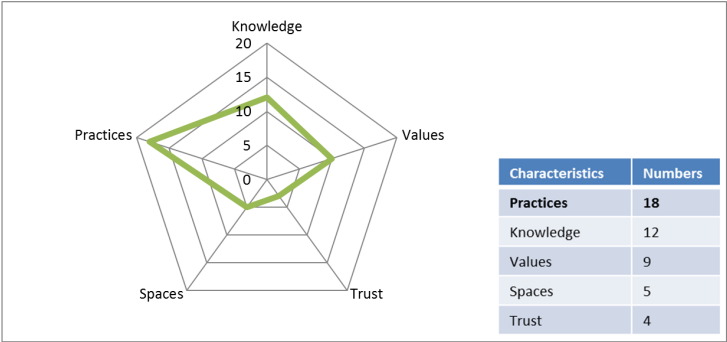


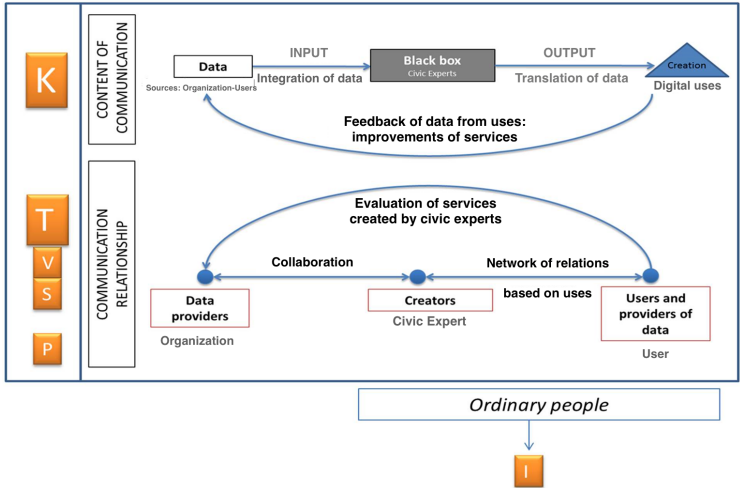
Figure 12.1: Number of civic cultural related tasks

To a certain extent, this research confirms prior findings that identify “ordinary people” as experienced individuals, empowered citizens and community’s members (Dahlgren 2009). The notion of experience implies that an open data policy can promote a long term evolution of civic identities in regards of creating and using applications from a collaborative aspect. Despite the political context, adversaries do not exist: people help each other in order to get well informed on transportation situation in Geneva. Using open data to create services, participation is stimulated thus to build empowered citizens. This individual empowerment serves immediately to indicate the individual willingness to become and behave as a part of a collectivity. This movement reinforces collective trust between open data actors improving also the sharing of knowledge and community values.

Overall, our findings function as indicators to propose an open data Communication mix model, created to enforce the engagement of citizens. This open data communication mix model should be constructed by the principles of Trust – deriving from relations – and Knowledge lying on content.

**An Open data Communication mix model**

The authors present a proposal for a communicational mix model between the players enrolled in a context of an open data project (Fig. 12.2). This model is inspired by aspects such as the content and type of relationship communication (Watzlawick, Beavin & Jackson, 1972). Following the Palo Alto theories, the transmission of a message involves two elements: the content itself and the relationship between the participants. In that way, information is established on a two-dimensional form revealing the facts and the link between the people involved. Most often, the relationship is more important than the content itself.



**Figure 12.2:** An Open data Communication mix model

Regarding the aspect of the content of the communication, the flows of content between actors are presented in terms of a cybernetic process control and regulation (Wiener, 1958). The command is materialized by an input consisting of data from a digital environment. This input is integrated in a black box of engaged civic experts. The output of that black box is a translation work data from the input. The regulation is materialized by the use of data feedback for refinement of open data, data translation, improving the novelty and the organisation's services. This regulation may enrich the data of the digital environment of the system and constitutes a feedback effect on the cause, as defined by cybernetics. These exchanges based on content result from the element of Knowledge provided in Dahlgren's theory of cultural factors.

Under the scope of the communication relationship, relational flows between the actors derive from the adaptation of the Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) model of "two step flow communication" between the media and the public, via opinion leaders. Transcending these notions into situations of a communication for civic engagement related to open data, two phases emerge. The first phase, demonstrates the collaborative relationship between the organisation and experts whereas, the second phase signifies the relationship of the uses of these services created as well as the link between the experts and the users. These relationships are considered as the steps inasmuch as grounds, in the sense that they are horizontal (collaborative) and not vertical (hierarchical). It is also observed a relationship between users and the organisation through the trial of innovative services. These exchanges based on relationship derive from the element of Trust, provided in Dahlgren's theory of cultural factors.

## Conclusion

### Contribution

Our study provides a theoretical contribution. The integration of cultural factors and civic engagement theories into the present study sheds light on the new relationship between organisation and citizens in a context of an open data policy for public transportation. The evidence of tasks importance, evaluated by all actors of an open data project, indicates the necessity of a suitable Open data Communication mix model capable to incorporate the values of Trust and Knowledge. These kinds of values could be attached into the

exchanges and practices between organisations, experts and end users of mobile applications. Furthermore, our findings on circulation of information confirm that open data generate informational and relational descendants and ascendants streams. Namely, the organisation must agree to disclose its data in order to access a value that ultimately aims to improve the lives of its customers and to collect valuable data for the organisation itself. The improvement of the relationship between players through the use of these resources is thus considered as a main challenge for the development of ideas to the users of digital services.

