

## **Managed Communication and Public Relations in Transition Society: Collection of Memories from the Past and Dreams about the Future**

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Communication management and public relations processes are mostly studied in stable societies. The aim of the present paper is to analyse communication management and public relations processes in a changing society and the emergence of the 'Western' communication and public relations concept in this process. This study addresses the questions of how organisations managed their relations and communicated in a communist and post-communist (transition) society, how they changed their attitude, how public relations emerged in a new social context both theoretically and practically, in a transition society which changed very rapidly and at a fundamental level, and how organisations built up their communication concept and public relations functions in this situation.

The main aim of the communist ideology was to keep people as uninformed as possible. People's communications were even physically restricted. This situation influenced communication practices in post-communist transition societies also for a long time after regaining independence. Even today, it is possible to recognize tendencies from communist past in people's communication and behaviour. This makes communication situations in transition societies different and it is important to understand and remember this if for example organizations from the "West" want to start their business in post-communist countries, or if politicians plan to achieve political cooperation or deal with post-communist states, etc.

### **Concept of transition**

To understand the changes in society from totalitarianism to democracy it is necessary to understand the peculiarities of totalitarian, transition and democratic societies. The main differences between these different types of societies are the questions of freedom of choice and of expressing one's opinion. The role of communication and the media is significant in that situation. Societies that are changing from totalitarian to democratic are called transition societies by sociologists. Society is important as an environment for communication processes, because the character of communication processes depends very much on environmental influences. Transition itself is not a one-way process of change from one hegemonic system to another. Rather, transition constitutes a complex reworking of old social relations in the light of processes distinctive of one of the boldest projects in contemporary history - the attempt to construct a form of capitalism on and with the ruins of the communist system. (Stark 1996; Smith 1997) Mainstream transition theory has, then, largely been written in terms of the discourses and practices of liberalisation. (ed. Pickles, Smith 1998) Theories of transition attempt to move the ground away from such perspectives by directly engaging the criticisms of communist society. Liberalisation can thus be thought of in terms of what Michel Foucault has called the

'technologies of the social body': as a series of techniques of transformation involving marketisation of economic relationism, privatisation of property, and the democratisation of political life (Foucault cited Pickles, Smith 1998). Each seeks to de-monopolise the power of the state and separate the state from the economy and civil society. Marketisation seeks to free up the economy. Privatisation aims to break up economic monopolies in the sphere of production, purchasing and distribution. Democratisation and de-communisation aim to break the hold of the Communist Party in political life and to enable a rejuvenated civil society to emerge. Each technique of transformation, along with its specific instruments and policies, brings about a fundamental reorientation in the position of post-communist states in the global economy (ed. Pickles, Smith, 1998: 2-4)

After the revolutionary changes in the eastern part of Europe in 1989, the concept 'societies in transition' has become a common phrase referring to the countries of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. In each of them, one may speak of systemic changes at all levels of society as a whole, which would result in the emergence of a new kind of society. The word 'transition' implies some evaluative teleological content: one may ask about the objectives of transition, and try to forecast its positive final state (e.g., democracy) as well as describe its initial point of departure in negative terms (e.g. totalitarianism, apartheid). Societal, social and individual levels of change in every post-communist country are integrated into the systemic whole by common cultural characteristics, partly rooted in national culture, but at the same time strongly influenced by the all-European cultural environment and by global processes. (Lauristin & al. 1997: 26) The year 1989 was not a political shift from autocratic, mono-party regimes toward parliamentary, multiparty systems – the ultimate victory of democracy; nor was it an economic break from a socialist, planned, command economy, to a basically free, capitalist market – the second birth of capitalism. It was not a radical transformation of institutions, nor the restitution of some earlier social order – 'the return' to Europe, to the West, to 'normality'. Rather, it started the reconstruction of a new social order from a strange mixture of components of varied origin. It was a major cultural and civilisation break, a beginning of the reconstruction of the deepest cultural tissue as well as the civilised surface of society, the slow emergence of a new post-communist culture and civilisation. (Sztompka, 1996: 120)

One of the most important lessons to be learned from the story of the collapse of communism is the importance of the role of cultural factors. In order to understand the role of cultural resistance to the Soviet system, one should also take into account the nature of the Soviet Empire as an attempt to create a new kind of global civilisation. (Lauristin & al. 1997: 29) Soviet communism was a dangerous mix of traditional ideas of European Enlightenment in their Marxist version, expressed in a language similar to the language of the French revolution and classical German philosophy, combined with the Byzantine and even Asian practices of traditional authoritarian societies, denying autonomy of the individual 'self', not recognising individual rights and freedoms, and not allowing any opportunity for free personal choice or honest self-expression. Soviet culture was a strange mixture of collectivist values of Marxist philosophy with traditions and rituals of especially Russian (or Orthodox) origin. Official communist ideology employed

the concepts of freedom and equality that were familiar in Western rhetoric, but implemented them in a reversed and absurd way. (Lauristin & al. 1997: 31)

Relation processes and strategic communication management in the transition society of Estonia take place in the paradigm of fundamental changes: society, organisations, people's thinking, worldviews, culture, ideology etc. changed during the years from 1989 to today. The environment of an organisation can be called a 'home' for the organisations' publics, influencing their ideas, decisions, opinions, and attitudes. The environment is a space for education and discussions, conflicts and consensus, etc. Changes in the environment (in the type of society) are the dominant factors in the organisations' communication and relations analyses.

