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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Relations, Intereffication and Trust</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Relations Theory: The Reconstructive Approach</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Intereffication Model: Theoretical Discussions and Empirical Research</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust and Credibility – Prerequisites for Communication Management</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part II</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advancements in Communication Management</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate Communication Revisited: Integrating Business Strategy and Strategic Communication</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization and Communication: An Integrative Approach to Public Relations and Communication Management</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Communication and Public Relations: A Conceptual Framework for a Common Ground</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The True, the Good and the Beautiful: Reputation Management in the Media Society</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Communication and Leadership</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Internal Communication as Management of Trust Relations:
A Theoretical Framework
(Ulrike Röttger & Andreas Voss) ................................................................. 163

Evaluating Strategic Communication:
Theoretical and Methodological Requirements
(Juliana Raupp) ........................................................................................................ 179

Political Public Relations:
Research on its Success and its Influence on German Media Coverage
(Romy Fröhlich) ........................................................................................................ 193

Public Relations and Public Diplomacy: Some Conceptual Explorations
(Benno Signitzer) ........................................................................................................ 205

Communication Management, Organizational Communication and Public Relations:
Developments and Future Directions from a German Perspective
(Stefan Wehmeier) ...................................................................................................... 219

Part III
European Perspectives in Communication Management ........................................ 233

Reflection: Legitimising Late Modernity
(Susanne Holmström) ............................................................................................... 235

Public Relations, Persuasion and Propaganda:
Truth, Knowledge, Spirituality and Mystique
(Jacquie L’Etang) ......................................................................................................... 251

Public Relations and Power: How Hard is Soft Power?
(Dejan Verčič) ............................................................................................................. 271

Intangible Assets and Communication
(Peggy Simcic Brønn) ............................................................................................... 281

Glocalising Public Relations and Crisis Communication:
Bridging Gaps of Trust in Multicultural Societies
(Jesper Falkheimer) ..................................................................................................... 293

Risks and Crises in Virtual Publicity –
Can Publicity Crises Be Prevented by Public Relations in the Cyberspace?
(Jaakko Lehtonen) ..................................................................................................... 305
Communication Management in Europe – Challenges and Opportunities
(*Betteke van Ruler & Dejan Verčič*)

**Part IV**

**International Challenges for Public Relations**

Excellence Theory in Public Relations: Past, Present, and Future
(*James E. Grunig & Larissa A. Grunig*)

Rhetorical Perspective and Public Relations: Meaning Matters
(*Robert L. Heath & Finn Frandsen*)

Reconsidering Strategic Corporate Social Responsibility:
Public Relations and Ethical Engagement of Employees in a Global Economy
(*Steve May*)

Linking Stakeholder Relationships and Corporate Reputation:
A Public Relations Framework for Corporate Sustainability
(*Ronél Rensburg, Estelle de Beer & Elsamari Coetzee*)

Situating Science: Public Relations, Status, and Theoretical Trends
(*David McKie*)

Globalization and Public Relations
(*Krishnamurthy Sriramesh*)

**Annex**

Günter Bentele – Curriculum Vitae

Publications by Günter Bentele

About the Editors

About the Contributors
Introduction

Krishnamurthy Sriramesh, Betteke van Ruler & Ansgar Zerfass

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

1 Stimulating the Debate on Public Relations Theory

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

Unlike a traditional Festschrift, we refrained from asking the most important fellows of Günter Bentele’s career to contribute to this volume preferring instead to also foster research in public relations by gathering concepts advocated by those who are shaping the future of the field. This mirrors Bentele’s aspiration to bridge the gap between research traditions in different cultures and disciplines, and to support fresh thinking by younger scholars. Bentele, whose curriculum vitae and impressive list of publications is presented in the appendix, has published almost 40 books and more than 200 articles or book chapters. He also has conducted numerous empirical studies and delivered speeches at conferences in many countries. He has served as president of the European Public Relations Education and Research Association (EUPRERA) and president of the German Association of Communi-
cation Science (DGPuK). He also has been member of international committees (such as the Program Committee of the annual BledCom research symposium), and has served as visiting professor at many universities both in Europe and overseas. In Germany, he has been awarded the titles “Professor of the year” recognizing his contributions to public relations education, and “Public Relations head of the year” in honour of his efforts to bridge the chasm between theory and practice.