### **Management implications**

Based on these findings and the theoretical contribution, our study reveals several practical implications for issue management and open data communication. We propose that organisations involved into an open data project should intensify the value of Trust and attempt to facilitate the sharing of Knowledge on this subject.

### **Limitations and future research**

This study demonstrates two important limitations. First of all, the categorization of tasks according to Dahlgren's cultural factors "may convey a misleading impression of their individual independence, but it is necessary for heuristic purposes" Dahlgren (2009: 108-109). Secondly, the e-survey presents a limited number of answers. Worth mentioning that this e-survey is still ongoing.

This study sets an important foundation for a future analysis. We intend to further explore the concept of communication mix model in relation to civic engagement discussed in this paper. We aim to test it into an open data project from a Non-Governmental Organisation in relation with the development of smart cities.

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# Leveraging the power of social media to enhance internal and external communication: A case study from the European Journalism Observatory

Marco Bardus and Philip di Salvo

## Introduction

Citizens are increasingly using mobile and the Internet for daily communications and for social interactions. As of January 2015, there were 3.6 billion unique mobile users, representing more than 51 percent of the global population (Kemp, 2015). Through affordable mobile broadband packages, users can now access the Internet directly from their mobile devices, in particular their smartphones, which represent 38 percent of the world's total active connections (Kemp, 2015). According to new, exploratory research, adults tend to use their smartphones for an average of 5 hours every day (Andrews, Ellis, Shaw, & Piwek, 2015).

In the last decade, the Internet has evolved from a relatively static environment of centralized websites, offering static content to a more dynamic platform of applications that are continuously created, modified and updated by the individuals who use them. The so-called “Web 2.0” is a concept and ideology that describes a new way in which users became editors, reviewers, and developers of new web-based applications and content. In fact, the Web 2.0 is characterised by a participatory architecture, where users can create and share information among each other (O'Reilly, 2005). In this environment, social media is a “group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61). Social media are among the most frequently accessed Internet services through smartphone browsers

and apps, with 1.6 out of 2.8 billion active social media users (57%) accessing their social media profiles via smartphones (Kemp, 2015). Social networking sites are the most frequently used types of social media, as recent reports show: according to the latest *Social Media Update* by the Pew Research Centre's Internet and American Life Project, in 2014 Facebook reached more than 70 percent of the U.S. population, followed by LinkedIn, Pinterest, Instagram and Twitter (Duggan *et al.*, 2015); more recent worldwide data by *We Are Social* showed that in 2015, Facebook reached 1.4 billion active users (Kemp, 2015). Twitter, instead claims reaching 320 million active users (Twitter, 2015). In addition to these widely adopted and popular social platforms, it is also interesting to see how other, younger, tools and services are raising and reaching already wide user bases: the messaging app Telegram, for instance, announced in February 2016 to be used by 100 million active users (Telegram, 2016).

Social media are increasingly used by organisations of different sizes and types to communicate and interact with their own stakeholders or to "be present" where people potentially interested in their activities spend a large amount of their time. While research generally confirms the importance of using these media for engaging with different stakeholders and publics of interest, little we know about *how* we can effectively leverage social media platforms to improve communication flows, both internally and externally to an organisation. The existing literature acknowledges the role of social media in the development of strategies to improve internal and external communication for popular types of nonprofit organisations, such as NGOs, charities, foundations, social advocacy groups and trade organisations. Even though some literature shows how academics use social media (Lupton, 2014), little we know about how nonprofit scientific institutions use social media to achieve their overarching mission to disseminate research.

In this paper we present a case study (Yin, 2006, 2013) about the challenges of the continuously changing and evolving environment of social media were addressed and how a communication strategy was developed in order to improve the visibility and internal communication of the European Journalism Observatory (EJO). The EJO, founded in 2004, is a consortium of 14 nonprofit scientific institutions focused on disseminating research results in the field of media, journalism and communication by means of "media journalism". The institutions involved in the EJO publish journalistic articles and analyses based on available research about the de-



velopment of journalism and the media in 12 European languages, and soon also in Arabic and Hungarian. The aim of this paper is to discuss the role of social media in the communication strategy of the EJO, which was aimed at improving the internal and external communication efforts of the team. The communication strategy was based on analyses and on best practices and theoretical foundations, as described in the following paragraphs.

## Theoretical Background

### **Theoretical approaches for the study of social media**

In the past ten years, scholars in various academic fields and disciplines have increasingly studied social media. In the social sciences, in particular within organisational communication and public relations literature, the study on the adoption of social media technology is embedded in the tradition of the *Uses and Gratifications* (West & Turner, 2010) and *Media Choice* approaches (Hartmann, 2009; Krcmar & Strizhakova, 2009). Since the concept of “Web 2.0” has been developed to indicate a new way of *using* the Internet (O’Reilly, 2005), the assumption is that social media users choose the medium to fulfil specific functional, emotional and instrumental needs, such as interacting with peers, gathering information, engaging in conversations, etc. The adoption of social media has also been analysed using several other theoretical approaches, such as *Diffusion of Innovations theory* (Rogers, 2003) or the *Theory of Planned Behavior/Reasoned Action* (Ajzen, 1991; Ajzen & Fishbein, 2010), and more technology-oriented frameworks, such as the *User Acceptance of Technology* model (Davis, 1993), which was then incorporated in the *Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology*, UTAUT (Venkatesh, Morris, Davis, & Davis, 2003; Venkatesh, Thong, & Xu, 2012). The UTAUT postulates that the intention to use a system – and the actual use of the system – depend on performance and effort expectancies, social influence (i.e., how other people use the system) and facilitating conditions (i.e., the belief that an organisation or an infrastructure supports the use of the system) (Venkatesh *et al.*, 2003). More recently, also ethnography has been used to study how people use and adopt social media worldwide. A major example of this approach is the “Why We Post” study, which was conducted by a team of anthropologists over a 15 months time in 8 different countries (Miller *et al.*, 2016).