The preliminary euphoria that followed the end of communist society might have turned into fear because people found themselves in a new, unknown situation. The same applies to organisations.

One way to ease the fears of the members of a society is clear, understandable and fair communication. But this is problematic, because the communication customs of a totalitarian society are completely different from what people usually assume and expect, and what are accepted by democratic societies. Fears resulted from changes, and poor communication on the part of the state with its public can be illustrated by the low rating of the Estonian government, the misunderstanding of various organisations, etc. in everyday practice in the Estonian society today. People in a transition society were influenced by memories of communism and illusions about democracy, given that they had no practical experience with democracy.

### **Cultural and ideological influences of communication processes**

Culture, values and ideology are important factors in building up relations and in the communication process. As the Estonian transition society is rather young and still building up its own new culture and ideology, the cultural approach deserves special attention. Some key conflicts in society were cultural and ideological conflicts: organisations' communication with the public was guided by one ideology, while the public's expectations were guided by another. Problems often arose between organisations and their publics on the cultural level: how to understand messages, different languages (not only philological approach, also different languages in different lifestyles), etc. A special tendency in the transition society was that organisations started to behave according to the market economy rules but the public had still many memories of the 'good old communist era' and this resulted in a conflict in their relationship. For example, there was a conflict in 1994 when the Estonian Telephone Company started to bill clients. After that, the clients organised a picket against the phone company because in communist times telecommunication services had been free, and this new economic situation was unacceptable to the clients. In the author's opinion, the only way to maintain stability in such a situation would have been to disseminate a great deal of information and communicate it to the clients very well, and even to teach the clients how to behave in that new situation, what it means to live in a market economy, etc. But the Estonian Telephone

Company did not comment on their decisions and did not explain why it was important to ask for money now in this new political situation and why they had not asked for money in the communist era. In another situation in 1996, the Estonian Telephone Company made a profit for the first time and according to a tradition of the 'Western' public relations, notified the public about this, saying in a press conference that the profits would be reinvested in the Estonian telecommunications infrastructure. Business reporters spoke later in the media how 'these horrible capitalist owners were pocketing the money of poverty-stricken Estonians and shipping this money abroad'. In that situation, an obvious misunderstanding had occurred again: young journalists had insufficient knowledge of the capitalist free market system, journalists acting as a public megaphone were using the Soviet-era rhetoric (the meta-text being that enemies come from capitalism) and organisations who were insensitive to the expectations and education level of important key publics were throwing around jargon without considering the possible cultural and ideological diversity. Historically, the cultural aspect of the communist society had been highly politicised: there was not much national culture (the national culture approach was used only for propaganda: for example in the discourse about friendship between different nations, etc), priority was given to the hegemonic Soviet culture, a collective worldview with collective cultural practices. The primary importance was attributed to the idea that the political ideological approach predominated over other approaches to culture and in all aspects of Soviet everyday life. In communist society, culture was essentially political culture. With changes in the political life, fundamental changes took place in culture and ideology too, and these changes influenced all processes in the Estonian society.

Raymond Williams (1962) defined culture as '*a particular way of life*' shaped by values, traditions, beliefs, material objects, and territory. Culture is a complex and dynamic ecology of people, things, worldviews, activities, and settings that fundamentally endures, but is also changed in routine communication and social interaction. Culture is context. Culture as everyday life is a steadfastly democratic idea. (Lull, 1995: 66) The hierarchical relationship between social structure and culture has been well recognised in classical Marxist theory. The crux of the typical Marxist argument is that because '*culture is determined by forces outside itself, it does not have autonomy in the causal sense*' (Alexander and Seidman, 1990: 2). From Daniel Bell to Jürgen Habermas, culture has historically been subverted to social structure in the writings of many critical theorists (Archer, 1990).

