



The history of public relations in Greece from 1950 to 1980: Professionalization of the “art”



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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 2 October 2013

Received in revised form

28 November 2013

Accepted 10 January 2014

Keywords:

Greece

History

IPRA

PR

Professionalization

Public relations

ABSTRACT

The early development of public relations in Greece is explored through a focus on the period between 1950 and 1980. Specifically, the article considers the origins and early developments, important actors, international influences, professional bodies and the field of practice. It is found that Greek business public relations were greatly influenced by American practices and through influential practitioners' contact with the International Public Relations Association (IPRA).

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1. Introduction

The oxymoron when researching the history of public relations (PR) in Greece is that even though Greek PR literature reports ancient Greece as the birthplace of PR (or at least claims that Greeks were among the first to practice a form of PR, among other highly respected civilizations of ancient times such as the Sumerians, Babylonians, and Romans) there is no systematic historiographical attempt (L'Etang, 2008) to approach the topic. The references to ancient Greece and Greek philosophers (Plato, Thoukididis and Aristotle to name a few) with regard to PR mostly focus on the values of logos, ethos and pathos, the concept of persuasion, the principles of argument setting and the balance of power, but they do not refer to any similarities with contemporary integrated PR campaigns (Panigyrakis & Ventoura, 2001; Papalexandris, 2001; Papatriantafyllou, 2008; Theodoratos, 1999; Zbanakis, 1965, 1974). Greek PR literature, responding to the needs of the industry, has mainly focused on PR functions and practice rather than researching PR's evolution in the country. In a few texts, it is briefly acknowledged in an introductory chapter or the appendices (Panigyrakis & Ventoura, 2001; Papalexandris, 2001; Yannas, 2004).

This paper explores a field which has not been rigorously investigated and therefore will offer a fresh insight which may lead to better understanding of the business practice of PR in Greece.

2. (Hi)stories and public relations

As it is necessary to explore the past in order to understand the present and move to the future it should be noted that the significant developments have occurred over the last five years, such as the establishment of the International History of Public Relations Conference (IHPRC) since 2009 and the constitution of the European Public Relations History Network

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(EPRHN) in 2012, which have placed PR history back in the research agenda. The literature covering the field of PR history varies in approach, focus and output depending on the historian's assumptions, values and methodological approach (L'Etang, 2008). Indicatively Raaz and Wehmeier (2011) reviewed 36 PR history books and articles drawn from Britain (1), Germany (11) and the US (24). They reported that: (a) the progressivist approach dominates the US studies, (b) the non-progressivist with a robust historiographical approach is followed by the British approach, while (c) PR history research in Germany has been approached with mixture of methodological approaches which either borrowed elements from US outputs and applied to the German case or showed no interest in what has been done in Britain and US and focused clearly on the governmental activities which influenced and shaped German PR.

Since 2008, almost 150 papers or articles have been published on the history of public relations (Watson, 2013). They have explored different aspects, following a mixture of research methods and presenting cases from numerous different countries. These have been classified in the IHPRC, rather bluntly as Watson (2013) commented, in six categories, namely Historiography, History & Events, Professional & Practice, National Histories, Theories of PR and Proto-PR, with the papers being categorized in a three part typology (i.e. analytic, descriptive, critical). These categories and typologies allow public relations historians to develop comparative resources and map national histories, in particular, by their methodologies. In this case, the exploration of PR's evolution in Greece follows the UK, US, Italian and Spanish models at theoretical and/or practical level.

3. Methodology

Following Watson's (2013) classification the current study falls under the category of a national history and as the theme is related to describing and reconstructing the past it follows a descriptive typology (Tosh, 2009; Watson, 2013). Based on outputs of previous studies conducted in the Mediterranean region (Bini, Fasce & Muzi Falconi, 2008; Rodriguez Salcedo, 2008), the research objectives are identification of (1) early developments and main actors; (2) the characteristics of national practices; (3) the international influences on the shaping of the area, the professional bodies and (4) the field of practice (Bini et al., 2008). Because there is a lack of published literature on the history of public relations in Greece, this study used a three-phase research approach to explore the various aspects. The historiographical approach followed is derived from Bentele's Fact and Event-Oriented Type, where facts were described in a historical order with a focus on leading personalities (Watson, 2013).

In phase one, archival research was undertaken. Archival materials are one of the four types of *unobtrusive measures* where the researcher observes the evidence without having any interaction (Webb et al., 1966 cited in Bryman, 2008). The initial archive investigated was that of the International Public Relations Association (IPRA) from 1955 to 2002 (Watson, 2011). Its catalogue was scanned for references to Greece and the bureaucratic archive (minutes and reports) of the organization was then reviewed in detail. The IPRA archive, which is held at Bournemouth University, was chosen as it indicated the mid-20th century relationship between pioneering Greek public relations figures and the emerging international public relations scene. The archive provided more than 40 references about Greece.

In the second phase, three in-depth interviews were conducted in Greece in order to achieve the research objectives but most importantly to answer wider questions regarding the development of Greek PR. The opinions of three highly regarded practitioners offered valuable insight. While conducting the interviews, the researcher acknowledged the risks of the three interviewees being important personalities of the field with large experience (L'Etang, 2008) and proceeded with a narrative enquiry (Daymon & Holloway, 2011) to explore the meaning that the stories told by the interviewees regarding the evolving practice of PR in Greece. Close collaboration with the Greek Institute of Communication (IoC) and personal research enabled access to the interviewees. The interviews were conducted with Marcel Yoel, Andrew Rizopoulos and Rita Malikouti in summer 2013. The interview guide was adapted from L'Etang (2008), which focused on: (a) autobiographical information, (b) view of the changes of the professionalization and (c) opinion on PR scope and function (p. 258). Besides translating the interview guide into Greek, modifications were made in order to meet the research objectives of the current research. The questions were open, thus giving the opportunity to the interviewees to express their experience and opinions openly and without time constraints (L'Etang, 2008).

Finally, in phase three, desk research was undertaken. According to the interviewees and IoC, a rich archive of case studies and Greek PR literature has been donated over the years to the latter. Membership of IoC granted access to books, recorded interviews and enhanced support. The research aimed to explore all articles, books and case studies which were published before 1980. A number of books were found, unfortunately without any case studies or articles. The Greek PR literature investigated covered the period from 1961 (earliest book) to 1980. Approximately 30 books (courtesy of IoC) including a recorded interview with a pioneer practitioner of Greek PR, Manos Pavlidis, were examined.

4. Findings

4.1. Early developments of Greek PR and IPRA

There are a number of historical aspects influencing the political, social and economic landscape which have to be acknowledged and set the context for the development of PR. Greece came out of WWII and Nazi occupation (1945) and a civil war (1949) just before the 1950s. The period from 1950 to 1974 was considered to be the legacy of the civil war counting

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