The research on social media, from an organisational communication perspective, has initially focused on conceptual discussions about their potential used to overcome asymmetrical, one-way, top-down models of communication, favouring a bottom-up, participatory approaches and a dialogical interaction between organisations and their stakeholders (Moreno, Navarro, Tench, & Zerfass, 2015). The research in this area has then developed recommendations for engaging with users and other stakeholders, with empirical tests conducted to examine the adoption of social media practices from professionals and communication managers working for various organisations (Moreno *et al.*, 2015). An exemplar study conducted on nonprofit organisations using the UTAUT framework (Curtis *et al.*, 2010) discovered that organisations with a structured PR department were more likely to utilise social media in their communications. The study also found positive associations between credibility, technology acceptance and intention to adopt social media (Curtis *et al.*, 2010). Some more recent studies have also explored the role of social media in shaping the organisational identity (Madsen, 2016). Despite being tested in specific bank settings, Madsen found that co-workers tend to use arguments and phrases derived from vision and mission statements to promote the organisational identity so that it is aligned with the brand promise (Madsen, 2016).

Social media have become fundamental components in the strategies and communicative practices of organisations of all industries, including media. Empirical studies that focused on PR professionals and communication managers of different organisations in Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, and Hong Kong (Macnamara & Zerfass, 2012; Verhoeven, Tench, Zerfass, Moreno, & Verčič, 2012) reported that social media, in particular social networking sites, are the most important tools for communication and interaction with customers and other stakeholders. Another study reported that nonprofit organisations with a structured PR department, responsible for the development of strategies and marketing plans, were more likely to utilise social media as tools to engage with their publics (Curtis *et al.*, 2010). Nonprofit organisations need to utilise a consumer-centred rather than organisation-centred approach to marketing (Dolnicar & Lazarevski, 2009) and social media seem to leverage a more participatory approach. These views

were confirmed in a more recent study by Moreno and colleagues (2015), who also found that frequent use is associated with a set of digital competencies such as delivering messages through the social web, knowing social media trends, developing social media strategies, and evaluating social media activities.

## **Social media and engagement for nonprofit organisations**

Considering the diffusion and adoption of social media, organisations of different sizes and types are increasingly using Web 2.0 tools and platforms to fulfil their communication needs and goals. Engagement and visibility are important factors that shape an organisation's reputation. Some research showed that the consumers' intensity of social media use was positively associated with the engagement with the social media profiles of an airline company, which was in turn associated with customers' perceived reputation of the company (Dijkmans, Kerkhof, & Beukeboom, 2015). Engaging with the customers is especially important when considering younger segments of the population. A recent study shows that Millennials in fact engage extensively with organisations online to seek information about their brands, cultivate their interests, maintain a sense of presence, and interact with peers (Smith & Gallicano, 2015).

A survey by the Case Foundation and Social Media for Nonprofits revealed that, although 84 percent of the interviewed organisations relied mostly on their websites and email for interacting and engaging with their audiences, 97 percent of them had a Facebook page (Creedon, 2014). Despite about 33 percent of the organisations used Facebook for receiving donations (Creedon, 2012), the popular social networking site might be a useful channel for creating awareness for campaigns and for reputation management. Few nonprofit organisations encompass social media marketing strategies and policies (Hume & Leonard, 2014) and rely on disseminating messages with the aim to engaging with users (Carboni & Maxwell, 2015). In their empirical study Carboni and Maxwell (2015) analysed a sample of 150 nonprofit organisations for youth development. They discovered that the type of Facebook post was a significant predictor of stakeholder engagement: longer posts from individuals were associated with higher engagement from stakeholders;

at the same time, longer and more frequent posts from organisations were associated with less engagement, suggesting that users might feel overwhelmed with information when they are not directly and emotionally attached to the person or organisation who posts the content (Carboni & Maxwell, 2015).

This problem is also increased by changes in the way Facebook determines how posts from users and organisations appear on users' home feed. Recent changes in Facebook core algorithm facilitated the display of paid, advertised posts, in spite of unpaid, free content. Thus, organisations had either to pay for boosting their posts and reaching larger segments of their fans or see their posts views statistics decrease over time. These changes have negatively influenced the activity of nonprofit organisations and the visibility they can gain on such relevant platform, which could not rely on budgets for Facebook advertising or "post boosting" (D'Onfro, 2014), and needed to find new ways to engage with their publics (Beck, 2015). The predominant preference towards this social networking site may have influenced the decision of Facebook to develop specific pages to guide nonprofit organisations in improving their digital presence (Creedon, 2016).

There are many different kinds of nonprofit organisations. For example, according to the classification of the U.S. Internal Revenue Service there are 29 types of nonprofit organisations (Internal Revenue Service, IRS, 2016). Among these, academic research institutions, "Scientific" organisations, rely mostly on foundations and other forms of institutional support (e.g., research grants) rather than individual-based funding. The competitive funding depends on their reputation, accountability, and ability to demonstrate the value of research. To the best of our knowledge, there are no studies that evaluate the role of social media and of strategic communication for this type of organisations.