### *Concept of comfort zones*

Certainly the most systematic and sophisticated effort to come to grips theoretically with the problematic relationship between cultural taste and social structure is the research and writing of Pierre Bourdieu (1984; 1990a; 1990b; 1993). Bourdieu resurrected and reworked the idea of habitus to signify a system of socially learned cultural predispositions and activities that differentiate people by their lifestyle. Habitus encompasses the whole gamut of cultural activity – the production, perception, and evaluation of everyday practices (Bourdieu 1990a: 131). While habitus is claimed to account for taste, it is not simply a cold system of aesthetics detached from the sensate world; habitus pervades our

bodies as well as our minds. According to Bourdieu, cultural comfort zones and characteristic ways of acting are learned through social experience. New social experience erased people's Soviet-era comfort zones in the transition society, and the formation of new comfort zones is a long and time-consuming process. Therefore, we can say that there are many so-called security holes that influence the thoughts, acts and decisions of people, and there are also factors that influence relations and communication. This applies also to major systems of interaction (individual-organisation, organisation-organisation, etc) and to the explanation of the Estonian Telephone Company examples presented *vide supra*. In order to gain a wider view of social and cultural aspects, we should mention one characteristic feature of communist society - state interruption in the activities of business organisations, or in other words, a centrally managed economy (Sartori, 1987). Another characteristic feature of the Soviet Union was that a certain group of business organisations helped to spread the ideology and to control the public, and in return these organisations received crucial privileges from the state that helped to establish their position, and gave rise to a specific organisational culture. Such organisations favoured by the Communist Party became very arrogant, their inner rules and ideology copied the state, and they became secret systems inside the state (Estonian Telephone Company was one of such type of organisations in Estonia). The question of ideology in post-communist societies is very important, but at the same time also rather painful, because communism relied on its powerful ideological influence on people, and, clearly, people released from a communist society were fed up with ideology in general.

### *Ideological effects*

Media-transmitted ideology in any political-economic-cultural context is represented partly in language and articulated and interpreted through language and through other highly elaborate codes and modes - including visual forms and music - which are then further interpreted and used by people in routine social interaction. These processes are all part of an ideological effect. Just as language and other communication codes are learned and reinforced in the context of everyday social interaction, ideology is likewise made familiar and normal in routine social intercourse. These are the processes of social mediation. Mass media's ideological representations are recognised, interpreted, edited and used in audience members' social construction of daily life. (Lull, 1995: 9-21) In a totalitarian society, mass media was used to create different political and social constructions in the auditorium (society, public). The mass media was used as an instrument of propaganda that produced effects that do not exist in a democratic society. Even seemingly trivial extracts from TV, the news, entertainment programs, and movies take on tremendous ideological force when they are circulated socially. J.B. Thompson (1990) calls this the 'discursive elaboration' of ideology. Ideological image systems cannot confer meaning. The consequences of communication do not always fulfil the message senders' objectives. (Lull, 1995: 21) This reveals the difference between the approaches of totalitarian and democratic ideologies: in a totalitarian society people did not have a choice between different constructions, and politically led ideological discourses consciously moulded the ideas of the auditorium.

Organisations (also 'business' organisations as the Estonian Telephone Company) in the communist society had an obligation to follow the dominant communist ideology and support the political system. A strong hegemony of ideologies dominated the communist system. Therefore, the political aspect is closely connected to the past and to the communist ideology in post-communist context. This gives us a situation where the dominant ideology is an expression of the collective public's worldview of reality. Often the personal worldview of a member of an organisation differed from the general and social worldview and this gave rise to the syndrome of 'deep language'<sup>1</sup> in the practical communication processes. People with communist experience were, and still are, influenced by communist ideas and values. It is important to point out that the breakthrough from communism to a transition society was faster and more sudden in social practice in the society, in the structure of society than in the minds, communication and behaviour of people.

The analysis of ideologies and cultural forms of organisation in the communist society has been an innovative approach to understanding the peculiarities of [organisational] culture and communication in a transition society. Ideology in the present context refers to the system of views and ideas through which people are aware of their relations with reality. Trice and Beyer stress the fact that convictions are connected to supportive emotional attitudes in ideology by presenting the following definition: ideology is a harmonic set of convictions in emotional shades, values and norms that unites people and helps them to understand the surrounding world (Trice&Beyer, 1993: 33). Ideologies make social situations comparable and valuable. People tend to simplify experiences, and ideology is one method of simplification (Trice&Beyer, 1993: 45). The content of ideology is formed by convictions that are amplified by emotions. These influence the extent to which people are eager to follow their convictions. Usually, those convictions that are ripe for understanding are understood, and then new convictions find their place among others. Convictions in ideology are not only present in the minds of people, but are also represented by social actors. Therefore, we can state that organisational culture and communication are very vivid in some periods due to especially annoying factors. Various contrasts are sensed in unification, failures, and in accepting people with new convictions into the organisations. We can say that many Estonian firms experienced a cultural and ideological shock in 1992: organisations of communist cultural experience had to adjust immediately to the democratic organisational culture because of the process of change in the society. And this shock was visible in the organisations' communication, rhetoric and behaviour.