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

2 The Relevance of Epistemology and Trust

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

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

3 From Interdisciplinary Frameworks to Applications in Business and Politics

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

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

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

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

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

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

4 Contributing to Legitimisation, Crisis Avoidance and Reputation Management

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

Susanne Holmström from Denmark pleads for a reflective paradigm to analyse the interrelation between society’s constitution and organisational legitimisation. She demonstrates first how expectations to organisational legitimacy have changed in co-evolution with society’s basic ideas, constitution and regulation; second, that we may understand ideals of organisational legitimacy as a result of modernisation having reached a stage where the problems created as side-effects to the blind reflexivity of solid modernity and full functional differentiation reach a critical mass; third, that we can parallel contemporary ideals of legitimacy with the analytical concept of reflection as opposed to reflexivity; fourth, that we may relate contemporary inherent conflicts of legitimacy experienced by
globalising organisations to the different ways in which societies are constituted today. *Jacquie L’Etang* from Britain reflects upon the definitional and methodological issues that concern the relationship between public relations and propaganda. Links are made between the history of public relations and propaganda, and between these two concepts and notions of spirituality, mysticism, religion and ethics. She argues that these concepts may also help explain the fear and loathing often expressed in relation to the public relations function and she has the challenging notion that in considering the themes of religion and spirituality we come perhaps closer to addressing the role of persuasion in public relations and its relationship to propaganda.

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

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

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

5 Beyond Excellence and Rhetoric: Global Developments in Theory Development

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

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

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

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

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

6 The Future and Thanksgiving

We offer this volume primarily in appreciation of the contributions of Günter Bentele. In doing so, we also intend for this Festschrift to help us look to the future of the body of knowledge and scholarship in public relations and communication management. Therefore, quite fittingly, the final chapter of the volume addresses the latest trend – globalization – and poses some questions that scholars of public relations need to address as we progress into the 21st century. Because of the dire need to develop the body of knowledge to prepare it for the challenges of the 21st century and globalization, we see this volume not only as an offering but also a challenge to students, scholars, and practitioners in the field of public relations and communication management. We thus see a much broader spectrum of goals for this volume. The resulting cross-pollination of ideas and perspectives is bound to take public relations scholarship to the next level, a vital need in a globalizing world. Therefore, it is our fond hope that this humble Festschrift will be the harbinger of increased cross-regional dialogue in the future.
A good concept is only as good as its execution. This project would not have been possible without the able and willing help of many friends and colleagues. At the outset, we offer sincere thanks to the 32 contributors (not including Günter Bentele) hailing from at least a dozen countries for enthusiastically agreeing to participate in this Festschrift and delivering thoughtful manuscripts on time even though we had forced them to work to a tight schedule. We believe readers will join us in offering our gratitude to the many leading minds of public relations scholarship included in this volume for sharing their perspectives here but more importantly for helping build the body of knowledge to its current form. Once the manuscripts came in, we needed a lot of administrative help, which came from several members of the staff and graduate assistants at the University of Leipzig. In particular, we would like to recognize the diligence of Kristin Köhler who was most efficient in bringing all manuscripts to a uniform and publishable format in a very short span of time. Without a sponsor, the final manuscript could not have been published and for that we next offer our sincere gratitude to the Erich Dorp-Foundation. Finally, we thank the publishers, especially Barbara Emig-Roller, for bringing out this volume in a most professional format and on time.
Part I

Public Relations, Intereffication and Trust
Public Relations Theory: The Reconstructive Approach

Günter Bentele

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

1 Reconstructive Approach and Social Theory

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


2 “Note that this does not mean adopting “radical constructivism” […] as epistemology. Rather, a reflected reconstructivism seems appropriate (author’s emphasis, G.B.), thus a process of gaining recognition, whereby the cognitive system may be exclusively linked to one’s own means of observation and understanding and can therefore find grounds for the object of its recognition, not as “objective” or “real”, nor in fact as “reality”. However, on the other hand, this does not mean that the cognitive system simply invents some arbitrary products of fantasy and can define these as the correct recognition. Evidently, a plausible relation is required between explanation and the explained, an alignment, “a goodness of the fit” […], a kind of keylock relationship …” (Willke, 1996, 167ff.). Willke represented a “functionally genetic” approach in sys-
The term “reconstructive approach” refers to a concept of reconstruction, which defines a process of cognitive (and communicative) model formation, in other words, the process, whereby a structural, isomorphic model is created that is “suited” to the focus of observation. The concept and process of reconstruction therefore refers – in relation to the perceptive and cognitive process – to relations existing between the observer and observed, or (in traditional terms) between subject and object. In terms of the communication process, the concept refers to relations between the characterization and the signified, the description and what is described as well as between media reality and reality as such. This process is cognitively reconstructed in the observation of reality. In the process of the communicative description of reality (by signs, words, texts and topics), natural and social reality is communicatively reconstructed. Other observers do this in exactly the same way. Moreover, if they also reconstruct observed reality in communicative forms (texts), this reconstructive character of texts ensures that different communication partners have the impression that they are communicatively referring to the same reality. Communication that is to facilitate understanding requires the same referential realities.