## Research Design

A case study is used to analyse the communication strategy of the European Journalism Observatory ( <http://ejo.ch>), a consortium of 14 nonprofit media research institutes from 11 European countries, which aims to disseminate research on journalism and global media issues. The mission of the EJO is to foster professionalism, press freedom, research transfer, academic credibility using a transna-

tional perspective (Russ-Mohl, 2011). We chose to use a case study to conduct a thorough analysis of the activities, processes, outputs, and outcomes that supported the development of the EJO communication strategy using social media. We used this approach because we wanted to get a better understanding on how and why these technologies could be used for the communication of this multi-centred institution, and case studies are an appropriate method for this purpose (Rowley, 2002; Yin, 2013). From a scientific point of view, this case study is helpful because it highlights how social media can be effectively and efficiently used for enhancing both internal and external communication of a nonprofit scientific institution that cannot heavily rely on traditional communication channels (e.g. paid advertising) due to limited resources.

The main *product* of the EJO is the “journalistic analysis and presentation of media-focused research” through publications (articles) that are published for free on the sites of the EJO network and also externally in newspapers and professional publications. Articles include summaries and analytical reviews of journal articles on various topics related to journalism research (e.g., media economics, ethics and quality, PR and digital journalism, press freedom). Other EJO activities include conferences and workshops to diffuse the culture of journalism and media research, joint research projects, and international, collaborative journalistic analyses. The products and research outputs are made available for free to any interested public and target audience through the websites and related social media channels. In some occasions, the EJO sites republish articles that were originally made available on print and online newspapers. Under these circumstances, the articles are paid directly to the authors, but do not constitute revenue for the respective site and for the network. The main activities of the EJO revolve around the 13 websites that constitute the network and allow the dissemination of the articles through translations. Each partner is responsible of managing the website in their respective language (i.e., Albanian, Arabic, Czech, English, German, Italian, Latvian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, and Ukrainian). The content produced is then spread across social media (Facebook and Twitter mainly) with each partner responsible for the dissemination through dedicated pages and profiles on social media. Other events and occasions spread the voice about EJO through networking activities, public events, workshops, and classes at universities and presentations at international conferences.

The EJO network received financial support from several private foundations, such as, for example, Fondazione per il Corriere del Ticino, Lugano, Switzerland, Stiftung Presse-Haus NRZ and Bosch Foundation. The Universities of Wroclaw, Prague and Lisbon provided further support to the teams based in their respective countries.

## **Main target audiences**

The main target groups of EJO are: 1) professional journalists, decision-makers in newsrooms and in the media industries, media practitioners in each of the countries and languages covered by the EJO network; 2) the scientific community (such as researchers in media studies and science communication in Switzerland and Europe) interested in disseminating “understandable research”; 3) journalism students at the various universities of EJO network and in Europe and beyond. Other relevant, secondary target groups are: bloggers interested in journalism and media dynamics; general “media savvy” people, interested in media topics; and media relations and PR practitioners of various organisations in Europe and in the world.

## **History of the EJO**

The EJO was established in 2004 as a nonprofit media research institute, based at the Università della Svizzera italiana (USI) in Lugano, Switzerland. At that time, the EJO included other two main partners: the Erich Brost Institute, University of Dortmund, and the University of Wroclaw, Poland. The most substantial funders have been Fondazione per il Corriere del Ticino (Lugano, Switzerland), Pressestiftung NRZ (Essen, Germany) and Bosch Foundation (Berlin, Germany). In 2011, six new partners from Eastern Europe joined the EJO network, supported by a grant (ref. nr. IZ74Z0\_137489) awarded by the Swiss National Science Foundation, under the scheme “Scientific Cooperation between Eastern Europe and Switzerland Institutional Partnerships (SCOPES) 2009-2012”. These part-

ners were based in Albania (University of Tirana), Czech Republic (Charles University Prague), Latvia (Turība University, Riga), Romania (Andrei Saguna University of Constanta), Serbia (University of Belgrade), and Ukraine (National University of “Kyiv-Mohyla Academy”, Kiev).

Since 2012, the EJO cooperates with the European Journalism Fellowships at *Freie Universität Berlin* and offers an EJO fellowship (sponsored by Stiftung Presse-Haus NRZ). Fellows become EJO correspondents reporting on the activities of the Berlin “media laboratory”, observing the German journalism landscape, and disseminating the results of their observation through the EJO network. Since Spring 2013, the EJO started cooperating with new academic institutions in the Anglo-Saxon world, such as the *Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism (RISJ)* at the University of Oxford, and the *Journalism School of the University of Oregon*, USA. The new partners contribute to the diffusion of content in the Anglo-Saxon world and support the editorial activities for the English websites.

Between May 2013 and April 2015, the EJO received further support by the Swiss National Science Foundation, through the science communication program “Agora” (ref. nr. CRAG-1\_145651), to develop the project “EPICUR II – Expanding Public Interest by Communicating Understandable Research: Marketing of the EJO as a Dissemination Network”. This project, jointly conducted between the University of Lugano and the Zurich University of Applied Sciences based in Winterthur, was aimed to extend and strengthen the network of the EJO, improve the English EJO platform and increase the visibility on social media. EPICUR II was aimed: at extending and strengthening the network of cooperating research institutions, journalism training facilities, and newsrooms in the German speaking part of Switzerland; improving the English EJO platform (which was needed for joint dissemination efforts); and making the project more visible by a strong effort in social media marketing. This translated into the overarching goal to improve both the internal and external communication of the EJO, through a systematic, evidence-based approach that lead to develop a shared, bottom-up communication strategy, whose methodology is described below.