### **The role of worldview in communication processes**

In order to provide a more thorough explanation of the ideological aspect, special attention is dedicated to the aspect of worldview. Firstly, discourse on worldview held an important place in the communist ideology and in the everyday experience during the communist period. Most of the processes in communist society were marked by the cultivation and improvement of the communist worldview. Secondly, the worldview

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<sup>1</sup> The concept of 'deep language' is analysed below.

aspect also holds an important place in the theoretical consideration of public relations, mainly developed by a representative of the American school, James Grunig et al. (1992).

The change from a communist society and communist way of thinking to a transition society and then to a democratic society and a democratic way of thinking is the key to all other changes dealt with in the present paper.

The central issue of this paper, a change in organisational communication, was initiated and influenced by changes in context and culture, in worldview, in ideology and in public system. In practice, this refers to changes in the way people think, behave and decide, which in turn influences people's decisions as members of organisations and societies. This is also where the biggest conflict for the empirical research objectives of the present paper lies: the organisations studied had to initiate changes because their environment was changing. This meant making changes in their worldview in order to survive in the new circumstances and to find a new meaning for their existence. And this is the level at which the greatest problems occurred, in relations as well as in communication. Although at first glance, conflicts do not seem to concern the worldview, but instead occur in the instances of everyday life, for example in pricing policies or the assessments of the quality of their services, the discourse analysis applied in the present study provides an outcome that proves that conflict also occurs on the level of the worldview.

In the communist society, there was no choice but to follow the communist worldview, which was strongly asymmetrical compared to the worldview of a democratic society. One reason for the asymmetry was the intensive use of propaganda. Party leaders and control apparatuses of the communist society applied extreme pressure to achieve adherence to the communist worldview: *'We have established a new society that the humankind has never seen before. This is a society without crises, with a growing economy and improved socialist relations – a society of true freedom. This is a society where a scientific-materialist worldview is prevalent. This is a society truly convinced of the future, of bright communist perspectives. Horizons of unlimited and diverse progress are open. The other main result of this road is our Soviet way of life: an atmosphere of true collectivism and comradeship, the strengthening friendship and monolithic nature of our country's nations and nationalities, healthy decency that makes us strong and resistant. (Long applause)'* (Brezhnev, 1977: 570). The dominance of such discourse and such rhetoric in everyday context set the tone for the everyday behaviour and communication of organisations. The communist worldview was to be followed at every step, both at work and in private life.

When societal changes began in 1989 and organisational changes with them, changing their worldview became one of the greatest problems for people. It would be too much to ask that historical influences be erased from people's memories immediately. Quite often the prevalence of communist collective memory can be spotted in today's Estonian society, especially in the aspects that were vitally important for ordinary people (free phone service, free medical service, special privileges for the working class, a derisory attitude towards business and money-making, etc). It would be wise for organisations and people

coming from democratic societies to consider the effect of memories of communism and dreams of democracy on the worldview in a transition society.

Worldview can be described on the basis of ethics. Vroom reported that writers on religion have mentioned love as a criterion or the ability of a worldview to 'help people find a right relationship with themselves, their neighbour, and the universe' (Vroom 1989: 96). Torrance said that science should look for the 'good' as well as the 'orderly' and suggested that the 'good' is that what produces a 'reunified human culture' (Torrance 1989: 82).

The general theory of excellence in communication management and its contribution to organisational effectiveness begins at the level of worldview – the way people and organisations think about and define public relations and communication management. Grunig and Hunt conclude that an excellent worldview for public relations would be one that is logical, coherent, unified, and orderly – the internal criteria. It should also be effective in solving organisational and human problems, as judged by relatively objective research or by history – the external criterion. Finally, it should be ethical in that it helps organisations to build caring – even loving – relationships with other individuals and groups they affect in the society or the world. From studying different practitioners, Grunig and Hunt conclude that the dominant worldview in public relations is the asymmetrical view, in which PR is seen as a way of getting what the organisation wants without changing its behaviour and without compromises. In their opinion this is not an effective way to practice communications and relations management. They believe that excellent public relations departments adopt the more realistic view that public relations and communication management is a symmetrical process of compromise and negotiation and not a battle for power. In the long run, the symmetrical view is more effective: organisations get more of what they want when they give up some of what they want. (Grunig and Hunt 1992: 38-39) According to Grunig, public relations and communication management is artificial when considered on the basis of the symmetrical worldview: it is idealistic, critical and managed (Grunig and Hunt, 1992: 31). Grunig has described the symmetry and asymmetry of worldview from the public relations perspective, but in the context of the present study this approach is insufficient, since the organisations in the present study came from a totalitarian society, where symmetrical communication and worldview did not exist in the sense Grunig used it in his study. In addition, the asymmetry was also considerably different from that described by Grunig.