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

Based on this outline, it seems reasonable to differentiate between three levels of analysis for the purposes of PR theory, which meanwhile have largely become a commonly accepted part of discourse. At the first level of microanalysis, observation and analysis are focused on the action taken by individual actors, their motives, objectives, the rules that they use and create the effects of their actions etc. On the second – organizational – level, the description focuses on the communication process within the organization and between organizations and their social environments (“publics,” “stakeholders”). Organization is understood as the level that mediates between social functional systems, society as a social system in its entirety and the individual actor. In this case, the analysis centres particularly on the tasks, functions, actions or – to adopt the terms of systems theory – decision
and action programmes of the PR organization in connection with the supra-status of the “parent organization” or client. The third level of analysis refers to the macro analytical level, on which the question is posed of the connection to society, for instance, the question as to whether or to what extent public relations itself can reasonably be outlined as a social functional system or part of a social functional system (e.g. publicist activity, public sphere), or what kind of social system it otherwise portrays. In this essay, the focus of attention is on the first two aforementioned levels.

2 Structures and Processes of PR or Communication Management

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

As with all social systems, organizations only endure by means of communication (Luhmann 2000, p. 62). Communication occurs within organizations and they communicate – as collective actors – with their external world (Theis, 1994). Internal communication processes can be distinguished into those that:
a) proceed relatively uncontrolled (informal communication such as conversations at the lunch table, at the coffee machine, creating rumours) and those
b) are consciously controlled by the organization, that is, internal communication processes.
In one sense, this includes the processes that are accomplished by means of (internal) media and communication instruments (e.g. notice board, employee magazines, intranet etc.). However, it also includes the procedures, which occur in preparation of the actual (internal and external) communication processes, particularly in the communication departments themselves. These are oriented towards planning, implementation and production of communication and organization-specific media. Communicative products are generated as results (texts, images, topics, PR media, and events).

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

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

3 Connections to Reality and Reconstructing Reality

3.1 Construction or Reconstruction?

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

---

4 The new sole trader company observes the organizational environment, decides after brief reflection (analysis) to provide the press with information (strategy development), also acts upon this decision (implementation) and two days later reads the newspaper article (evaluation) that published its information.
define what is meant by “desirable” and how these desirable realities behave in relation to the empirically determined organizational realities. Press releases or business reports, as constructed “desirable” PR realities by the media, are not Christmas wish lists – neither are journalistic news or reports. On the contrary, they have to be “constructed” according to guidelines and within the context of observed reality. To that extent, therefore, they represent “reconstructed entities.” The reasons for discussing this relation to the reality of communication processes and products as a whole and, in particular, to the PR process in a theoretical sense lie, firstly, in the fact that the connections to reality occur and are reflected in concepts such as truth, objectivity, precision, accuracy, credibility and trust. These qualities are just as important in professional practice as in scientific reflection. Secondly, if an attempt is made to avoid the discussion, significant theoretical problems emerge and questions remain unanswered.5

3.2 The Reconstructive Model of Observation and Communication

3.2.1 Perception, observation and reconstruction

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

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

5 Cf. further Bentele (1993). Some representatives of radical constructivism set this connection to reality to one side by way of the construction metaphor (media reality is not reproduction, but construction). However, this does not solve the theoretical problem. Von Glasersfeld (1987, 1992) attempts to approach the problem via the viability concept. Viability, that is, cognitive representations' fitness for survival, is correctly introduced as a concept in contradistinction to a naive concept of reproduction. However, it is no solution to the basic problem of the production of correct or true statements, because it cannot be explained why some ideas are viable while others are not. In addition, the constructivist von Glasersfeld argues realistically: “In order to survive, the organism only has to “cope with” the restricting conditions in his environment. Expressed metaphorically: it has to force itself through the bars of the cage of these conditions.” (von Glasersfeld, 1987, p. 137ff.) This is (voluntarily) a key argument for realistic epistemological theory: for the observing system, the point is to recognize these “cage bars” as something that exists and to have the capacity to distinguish the situation from a state in which the bars are not present. This is possible in a much more convincing way with a suitability concept of evolutionary epistemology (Vollmer, 2002).
specific point neither in time, nor within the duration of an individual’s lifetime, or within the existence of humankind. From the limitless and abundant potential information that fulfils the function of information offers for an individual’s brain, a specific part of reality is actualized within the human perception, cognitive and communicative process (Bentele & Bystrina, 1978, p. 96ff.). While observation of a (biological, physiological or social) system is always an operation internal to the system and based on the generation of distinctions, these are not made arbitrarily or even by pure chance. Rather, they are made in accordance with the existing rules, in accordance with previously existing objective and subjective information, that is, also in accordance with the observed pattern. For this reason, the process of actualization is not only a process of construction, but reconstruction.