## Communication Strategy

The communication strategy adopted by the EJO was based on a situation analysis, which included a reflection on the organisations' strengths and weaknesses and the external opportunities and threats, target audiences and competitors, and of the offered services. This initial internal audit was based on insight from key internal informants (interviews and discussions with the EJO Editors from the English, Italian, and German sites), which was validated through extended discussions with different partners of the EJO. The discussions among partners took place during annual in-person meetings and, more frequently, online, via a dedicated Facebook group and Skype calls among the Editors.

The SWOT analysis revealed major weaknesses in coordinating the work among partners and the high workload for editors, which often resulted in high turnover. This was mostly the case of partners that faced discontinued funding (SCOPES partners after the end of the project funding in 2013). High turnover resulted in an intermittent editorial activity, which also reflected in an intermittent presence on social media. When the EPICUR II project started, there were no social media policies that would have streamlined the online presence on Facebook, Twitter, and Google+, the most frequently used social networking platforms used by the website visitors, including national instances (e.g., VKontakte, LinkedIn, or Xing, popular social networking sites in some of the websites). Finally, the fast-paced changes in technology and shifts towards mobile made the visual layout of the website, developed in 2011, appeared out-dated and least attractive, with limited options for sharing the content on social media. The analyses of web and social media metrics, collected using Google Analytics, confirmed these assumptions: the most important source of traffic was Organic search (e.g., through search engines); Social media traffic accounted for about 20 percent across the websites of the EJO network<sup>1</sup>; contrary to the global trends in mobile traffic, most of the traffic was generated by desktop computers. Important threats identified were the financial ecosystem, which made it difficult to identify new sources

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<sup>1</sup> Google Analytics considers three main types of traffic sources: "Organic search" (i.e., search derived from search engines), "Referral" (i.e., other websites linking to the website, including social networking sites), and "Direct" (i.e. people explicitly using the exact website name in their browser). Since July 27<sup>th</sup> 2013, Google Analytics includes specific information about the traffic generated by social networking sites and social media, explicitly labelled as "Social traffic".



of funding and the instable online landscape, especially the changes in Facebook algorithms and policies (D'Onfro, 2014). Also, the competition analysis revealed at least two main actors: the European Journalism Centre (EJC), and the *Nieman Lab*, both nonprofit organisations that offered similar services and platforms. Nieman Lab and EJC differ from other media-related websites and news outlets and are considered closer examples of potential competitors, as they both are research-oriented institutions that run informational websites. In particular Nieman Lab has recently updated its website according to the latest web design standards (e.g., mobile friendliness and responsiveness) and offers good quality reviews of journalism research, mostly focused on the American context, coupled with a constant presence online on various social media, in particular Facebook.

## **Goals and objectives**

Following the analyses, the communication strategy was aimed at addressing two overarching goals: 1) to improve the dissemination and editorial activities through and on social media; and 2) to strengthen and expand the existing network of collaborations and increase the institutional visibility. Both these goals were aligned with the mission of the “EJO as dissemination network”. Specific, measurable and time-bound objectives were set to implement the strategy. To improve and increase dissemination and editorial activity on social media (first objective), we aimed to: a) maintain the level of Search traffic high and increase the level of Referral and Social media traffic on all websites; b) make the sites more user- and mobile-friendly through restyle and re-design; c) continuing education and training of EJO Web Editors on the use of social media platforms and tools with dedicated workshops; d) building and maintaining engagement with EJO communities online in order to improve communication content and ideas sharing. For strengthening and expanding the network of collaborations (second objective) we considered: a) increasing the opportunities to connect with new partners and collaborators, b) improve academic visibility by participating in academic and professional events; c) raising funds and institutional funding.

## Measures and indicators

Considering the evidence supporting the strategic role of social media – and social networking sites in particular among nonprofit organisations (Curtis *et al.*, 2010; Dolnicar & Lazarevski, 2009), we developed a communication strategy that was grounded on theoretical approaches (Moreno *et al.*, 2015) and based on the situation analysis we conducted. The strategy for improving internal communication was based on principles derived from behavioural sciences, such as the Theory of Planned Behaviour, TPB (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2010) and Social Cognitive Theory, SCT (Bandura, 2001), and was influenced by tenets of the Unified theory of acceptance and use of technology, UTAUT (Venkatesh *et al.*, 2012). In particular, our strategy addressed the principles of “self-efficacy”, related to cognitive and behavioural skills and capabilities to use the medium, borrowed from both TPB and SCT, “social norms” (TPB) and “vicarious learning” (SCT), aimed at influence the “efficacy”, “perceived ease of use”, “perceived usefulness” (UTAUT) of the EJO websites and social media platforms.

To provide continuing education and training of Web Editors on the use of social media platforms and tools we created guidelines and manuals (how to use *Wordpress*, how to use *HootSuite.com* platform), organized workshops and tutorials in person and remotely (hence enhancing their efficacy, literacy, self-efficacy, and ability to use social media tools). Social media policies (how EJO editors should post on Facebook, Twitter, and Google+) were also created with the aim to “create the norm” of using social media among EJO editors, norms that could resist turnover through documentation. Tutorials were used as benchmarks and models for the other editors, hence supporting the “vicarious learning” through modelling, postulated by the SCT. Also, virtual and face-to-face training sessions and workshops were organized with the aim to test and implement the social media policies and educate the Editors in the use of social media marketing tools for research and content dissemination. These were coupled with weekly and bi-weekly online meetings among Editors, who used a Facebook private group to share ideas on new articles and opportunities for developing new joint research projects. Continuous feedback was incorporated in the final document that was finally utilized as strategic plan after May 2014.