The modules created by Grunig and his colleagues are also referred to in the present survey because these modules deal with the ideological aspect, which is especially important in communications and in management when we are dealing with organisations and people who are used to different social orders.

It is important to remember that the roots of the differences between communist and democratic societies exist at the philosophical (worldview) and ideological levels. According to Grunig, skilful communications management and its contribution to effective organisation lies at the ideological level – what people and organisations think about public relations and communication management and how they define it. The



concept of worldview appears in literature throughout the humanities and social sciences, although under many names. Kearney (1984: 10) defined worldview as 'a set of images and assumptions about the world'. Kearney (1984) also referred to worldview as 'macro thought'. Macro thought is a useful term for the schema concept that is popular in cognitive and social psychology.

Once we realize that worldviews - or schemas - are theories of a sort, we can look to recent thinking about theories in the philosophy of science to help us understand and evaluate the different worldviews that influence the study and practice of public relations. Kuhn (1970: 175) applied the definition for worldview that is used most often in science. He described worldview as a 'paradigm' - a 'disciplinary matrix that stands for the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on shared by the members of a given community'.

Grunig's ideological approach (Grunig and Hunt 1992) deals with both the symmetric and asymmetric aspects of worldview. The asymmetry that characterises the rather closed organisations in a democratic society is different from the asymmetry that is important for a communist society. Organizations originating in a totalitarian society express the asymmetric worldview differently than organizations in a democratic society (Table 1):

**Table 1: The characteristics of an asymmetric worldview in a totalitarian society (based on Grunig's categorisation of asymmetry) (Tampere 1999):**

| Category of asymmetry | Description   |
|-----------------------|---|
| Internal Orientation  | Members of the organisation see it only as an entity in itself without analysing its relations with the external environment  |
| Closed System         | Information does not flow at all, neither inside out, nor outside in (except commands and decrees) - this is the 'secret' organization  |
| Efficiency            | Since in the totalitarian society economy and the government of the state are united, there is no efficiency in the sense of market economy (control of costs), thus efficiency is only an illusion and the control of costs is at the service of propaganda ('victories of work', achievements of 5-year programmes, etc.) |
| Elitism               | The cult of the leader is primary. This does not depend on the level of his/her knowledge, but on the worldview and loyalty to the totalitarian society. Organizations function as if they have all the knowledge and the public has none.  |

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| Conservatism      | Changes occur only seemingly and are at the service of propaganda, information from outside (i.e. from a different political system) about change is considered subversive because change is produced by enemies, changes are only seemingly useful, information from outside about the necessity of change undermines the system, changes are provoked and produced by enemies. |
| Tradition         | Tradition is at the service of propaganda, it is used to manipulate people and their emotions.   |
| Central Authority | The politicians and/or technocrats hold power, whereas 'good working people' are honoured and put on a pedestal for the sake of propaganda. Actually, the management of an organization depends on the ruling party and organizations are led by the official ideology.  |

The asymmetric worldview in communist society was different and somewhat also unique – a mix of communist propaganda, power, hierarchy, public lie, etc. All aspects, also communication, of communist society can be understood only in the context of knowledge about the hierarchical system of political control in the Soviet Union. This asymmetric worldview describes a very closed/secret approach to the public system and is characteristic of organisations coming from a communist society. There are the questions about canonisation and total control, about secrets, 'closeness' and openness.

### **The role of communication in different types of society**

Communication in communist and post-communist societies was rather peculiar and differed from communication in a democratic society. Influences of the communist society dominated the organisation's communications at the beginning of the transition period in the early 90s and even 10 years later. The author found examples of communist style in organisation's communication in organisational communication research. General characteristics of post-communist organisational communication were:

- chaotic character, not strategically planned
- fear of telling the truth
- dominance of professional language in public communication (lawyers, medical specialists, telecommunications specialists, etc. used professional language in public communications situations because it was safe – not many people understood the message and they did not have to be afraid of uttering ideologically incorrect expressions)
- the real message was concealed
- unethical propaganda elements in rhetoric

In the transition situation, changes in communication were necessary because the rules of society had changed. For a democratic society, which was the dream of post-communist countries, other values were important and a different communication style was expected. Different types of ideologies dominated in the society. The important characteristics of

organisational communication in a democratic society (according to different authors in the public relations and organisational communications fields) are:

- honesty
- clear and understandable communication
- dialogical communication
- research-based public relations activities

