Introductory note

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Strategic communication is the central theme for this issue of *Comunicação e Sociedade*, and it covers several of its contents. The purpose is to account for some of the scientific work that has been developed within national and also international contexts; we therefore present papers from researchers who share with us geographical proximity but also common scientific perspectives, coming from Spain, Italy, Norway, The Netherlands, United Kingdom, Denmark, Slovenia and USA.

A retrospective search into last century USA history shows that strategic communication, following the sense Habermas (1993) attributes to it, played a crucial role in the constitution of the field of Communication Sciences. This role becomes quite clear if we consider the works of Lasswell, early 20's, on political propaganda during WWI, Lazarsfeld, 40-50's, on electoral campaigns and their effects, Klapper, early 60's, with the theory of *limited effects* and McCombs and Shaw, in the 70's, with the idea of *agenda setting*. The school of Frankfurt covered the concern about media effects, when Adorno, Marx, Horkheimer and Habermas considered this an instrumental idea, opposing the emancipatory endeavours involved in the ideological accusation of *the culture industry*. This epistemological and theoretical division remains as fundamental within research on strategic communication. Following Lazarsfeld (1948), we would assume that most of the works within this field are integrated along *administrative research*, i. e., research that aims at producing theory *for* strategic communication, aiming at its effectiveness towards organizational goals. The volume of research *about* strategic communication is still quite reduced at least in an academic perspective. On the one hand, the first perspective adopts a process view of strategic communication, defining it as a whole of communicative intentional events that include planning, use of diversified media resources occur in a given limited period of time and aim at performing institutional and organizational goals. On the other hand, the second perspective is quite critical. Researchers would state that it is about a type of communication

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whose beneficiary is the organization itself, or the institution that behold legitimacy, power, resources and access to the media that are necessary for the launching of such a project, even if this is presented as *pro-social*, of *social responsibility* or even of *public interest*.

These communicative activities imply prejudices, judgements of value and manipulation of behaviours. Therefore, they involve a certain strength, which expresses and helps constituting the underlying power asymmetries. Under the hedge of critical research it is important not to reduce strategic communication to its scientific functions evidenced as technical instrument; instead it must be examined by considering the social relationships network and the cultural context to which it belongs. The readers of this journal will be given the opportunity of getting acquainted to both types of research despite their occasional opposition.

The journal begins with an approach to strategic communication in the public sector, constituted by a set of theoretical and also empirical papers. Paul B. Horsle, responsible for over 50 strategies within public field in Norway, proposes a combination of principles, steps and guidelines that must conduct strategic communication planning. The centre of his attention is information policy in Norwegian government. Tito da Cunha focuses his attention on the relationships between politicians and the *media*, reflecting about the nature, functions and dangers of the strategic silence in political contexts. As an example, he quoted from a well known *tabu* used by Cavaco Silva, concerning the hypothesis of becoming candidate for President of the Republic, in the end of his period as prime minister. Aldina Marques leads us even further, with an analysis of an electoral debate broadcasted by television (Sócrates-Santana) and centred in verbal interaction. The analysis is supported by a whole of linguistic mechanisms that, together with a pre-discursive *ethos*, performs a crucial role in the construction of discursive images for the participants, since like the author explains, the *who's who* dimension is fundamental for political action. Under a critical discursive approach, Zara Pinto-Coelho underlines some of the discursive strategies from persuasion, in the field of public campaigns for drug prevention, emphasizing the type of power they imply and the role ascribed to autonomy and democratic citizenship. Cláudia Costa follows, with a presentation of the results of her Master empirical research, concerning the ways in which the municipalities of Braga and Viana do Castelo condition the daily life, the contents and the presentation of the newspapers *Correio do Minho* and *Diário do Minho*.

Strategic communication in organizations will be the next theme, starring three major issues: a) Construction and management of identity, reputation and brand; b) Public relations and organizational communication; c) media diffusion and globalisation.