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

3.2.2 Three basic principles: perspectivity, selectivity and constructivity

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

---

6 This idea is entirely compatible with the notion of a basic operation of observation, understood as the determination of a distinction, as widely acknowledged in systems theory, cf. for example Willke (1999, p. 12ff.), Luhmann (1984), Kneer & Nassehi (1993, p. 95ff.).
learned. In public communication conveyed by the media, an important basic principle must be accepted.7

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

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

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

---

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

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

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

10 Cf. for instance the contributions of Zitzmann, Taubert, & Leis in Kirchhoff & Piwinger (2001).
3.2.3 Event types and rules of the reference to reality

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

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

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

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

12 Cf. in this connection the relevant contributions in this volume, in particular, the “determination thesis” developed by Baerns and the intereffication model developed in Leipzig.
13 (Public) topics are understood here as sign or meaning complexes which emerge in a complex communication process in an interplay of a) observed actual facts and events b) expressions of actors (descriptions, interpretations and evaluations of actual facts/events) and c) statements about the statements. Different types of communicators generate the topics in the context of a historically created reservoir of themes. The topics’ career, duration, acceptance and relevance with the public are dependent on how the public perceives the relationship between the underlying actual facts/events and the topics themselves (Bentele, Liebert, & Seeling, 1997).
realities on the one hand and media realities that were constructed by the communicators on the other hand is controlled in processes by professional norms of adequacy such as truth or objectivity and can be examined in this regard. The degree of adequacy of media realities is simultaneously a quality criterion for professional communication. A difference principally exists between social realities and media realities that cannot be suspended. This difference between actual facts and events on the one side and their representation on the other also holds true in the case of “media events,” that is to say, wherever an element of social and communicative reality was organized by PR professionals (for instance, a press conference, an anniversary event, etc.) in order to generate public awareness and reporting. The description of such events in the media is also subject to the same rules of adequacy for this event type (truth, objectivity) as the reconstruction of other event types. The most adequate reconstruction of events that is possible can be characterized as a basic form of the – necessary – reference to reality (see Figure 1).

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

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

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

4 Concluding Remarks

Communicators and recipients expect that media reality – at least if it does not concern entertainment, but rather reports on events and topics that actually occur in the real world – is in an *adequate* or *suitable relation* to these events. In this case, similar *rules of the connection to reality* are valid for PR instruments, PR media and for mass media texts. Different *topic constructions* are possible with regard to these social realities. However, if such texts and media representations go beyond a certain “corridor” of reality, the *discrepancies* between immediately experienced reality and the media’s version of reality, which is to
reflect the former, becomes so vast that this creates problems of credibility and trust. In centrally controlled, totalitarian societies, observable discrepancies can be identified between social reality and the state’s desired images, insofar as these emerge as negative propaganda effects. An adequate construction of reality in perception and thought is a biologically explicable achievement, whereas adequate construction of reality by PR and the media is a socially justified necessity that leads to a sanction of loss of trust, if that intricate link is interrupted.

References


The Intereffication Model: Theoretical Discussions and Empirical Research

Günter Bentele & Howard Nothhaft

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

1 The Intereffication Model

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

1.1 From Determination to Intereffication

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

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

---

1 Cf. Bentele, Liebert, & Seeling (1997). An article which introduces the IE model is also available in English language. It is dedicated to Jaakko Lehtonen on behalf of his 60th birthday. Cf. Bentele (2002).
several studies and drew attention to the fact that a significant part of journalistic work relies on public relations. Contrary to what audiences commonly believe, Baerns proved that a lot of journalistic output can be traced back to PR input, no matter whether primary or secondary media, printed media or broadcasting are concerned: “Hence, public relations does not only dominate journalistic investigation but all types of information sources (...).”

Another frequently quoted statement by Baerns is that public relations “determines” both the topics of media activities and the timing, i.e., the point of time when an issue is supposed to be on the agenda. Because Baerns used the word “determination” to characterize PR influence, the term “Determination Thesis” was coined and rapidly adopted by other scholars. Baerns’ observations, backed by empirical evidence, had a strong impact on the professional field of communication as well as on communication studies. Many PR practitioners became aware of the fact that their professional activity resulted in much greater overall influence of PR than they perceived from their respective individual perspectives. From a practitioner’s perspective, it often appears difficult to get a message through to journalists. Baerns’ study made practitioners aware of the fact that although they themselves may not always succeed, the overall influence of PR remains significant. Baerns’ conclusions also sparked intense discussion in journalistic circles. As journalists often regard themselves as independent and neutral observers virtually immune to influence and manipulation, the idea of news coverage being determined by PR ran contrary to journalistic self-perception.

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

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

---

2 Cf. Baerns (1991, p. 87), Baerns (1979). Primary media are, for example press agencies, secondary media are newspapers, radio and TV programmes, etc.
5 Cf. for example Ronneberger & Rühl (1992), Theis-Berglmair (2003).