### *Communication practices in communist society*

In communist society, an organisation's relations and communication were based on power. The most important public for organisations in practice were the communist leaders. Organisations reported of their successes to the society and the party leaders via the media. Positive reports from work collectives were prominent on TV programmes and in newspapers. Considering Marju Lauristin's and Peeter Vihalemm's research (Vihalemm & Lauristin 2001) on the media and communications in the Soviet Union, we can say that journalism performed the functions of public relations and communication management in the Soviet Union: there was no free media in the communist society. This was one-way asymmetrical communication - an ideological, political struggle for an abstract 'better communist future'. In this process the roots were holy and ideological. (Høyer, Lauk, Vihalemm 1993: 176) The treatment of communism based on Lenin's doctrine looked upon journalism as a major part of the political system. To quote a well-known saying by Lenin, journalism had to be and in fact was, '*Not only a collective propagandist and a collective agitator, but also a collective organiser*' (V. Lenin, *The Tasks of the Soviet Power Next in Turn*). Lenin drew a parallel between journalism and the scaffolding around a building; journalism should serve as a means of communication between different groups of the Party and the people, thus fostering joint construction of the edifice of communism. The Russian Bolshevik Party under Lenin's guidance, and dozens of other communist parties, viewed culture and communication pragmatically, discerning in them Machiavellian means of gaining power. In its treatment of journalism, Leninist-Communist doctrine rested upon the following logic (Høyer, Lauk, Vihalemm 1993: 177):

- history is the struggle between classes
- every person must inevitably take sides with one or the other class in society
- spontaneous movement and the natural evolution of events can only lead to the domination of bourgeois ideology
- in order to defeat bourgeois ideology, it is necessary to arouse the workers' class-consciousness, to organise and discipline them, thus changing them from a class in itself to a class for itself
- the above goals can be realised by the Party that uses journalism for this purpose

The party principle's rule over journalism was absolute. The party principle was also acknowledged as the underlying principle of activity for all cultural and social institutions. (Høyer, Lauk, Vihalemm 1993: 177) '*Journalism must serve as an instrument of socialist construction, giving detailed reviews of model communist achievements, disclosing the reasons why they are successful and what economic methods they use. But at the same time, journalism must pillory those communists who obstinately continue maintaining 'capitalist traditions', i.e. anarchy, idleness, disorder, speculation.*' (V. Lenin, *The Tasks of the Soviet Power Next in Turn*).

### *'Deep language'<sup>2</sup>*

Communication is a cultural practice: it is about what people actually do. According to Bourdieu, every communication practice constitutes an additional part of cultural maps. Communication can be understood as the practice of producing meanings and the way in which participants in a culture negotiate the system of meanings. Culture can be understood as the totality of communication practices and systems of meaning. (Bourdieu 1990) Communication and culture are not separate entities or areas. Both are produced through a dynamic relationship with the other.

The definition of communication in a communist society can be derived from its cultural context. Communist ideology created its own communication style, referred to as 'deep language'. (Radzinski 2000) This refers to a style of utterances, both orally and in written texts. Lenin initiated its use during the revolution. The whole process was clandestine and people were called to violent resistance with sentences such as 'We hope that it will be a peaceful demonstration' - in fact an appeal for a very bloody demonstration. 'Deep language' was also systematically developed by Stalin. For example, Stalin's statement announcing the promotion of a comrade was in reality his/her death sentence. 'Deep language' was preserved in the language use of subsequent state leaders in different forms, depending on the activity of the Party and the personality of the leader. Over time it was ingrained in the whole society because people understood that it was safer and more beneficial to use the same style as the leaders. This style was characterised by a 'syndrome of lies', which meant that in order to understand the actual content of information one had to read 'between the lines' and have a critical attitude towards texts. This style was born at the same time as the practice of communist ideology and it was typical of the whole period in many respects. It was one of the instruments of the Communist Party for controlling and influencing people. Organisations in communist society used the 'deep language' style mixed with very specific technical language that obstructed their communication with the public and gave birth to many communication problems.

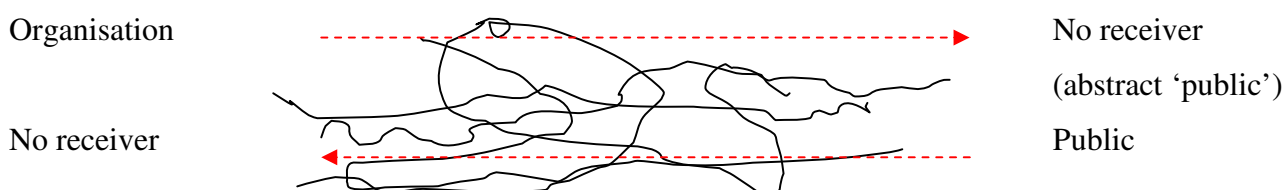
### *Ungovernable (Chaotic) asymmetric communication model*

The author of the present study analysed the remnants and influences of communist culture and ideology in the transition society. Communication as an expression of culture has some peculiarities. These can be described by using the ungovernable (by nature this model is chaotic) asymmetric communication model that can be illustrated by the syndrome of misunderstood intercommunication. (Tampere, 1999: 17). According to this model, dialogue does exist, as well as feedback to the public, because the media allows people to express their opinions, but communication is not understood, and therefore the processes are chaotic, asymmetrical and ungovernable. In other words, both sides present their truth and their message, and there is no receiver of the real message on either end. (Figure 1).

