ANA DUARTE MELO, IAN SOMERVILLE & GISELA GONÇALVES

INTRODUCTION

This e-book presents a selection of the research papers presented at the 5th European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA) Conference in Lisbon, November, 2015. The book reflects the work of researchers within the Organisational and Strategic Communication (OSC) Section of ECREA from different backgrounds and higher education institutions in Europe and highlights the diverse professional and scientific interests of the Section. At the 5th ECREA Conference, the OSC Section selected almost 50 papers from the 90 submitted abstracts, which were organized into two specialist panels ("Government Public Relations in Europe: Critical Perspectives" and "Inconsistences Organizational Communication"), eight parallel sessions and one poster session. Those papers selected for Lisbon 2015 made a valuable contribution to key contemporary communications debates and issues. The peer reviewed papers presented in this volume share findings and "state of the art" critical reflections, which address the core objective of the Organisational and Strategic Communication Section of ECREA. They also continue the tradition of the promoting scientific knowledge in our broad and diverse field of research, which has been central to Section's raison d'être since its creation in 2006.

The overarching theme of Lisbon Conference was 'Communication for Empowerment: Citizens, Markets, Innovations' and the call invited participants to "rethink the necessary balance between the public interest and the interests of the market, so as to ensure the promotion of citizenship, social capital and social inclusion". Covering a range of subjects and perspectives, the papers in this e-book respond to that challenge and provide valuable explorations of how organisations face new challenges and find new balances between the logic of the market and the idea of active,

participatory citizenship. These issues are addressed through a changing communication paradigm characterized by innovative media technologies and resourceful media users and co-creators. The studies presented open up new paths for further research to critically understand the dynamics of power in communicative spaces increasingly dominated by social media and digital platforms. As in previous OSC Section publications (2012, 2013), research on issues of organisational communication in relation to empowerment, participation, democratisation and citizen engagement remain a central focus.

The first paper in the volume critically reflects on the digital sphere possibilities for citizen political participation and on the relationship building and management potential it configures, while at the same time questioning its real implementation, impact and results. In *'Online relationship management and digital participation in the political sphere: a communicative myth?'*, Gisela Gonçalves and Paulo Serra, from the University of Beira Interior, Labcom, Covilhã, in Portugal, focus their attention on the digital performance of Portuguese political parties in non-electoral periods. Findings indicate that although political parties frequently facilitate digital spaces to citizen participation, they use them to disseminate information but not to promote a democratic participative debate, avoiding direct interaction with the public.

Based on the exploratory case study of the Portuguese airline company (TAP), whose online presence results from a cross management of PR, marketing and costumer support, this article draws attention to emergent practices of public relations through social media. In the paper *'The PR pyramid: the functions of public relations on social media'*, Patrícia Dias and José Gabriel Andrade, from the Research Center for Communication and Culture, Universidade Católica Portuguesa, Lisbon, Portugal, aim to identify the functions assumed by public relations when social media is adopted as an exploratory resource. They discuss its performance as a strategic tool for concrete implementation and critically observe the enhancement of the pivotal articulatory role of public relations within organizational communication.

The concept of empowerment and its uses and implications are at the core of the article by Ana Duarte Melo, from the University of Minho, Braga, Portugal, who critically analyses the interaction between consumer-citizens and advertising, exposing the paradoxical empowerment it configures by enabling participation, co-creation and giving a voice to the people and, simultaneously, promoting mining data, collecting insights, profiles, and

personal data that function as a deeper control of consumer and citizens by corporations and organisations. In *'The paradoxical empowerment of consumer-citizens through advertising'*, the author reflects on the social capital perspective of this interaction and concludes by pointing out consumer literacy and media awareness as a sustainable approach to this communication paradigm.

The emancipation of the specific professional field of internal communication is analysed in *'From amateur to expert: professionalization in the field of internal communication'* by Mark Verheyden, Katie Goeman and Jo Pierson, from the Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium. This study questions whether the theoretical principles of more established fields of Public Relations are applicable to internal communication professionals and contribute to the creation of a professional identity. Through an online survey they collected relevant data, namely pointing out that although internal communication professionals are open to innovations, a gap between scholars and practitioners persists. The paper discusses further on the fragmentation of Public Relations due to the emancipation of specializations.

Catrin Johansson, from Mid Sweden University, Sweden, centres her research in the management field and portraits the paradigm shift from the command and control management to a more inclusive and responsive perspective that values the involvement of collaborators in decision making processes and promotes dialogue and empowerment. *'Empowering employees through communicative leadership'* present the leader's perception of the contribution of the "communicative leadership" approach to employee empowerment, assessing its transformational role in a multinational business organization.

Teresa Ruão, Isabel Correia Neves and Ricardina Magalhães, from the University of Minho, Braga, Portugal, propose *strategic science communication* to conceptualise strategic communication practices that use science popularization to reach successful organizational performance. In *'Science and strategic communication: how can universities attract high school students'*, the authors anchor their line of thought on the use of science communication as a component of the promotional mix prepared by universities to attract high school students to their graduate and postgraduate programmes and they tested their proposal through a survey designed to assess several criteria, inspired in Burns et al. (2003: 191) *vowel analogy*: awareness (familiarity), enjoyment (appreciation), interest (voluntary involvement), opinion (way of thinking), understanding (comprehension), interaction (contact activities)

and action (attitude). Results conclude to the pertinence of the strategic science communication concept in universities' communication mix at different levels, namely on the motivation of potential students to apply to higher education institutions.

Completing the selection for this volume is a paper which deploys a semiotic analysis of the visual rhetoric of corporate social responsibility analysing how it contributes to the definition of meaning and to the valorisation of companies that promote socially responsible action in their communication strategies. Andrea Catellani, from the Université Catholique de Louvain, in Belgium, bases his study on a significant corpus of semiotic analysis of the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) reports published between 2004 and 2013 by Total, an oil and gas French company. *'Visual aspects of CSR reports: a semiotic and chronological case analysis'* identifies different phases and typologies, and contributes to the understanding of CSR and its exploitation as part of organisational image and identity building.

Thank you to all contributors, reviewers, designers and thoughtful critics without whose contribution this e-book would not have been possible. Special thanks to Madalena Sena, from Labcom, for designing the cover illustration. We also wish to express our appreciation to the direction and the editorial team from the Communication and Society Research Centre, University of Minho, for supporting the idea of this book and its publication.

The editors,
Ana Duarte Melo, Ian Somerville and Gisela Gonçalves

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