The documentation for training editors was also used to increase the search engine optimization (SEO) skills, which were functional to maintain the 'searchability' and SEO-friendliness of the websites. To improve the mobile-friendliness of the site, we started working on a complete restyle of the website (improved usefulness and ease of use). To build and maintaining engagement with EJO communities online we assessed the reach and engagement on social media, in particular Facebook and Twitter (addressing the "social proof" and norm of using social media for the target audiences).

We outlined a set of key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure progress towards the goals and address the relevant theoretical components. Web traffic indices were used to estimate the level of traffic from Search and Social media sources and devices used; social media engagement (calculated as the number of people who saw a post and that liked, shared, clicked or commented on it); number of training occasions, number of events organized were used as measures for strengthening and expanding the existing network of collaborations and institutional visibility.

## Empirical and Results

In the two years of the EPICUR II project, the coordinated communication efforts had positive effects on both internal and external communication indicators as outlined below, according to the goals of the strategy.

### **Improving dissemination of editorial activities through and on social media**

Guidelines for editors: The manuals for all EJO teams were enhanced with specific social media guidelines, developed by the Lugano team as part of the EPICUR II project and adopted by the new editorial teams. We also included policies to cope with comments, corrections and complaints, in order to improve our transparency towards our audience and our stakeholders. Manuals include also tips on how to post content on different social media and set standards to keep our institutional image consistent on all the platforms the EJO is operating.

Workshops and tutorials on social media for EJO Editors: Two workshops about social media tools and instruments for disseminating EJO articles and improve digital presence were organised by EJO Lugano and Winterthur teams. The first took place in Winterthur in July 2013 and consisted on an introduction to social networking sites and tools for social media management, monitoring and evaluation; the second took place in Lugano in April 2014 and was offered also in the form of a webinar to other Editors and collaborators. The second workshop/webinar focussed on utilising a social media management dashboard, *HootSuite*, as instrument for helping EJO editors being more present on various social networking sites. Additionally, we provided editors with new instruments for monitoring and measuring social media activity from the dashboard of the site (see Figure 13.1).

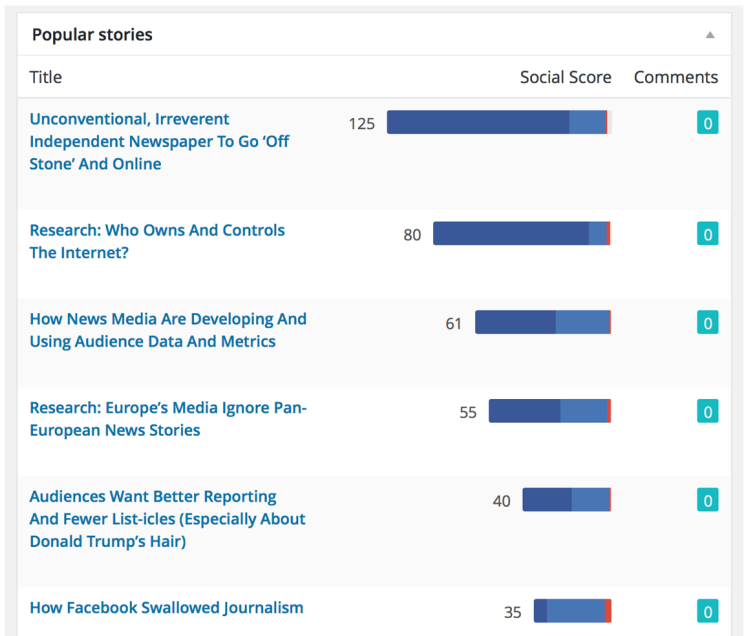
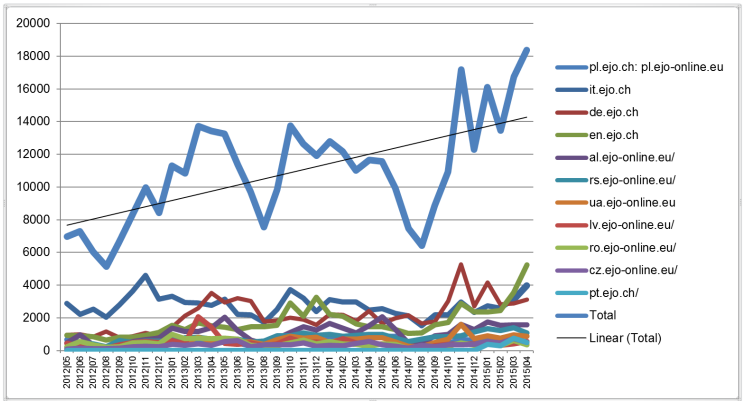


Figure 13.1: Social media metrics for popular stories on the sites

Web traffic: As a result of the social media marketing strategy and the extensive work of the Editors, the unique visits of the 11 websites belonging to the EJO network increased on average by 206 percent (SD = 535%), compared to the period before the start of the EPICUR II project (May 2012-April 2013). Figure 13.2 represents the trend of unique visits for each of the 11 websites and the total across the network over a three-year period, including the first year before EPICUR II (May2012-April 2013), and two years of the project (Year 1: May 2013-April 2014; Year 2: May 2014-April 2015).