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<sup>2</sup> In some contexts the term 'double speech' has been used, but this is similar to what Radzinski called 'deep language.'

**Figure 1: Ungovernable (Chaotic) asymmetric communication model (UCAC)  
Communication flow and relations in transition society**



According to this model, an organisation sends its message to a so-called abstract and anonymous 'public' in the environment but the message is not received because it is not clear to public (it is often delivered in specific technocratic wording and lacks a defined message). The 'public' sends their messages to organisations, but their messages remain unheard, because there is nobody in the organisation interested in the public's opinions. During the Soviet era, organisations were like small, closed and independent systems, with the aim of operating only for themselves and for some public group in the government (Communist Party leaders, KGB, technical managers in Moscow etc), so in fact the messages did make some sense in that context. This model illustrates very clearly the style of sending messages in the Soviet period and the communication influences of communist society on all processes. There was no clear sense to the messages and nobody heard them because communist propaganda made people passive and apathetic. People had some kind of immunity to information and organisations as a rule did not send information to the public, because customers and citizens were not the key public at the time. This UCAC model can be found in the communication analyses of Estonian companies - organisations sent some messages to the public via newspapers and the public also sent some messages to organisations at the beginning of the change processes in the Estonian society during 1989-1992. But their messages did not 'meet each other'. It was like a traditional family comedy: all family members talking at once and nobody listening, nobody wanting to receive information from the others.

Information flow in UCAC is independent, chaotic and 'living its own life'. One legitimate aspect of this chaotic process is that messages arise even when organisations do nothing in the communication and relations field. Organisations and societies thus seek continuously to reconfirm themselves, which leads to a selective use of information and a dangerous narrowing of perception (De Greene 1991).

### *Public relations in post-communist society*

The role of public relations and communication management in a transition society is unique. Firstly, this is due to the relationship between propaganda and communication, a very sensitive cultural context for all communication processes in new situations that a transition society has to face. The second important reason is definitely the fact that the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and of the former Soviet Union are undergoing a breakthrough stage in their transition from centrally planned to market economies. Due to such remarkable social and economic changes, it is very appropriate to add a transitional

PR aspect to the PR and communication management that emerged in the new market economy context.

According to Ryszard Ławniczak, the task of public relations during the first stage of the transition is to build up an image of 'capitalism with a human face' in order to secure public acceptance for ongoing economic reforms. The second task is to create public awareness of the wide range of possible alternative market economy models, by promoting value systems and lifestyles with products and services, and by keeping in mind that in the formerly socialist countries a struggle is currently under way to determine the final shape of the market economy. And thirdly, its task is to facilitate the effective functioning of the market economy. (Ławniczak 2001: 15) His central idea is that transition public relations is an instrument for systemic transformation in Central and Eastern Europe: "To achieve such desirable transformations in social consciousness within the shortest time possible, one should make optimal use of new effective instruments. Those best suited and most commonly known and used in market economies include marketing, modern management methods, human resource management and computerisation. Meanwhile, another instrument that is essential in shaping market economies, namely public relations, is still in its infancy". (Ławniczak 2001: 7)

Based on an empirical study by the present author (Tampere 2003) which also confirmed the conclusions of Polish colleges, it can be concluded that public relations performs also a pedagogical role in a transition society. PR should be on the frontline of managing changes as an agent of increasing knowledge and a follower of ethical principles. In this way a mutual understanding of the ongoing economic as well as more specific processes can be achieved.

As an outcome of the EBOK project, the 'Bled Manifesto', Van Ruler & Vercic (2002) highlight the educational aspect, which is to help members of organisations become communicatively competent in order to respond to societal demands. This function has to do with the behaviour of the members of the organisation. But the pedagogical aspect concerns the education of the public and the stakeholder groups of an organisation in order to help people change with society and adapt to new cultural, philosophical and economic conditions. Then, a system of knowledge will emerge as a basis for better mutual understanding, trust and relationship in the society as a whole and between the organisation and its different stakeholders.

We could also suggest that the pedagogical role is similar to the reflective role of Van Ruler & Vercic (2002), because both describe the organisation's relations with society. The reflective aspect makes it possible to talk about the organisation in society, so that the organisation can become socially responsible. This function has to do with organisational values and norms, and can be seen as a developing function of public relations, as part of the discussion on socially responsible behaviour of organisations. (Van Ruler & Vercic 2002) In the present author's opinion, the pedagogical role is not the same as the reflective role, because the reflective role is based on dialogue, discussion and social responsibility. In a transition society, discussion has not yet emerged, communication is asymmetric and

chaotic, and there is no social responsibility in the sense of democratic society at the very early stages of a transition society.