Teresa Ruão and Victoria Duran write about the work of updating the visual identity of two high education institutions – Minho University, in Portugal and Extremadura University, in Spain – reflecting about their strategic relevance within university management, in a market context. Justo Vilafañe also writes about the

increasing relevance of the *intangible actives* within entrepreneurial management, presenting the management model of corporative reputation, which he created and which was applied to over a dozen Spanish large companies. Hatch and Schulz aim at contributing for the organizational identity theory in three fundamental aspects: demonstrating how this theory is rooted in social identity theory; fostering the idea of taking culture into account for the definition of identity as a social process and offering a model of the dynamics of organizational identities which articulates identity, image and organizational culture. From a practical perspective, it is considered that a stronger knowledge about the functioning of organizational identity dynamics might help organizations to avoid dissention and to increase productivity. In her paper, Gabriela Gama, based on an example, shows that the occurrence of a crisis has implications that go behind organizations' borders, reaching public opinion that it will judge the solution given by organization. John Balmer points out the benefits and the characteristics of corporative brands in the context of recent research, bearing in mind the 10th anniversary of a 1991 paper by Steven King about this issue. He concludes that there has been little progress in conceptualisation, criticising the trend to group under the same umbrella (corporative brand) such diverse concepts as the ones of corporative identity, organizational identification and corporative reputation. He foresees that in the next decade there will appear a new multidisciplinary area of management, known as corporative marketing.

Betteke van Ruler and Dejan Verčič deal with public relations and communication management at the European level in a paper that combines different aspects of two studies from the EBOK research project (European Public Relations Body of Knowledge), initiated in 1998 by the European Association for Education and Research in Public Relations (EUPRERA). The questionnaires, distributed in several European countries, including Portugal, are about the definition of public relations and the answers allow the authors to conclude that public relations must be considered as a multidimensional concept, with management, operative educative and reflective functions in and towards the organizations. Making use of these studies, José Viegas Soares suggests three possible guidelines for the study of Portuguese reality in terms of organizational communication. German researcher Julian Raupp emphasizes the process of vulgarisation and adopts a perspective from symbolic interactionism, therefore opposing the unidirectional communication model, which dominates the literature on organizational communication, public relations and communication management, where the organization is understood as an autonomous communicator. In her opinion, media and the organizations are mutually influenced, and so it is also necessary to study media impact within organizations. Considering the national reality, Luís Poupinha and Rita Espanha refer to some of the consequences of internet use in the organizations, in both levels of communication and form of expression and self-presentation. They propose the concept of *net* existence to think of this new organizational reality. Public relations and the consequences of globalisation are still addressed by Julia Jansoozi and Eric Koper, who question the simplistic idea of globalisation leading

to a homogeneous culture, arguing that international PR professionals must pay attention to cultural differences in order to be able to plan their activities in a culturally adequate way.

The last theme we present addresses the reception forms of strategic communication. British researcher John Cawood questions the deterministic idea of technologies having an intrinsic meaning, which is determined by its technical characteristics. Consumers use these products and they do not always attribute them the coincident meanings with the ones producers intended to promote. The researcher uses concepts from Cultural Studies and from Communication Theories, together with examples from telephone circuits. Centred in the child consumer, Luísa Magalhães approaches the ways of appropriation of advertising messages, by presenting the results of a questionnaire in which school age children show the multiple forms of understanding TV toy advertising.

The final part of this journal includes an interview to Gunter Kress, from the IOE London School of Culture, Language and Communication, as well as a survey of two important books published in the area of strategic communication. We also include here the text papers presented at a seminar on Persuasive Communication. The Research Centre on Communication and Society from Minho University organized this Seminar and it was held on 29-30 October 2004. These papers allow us to recover the word *persuasion,* which to our understanding, needs to be reconsidered if we actually intend to understand the nature and the mechanisms that are entangled with strategic communication, as well as its impact and the ways of public appropriation. The Seminar intended to create a debate between scholars and professionals, in order to overcome incompatibilities and to launch bridges of understanding and synergies with the final and most important goal of fostering the development of this study field in our country.

References

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