**Figure 13.2:** Unique visitors of the websites composing the EJO network

Overall, a positive linear trend in number of visits was observed, with visits decreasing only during the summer months. The English and the German sites showed the fastest, most stable growth. Among the SCOPES partners, the Albanian site showed the greatest increase in the period of 2012-2013, followed by the Latvian and Serbian sites. The lack of funding from the SCOPES project (after 2013) did not affect the network as a whole. During the first year of the project almost all websites achieved positive improvements (M = 37.8%, SD = 45.6%), which they managed to keep in the second year (M = 168.0%, SD = 544.5%). New visitors on the websites increased on average by 10 percent, and returning visitors increased by 3.6 percent indicating that the EJO network overall attracted an increasingly broad audience.

**Sources of traffic:** The main source of traffic for the websites of the EJO network was organic (e.g., Google search), which was above 62 percent across the network in the first period, but decreased slightly in the second period. At the same time, there was an increase in social and referral traffic, which accounted for 21.3 percent in Year 1 and for 26 percent in Year 2. The proportion of traffic from external websites (i.e., referral) and social media also increased on average by 3.5 and 1.2 percent respectively. Facebook and Twitter were the most important sources of social traffic for most of the websites. In some websites other social networking sites such as LinkedIn and VKontakte provided a limited, but constant flow of users. VKontakte is a Russian-based social networking site that has most appeal in the Eastern European countries, formerly part of Russia or under its influence. XING was a very popular social networking site for professional purposes in the German-speaking world. In April 2015, referral and social media traffic accounted for 26 percent of the total traffic and became the second channel of traffic, after Google search (59%). Facebook and Twitter generated the most traffic from social networking sites across the EJO network. Since the re-launch of the websites, we noticed an interesting level of activity and engagement on LinkedIn. So far, the EJO has not been officially present on LinkedIn, but it is our intention to explore and use this channel in the future.

**Social media activity and engagement:** After two years, the EJO network had 9,604 Facebook fans ( $SD = 880$ ), ranging from 323 (Czech page) to 2,727 (English page). The average net fan growth rate of the whole network was 2,429 percent ( $SD = 2,700$ ), with an average of 3,834 posts shared ( $SD = 4,577$ ) and 5,227 page views. The Facebook pages of the EJO network reached a total of 35,533 fans, with an 18.7 percent of the reach being organic (i.e. unpaid, generated from the activity of the editors) and an 84.6 percent of the reach being viral (i.e. generated by the activity of fans and friends of fans). The proportion of fans reached by posting on Facebook increased over the period of the project, regardless of the changes in the algorithm that negatively affected the organic, unpaid reach. It is important to note that it is EJO policy not to invest in advertising on social media.

The engagement rate is the percentage of people who saw a post and that liked, shared, clicked or commented on it. The content on Facebook pages was shared on average 1,201 times in Year 1 (229.3% from the year before), and 934 times in Year 2 (-0.4%) across the network. This might be due to the reduced funding from six of the ten partners then contributing to the network. This might be due to the fact that the social media profiles are used not only to share EJO articles, but also other interesting content coming from different sources. This policy helped in creating a stronger “community of interest” for readers and fans who now recognize our social media profiles as content distributors of relevant and interesting information. The English Facebook page achieved the highest content sharing rate and the highest engagement rate (12.2%), with a viral amplification of 432.5 percent, followed by the German (engagement rate = 10.9%, amplification 1224.3%), and the Italian page (engagement rate = 9.4%, amplification 928.4%). However, the engagement rate generated by the Facebook pages of the EJO network was quite low ( $M = 7.35\%$ ,  $SD = 2.9$ ), with limited number of comments and mentions on the posts shared.

Despite being the second channel of referral/social traffic, Twitter was the least utilized platform for engaging with the EJO audience. Twitter activity<sup>2</sup> was quite low (750 tweets on average,  $SD = 1,403$ ), ranging from 4,748 (Italian) to 20 (Portuguese). Only the Italian, English and German teams provided a constant, active and engaging content, interacting with the audience and increasing number of followers on Twitter, which translated into a larger number of retweets, favourites and mentions and a broader “reach” for our content in terms of community-building and positioning of the project. The highest engagement rate<sup>3</sup> was achieved by the Italian team, followed by the English and German teams.

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<sup>2</sup> The total activity index is calculated as the sum of retweets, user mentions, replies and divided by the total analysed tweets, weighted by the tweets per day.

<sup>3</sup> Twitter engagement is calculated as the sum of citations, replies, received retweets and received favourites divided by the lifetime tweets weighted by the tweets per day.

Website and logo restyle: In response to the current trends in web and mobile technologies, the re-launch of the EJO “corporate identity”, with a freshened logo and restyled websites, Facebook, Twitter and Google+ pages for each language version. The restyle was implemented in April-May 2015. The new websites are now accessible both from mobile and desktop applications, and are fully integrated with social media platforms (see Figure 13.3).