The pedagogical role of public relations is particularly important at the very early stages of transition society, especially at the beginning of fundamental social and economic changes. The adaptation of the different sides in changing situations is much more dynamic from a pedagogical perspective, because decisions and strategies are based on special knowledge. An ethically realised pedagogical role helps organisations to learn about new worldviews in society, to learn how to start to live in a new type of society. And on the other hand, the pedagogical role of public relations can help citizens understand an organisation's behaviour in a new type of society. For example, citizens can come to understand why there was free phone service in communist times while clients must pay for services in a market economy. The pedagogical role is mostly a one-way communication, based on ethics and tolerance as well as the citizens' right to make choices. When putting a pedagogical role into practice, it is important to get systematic feedback and to correct procedures according to the public's reactions. Pedagogy in itself is persuasion and in post-communist situation this aspect can cause some problems, because the public is very sensitive to different modes of persuasion and propaganda, but nevertheless, in the post-communist situation it seems the best way to achieve consensus and mutual understanding between different experiences, understandings, etc.

According to Ławniczak, transitional public relations fulfil an additional fifth role (after the managerial, reflective, educational, and operational roles of Van Ruler) as an effective instrument for systemic transformation. (Ławniczak 2001: 17) Although Ławniczak agrees with Sriramesh and Vercic's postulate (2000) that there are certain 'generic principles of public relations applicable in every economic system', he argues that public relations practitioners in Central and Eastern Europe need to account for the influence of political and economic systems (one of the five specific variables, according to Vercic, Grunig and Grunig (1996)) to a much larger extent. The legacy of a former socialist system, as reflected in ways of thinking, the structure of the economy, and the mechanisms for resource allocation, creates a unique combination of constraints on the application of the universal principles of public relations. For this reason we can speak of transitional public relations. (Ławniczak 2001: 17)

### **Developments in public relations and communication management**

The PR function has historically developed through various cultures and societies. Public relations and propaganda have been considered as beginning in early civilisations. Nearly all cultures and societies have examples of situations that can be considered as predecessors of contemporary public relations and communication management.

Public relations itself has been considered a phenomenon of a democratic society for years (Cutlip 1985, Harrison 1995). European totalitarian regimes at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (from the revolutionary changes in Russia in 1917 to the World War II, the totalitarian regimes in Russia, Germany, Italy, etc.) strongly influenced the development of

communication management. According to Harrison (1995: 7), Goebbels gave a definition for propaganda in the 1930s that changed the meaning of propaganda to a great extent - mainly devaluing its meaning. Today, PR specialists have distanced themselves from the communication processes of a totalitarian society (Harrison 1995).

Looking at the social developments at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it seems that the time has come to re-examine the pillars of PR and communication management as organisational activities of crucial importance, and also to accept the development of public relations in the environment of a post-communist society. PR history in the democratic world, in the present author's opinion, took on a new dimension in 1989, and we can call this period the opening period, which became the cradle for systematic public relations in post-communist countries and the beginning of new developments in European public relations. This was the beginning of the opening up of totalitarian states and the time when a large part of Europe changed its social order, worldview, style, culture, values, etc. This was the period when transition societies were formed and developed, and the period when public relations and communication management were established in post-communist transition societies. The length of the period of opening was about 10 years. Since 2000, communication management and PR processes have taken place in the global networking and Internet communication period (PR on the Internet), because in both post-communist and old democracies as well as in Asian cultures, the Internet and information technology have developed very rapidly. This communication trend has clearly followed the Internet society trend and McLuhan's ideas of the Global Village. This period can also be characterised as a period of strong integration of different cultures, worldviews and philosophies, and of different functions and activities.

Although there have been many odd developments in PR and communication management in post-communist society, two processes have been occurring simultaneously: very rapid adaptation of modern technology and network concepts, and influences from the communist past. The ethical aspects of PR and communication in post-communist states can be compared to the first years of development of PR and communication management, influenced by the ethical values, double speech and propaganda of communist society.

The present author would suggest one additional role of public relations, the integrative role: in the European context it is very important to discover opportunities for cooperation. The last 15 years have been revolutionary in Europe - more than half of the European territory changed its basic values at a very fundamental level. As a result, more than half of Europe is still experiencing the stress of change. In Europe we have encountered problems that arise from the meeting of different national cultures and religious worldviews. In addition, there have been problems with economic, political, ideological, ethical and cultural differences, which are much more complicated aspects than mere differences in nationality. In the present author's opinion, it is possible to find opportunities to integrate the experiences of different economic systems and different societies, different cultures and also ideologies. In order to do this, it is essential to have special skills and tolerance, along with good and ethical pedagogical practice. Together



with public relations' integrative role, it is possible to find new dimensions in the actions of PR practitioners: they will be in a much more diplomatic position, acting like translators between different approaches to existence.

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