

*Finn Frandsen**

Public Communication/Communication in Public The Editor's Preface

During the last decade or so, interest in researching the communication of public organizations (municipalities, counties, ministries, state agencies and administrations, relief organizations, etc.) has increased considerably. An interest that has manifested itself in a wide range of publications for both scholars and practitioners.

This happens while at the same time the very same public organizations experience a clear need for implementing a strategic approach to the planning of their external and internal communication activities, an effort which has led to the introduction of a series of new management disciplines and tools inspired by the business world. Corporate communication, that is, the strategic and integrated approach to the organization's external and internal communication with their stakeholders, is just one example of how public organizations have taken over such new disciplines. Corporate branding, management by values, change communication and crisis communication are other examples.

What makes the communication of public organizations particularly interesting to communication researchers is the fact that they as organizations are far more complex than private ones. This complexity is due to many things, among others that public organizations in most cases include a strong political dimension and that traditional bureaucracy often is combined with newer forms of management and organization, as we know it from the New Public Management wave in the public administration of many European countries. The result of this complexity at both managerial and organizational levels is that communication with stakeholders turns into a decisive strategic challenge, and that pub-

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lic organizations cannot just apply the new management disciplines and tools as such, but have to adapt or "translate" them to the new organizational context before implementation.

This thematic section of *Hermes: Journal of Language and Communication Studies* comprises four articles shedding light on important aspects of public communication/communication in public, each from a particular theoretical and/or methodological perspective.

In the first article "When Corporate Communication Goes Public: Communication Policies in Public Communication", **Marianne Grove Ditlevsen** og **Peter Kastberg** examine communication policies as a means of corporate communication within the public sector. A corpus of authentic communication policies from various Danish municipalities is analysed in depth focusing on what the authors call the "mediational properties" of the communication policies, that is, the function of the communication policy as a mediator between the overall strategy and the operational communicative efforts of the organization.

In the second article "Public Sector Communication: A Dialogical Change Management Approach", **Christa Thomsen** examines the role of dialogue as a strategic tool in Danish public sector Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) communication. The focus is on central government CSR communication strategies and how these strategies are implemented by a local government. A theoretical dialogue-change model is proposed as an alternative to how public organizations can change behaviour and mobilize employees to implement a CSR program.

In the third article "What Do People Expect from Public Services? Requests in Public Service Encounters", **Birte Asmuß** answers the question: what do the public expect from public services? Investigating public service encounters (guidance interviews) at the Danish Public Employment Service, the author analyses in detail the activity of making a request. She concludes that public services do not meet customer expectations, that they therefore have to be improved, and that one way to do this is to improve the actual face-to-face encounter.

Finally, in the last contribution to the thematic section, "The Apology of a Sports Icon: Crisis Communication and Apologetic Ethics", **Finn Frandsen** and **Winni Johansen** shift from the communication of public organizations to communication in public. Applying and testing Keith Michael Hearit's theory of crisis management by apology, in

particular his apologetic ethics, the authors examine and evaluate the apology given by a highly celebrated Danish handball coach after having withdrawn her team in the middle of an important match broadcast by television.