Figure 13.3: The new and old versions of the EJO website



## **Strengthening and expanding the existing network of collaboration**

Networking efforts: The networking efforts of the EJO teams based in Lugano and Winterthur created occasions for expanding the network in Europe. First, in August 2014, a new partnering institution from Lisbon, Portugal joined the network (CIES-*Instituto Universitário de Lisboa*, ISCTE-IUL). The partners from Lisbon were able to run a new website that deals with media and journalism research in the region. The EJO teams participated also in two international conferences in 2014 (European Communication and Research Education Association, ECREA, in Lisbon, Portugal; International Association of Media and Communication Research, IAMCR, Hyderabad, India), and in a German national association for media researchers and journalist (DGPuK). In January 2015, the Russian site went online, supported by the efforts of the current Latvian team, who hired a native Russian-speaker editor. In the early months of 2016 also the Arabic site of the EJO will be launched, marking the EJO legacy expand also in the Arab world through the Arabic Journalism Observatory.

Institutional visibility: Two public events and two academic seminars open to university students were organised by EJO Lugano team, in collaboration with the cooperative of the Swiss Italian public broadcasting service and the local association of journalists, about the future of public service broadcasting. These events also celebrated the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the EJO and were used as additional occasion to promote the institution and its activities. Public events achieved a good visibility from local media and the general public; the participation of students was limited (10 students enrolled and successfully completed the course), but satisfactory.

## **Discussion**

This case from the European Journalism Observatory (EJO) demonstrates the role of strategic communication in providing a viable, sustainable solution for improving internal and external communication efforts for a scientific-oriented nonprofit institution. The strategy aimed to increase dissemination of the editorial activities on social media and to strengthen and expand the existing network of collaborations, hence resulting in an improved institutional visibility.

## **The role of a shared communication strategy to build institutional identity**

This case shows how a planned, shared, decision-making process can create a communications strategy that can, in turn, mitigate the impact of structural challenges that the EJO is facing, similarly to other NGOs and nonprofit organisations. Structural challenges include the difficulties in establishing sustainable sources of funding, and the changing online environment. These problems showed their effect in the high turnover of the web editors and the consequent loss in expertise, knowledge and overall social capital. The high number of visits from social and referral traffic, coupled with interaction on different social media platforms, suggests that our communication strategy was successful in expanding the network, in making our content more visible, and in creating a strong EJO identity among our partners. Unlike other nonprofit institutions that do not have a shared strategy (Hume & Leonard, 2014), or rely mostly on disseminating messages in following one-way communication approach (Carboni & Maxwell, 2015), we fully incorporated social media in our communication strategy.

## **Social media policies**

We created a set of guidelines and social media policies, which are now the “norm” and became institutionalized. Social media literacy has become a core element in the current practice of the EJO network. While acknowledging diversity among partners, the guidelines and the ideas shared among editors through social media reinforce good practices and create the environment to sustain them, according to one of the core tenets of Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 2001). This principle echoes the results of exemplar practices presented in current research studies (Madsen, 2016). The systematic adoption of these practices is likely going to translate in sustained use, which will in turn reflect higher credibility of the medium, as shown in Curtis and colleagues’ study (2010).

## **Skills building for social media adoption**

In line with the evidence from empirical studies (Moreno *et al.*, 2015), we trained EJO editors to better use social media by interacting with the audiences, measuring, analysing and interpreting social media trends, and adapting their editorial practices. A more knowledgeable use of social media and better organisation of the workload among EJO editors in their respective teams improved the workflow and collaboration. This created a “social media culture”, which facilitated labour division and sharing of the workload among partners. As a result, the quality of the articles has improved and the sites of the network have improved generally in terms of visibility, and an overall increase of number of visits on all EJO sites. Most of the sites were able to attract new users from different platforms, and social media activity was positively associated with an increased number of visits in the sites where the activity was constant.

## **Engagement**

An active and constant social media presence resulted in increases in the reach of posts on Facebook and Twitter. However, unlike corporate organisations successfully engaging on social media (Carboni & Maxwell, 2015; e.g., Dijkmans *et al.*, 2015), the efforts of the editors did not translate in higher engagement rates. This might have been due to the endemic turnover and discontinued web presence in a large segment of the EJO network, due to the lack of funding from important institutions after November 2013 (Albania, Czech-Republic, Latvia, Romania, Serbia, and Ukraine). Also, the high turnover among the web editors of some of the partnering institutions (Germany, Switzerland, UK) resulted in an intermittent activity online and offline, which made it difficult to consistently enact the communication strategy. Investing in engagement will likely result in better response from the publics (Smith & Gallicano, 2015).

## Limitations

Despite the successful case, some limitations need to be acknowledged. Feasibility and financial limitations did not allow to conduct any formative market research with the target audiences and readership of the EJO network to understand uses, perceived barriers and benefits for using EJO websites and participating in EJO activities. Future research plans should include this type of activity, as it will provide important insight from the readership. Despite the benefits reached and the visible improvements in internal communication due to the workshops we organized, further training in social media use for editors is still needed. We aimed to provide sustainability to the approach by documenting the practices and providing opportunities for discussion, as providing a more stable online presence will reflect on the engagement with the identified target audiences.

## Conclusions and Discussion

This case study shows how strategic communication integrating social media can improve visibility and reinforce the identity of a non-profit institution promoting media and journalism research. The development of internal guidelines and social media policies through skill building processes allowed the establishment of a “social media culture”, endorsed by users and the leaders of the organisation. The increased utilization of social media should translate into sustained engagement with the target audiences, which will likely positively affect reputation and help the organisation achieve its mission and goals. This case could be used as example for similar other nonprofit organisations that are depending on institutional funding and operate in dynamic, fluid and uncertain contexts, and desire to engage more systematically online with their publics.

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