



## Awards for best master thesis in public relations on evolving organisation and work stress

Brussels, November 19, 2020 – The European Public Relations Education and Research Association (EUPRERA), a body of academic institutions, researchers and senior professionals in the field of strategic communication with nearly 500 members from 40 countries two master students for their excellent theses in strategic communication.

Master Thesis Award for Excellence is an annual prize aimed to celebrate the PR academia and the role performed by European Higher Education Institutions in the evolution of knowledge of this field. The jury, headed by Alexander Buhmann, from BI Norwegian Business School in Norway, selected the winning theses in two categories.

The Head of the jury together with the winners will present the winning works and hints on how to produce an excellent master thesis during a [webinar, free and open to everyone, on December 16](#), from 14.30 to 15.30 CET. More info & registration: [www.euprera.org/what-we-do/webinars](http://www.euprera.org/what-we-do/webinars).

**Practical Impact Award** – “Inside an evolving organisation: a framework for assessment”, by **Sasha Jurchak**. Tutors: Wim Elving, Hanze University of Applied Sciences, The Netherlands; Rudiger Theilmann, Leeds Beckett University, UK.

Jurchak centers her efforts around testing and advancing a practice-based model on organizational change in globalized and digitized environments (the 21st Century Continua Model; Hamlin, 2018). In her work, the author not only explores the extent to which the model corresponds with the perception of experts or the extent to which it can be used to identify meaningful opportunities for growth, but delves particularly also into the role of communication in such organisational change. As one reviewer stressed, “the managerial approach is definitively pertinent, questioning the agile versus the traditional organizational perspective shows a maturity and a feeling for what matters within organisations.” Jurchak does a good job in explaining shifts in business thinking and delivers a well-integrated literature review.

In her empirical part, Jurchak employs a substantive mixed-methods approach to evaluate the model, including 10 in-depth interviews, 10 focus groups, and a survey (n = 439). As one reviewer put it, Jurchak takes “strong methodological steps to get into the core of the issue” and in her empirics delivers a “very well documented and referenced piece of work: really well done!” Her qualitative results help to detail the validity of each of the components of the model and question their usefulness in guiding organizational change. While the quantitative data show that the model was useful rather on a general overview level, but had limitations in its linear-binary elements.

Ultimately, a highlight and main contribution of Jurchak’s work comes exactly from the author’s reflections and innovative thinking on these very shortcomings as she develops forward-looking recommendations to improve the model. Specifically, these alterations are formulated towards more operationally focused models for transition. Here the author suggests flexibility and communication as processes facilitating change, and thus aligns her contribution skillfully with important related work highlighting especially the role of communication in organizational change.

**Theoretical Impact Award** – “Work stress among communication professionals. A comparative study between Germany and the United States” by **Daniel Ziegele**. Tutors: Ansgar Zerfass, Leipzig University, Germany; Juan Meng, University of Georgia, USA.

The author aims to further our understanding of work stress in communication management, he empirically addresses stress factors and sources of stressors at work as well as individual and organizational coping methods, and he proposes a framework of components and process of work stress that can support and inspire further research in this field. The thesis, in the words of one reviewer “addresses a very relevant and interesting topic...the theoretical and empirical approach are absolutely convincing and original.”

In his empirical study Ziegele employs a qualitative design focusing on professionals in communication agencies both in Germany and the United States -also comparing between top-management and young professionals-, conducting 40 in-depth interview, transcribing over 1,200 minutes of audio subjected to qualitative content analysis. In his work, Ziegele reveals, e.g., not only major misjudgments between seniors and juniors about stress factors of the other group but his data also suggest that common organizational coping offers (such as fitness, wellness, and health programs) as not invariably useful. Based on his data and a thorough literature review, Ziegele proposes a framework for work stress in communication management that may inspire further research on, e.g., highlighting work stress related to 24/7-availability or agility. In the words of one reviewer “Results contribute to a



better understanding of working conditions, collaboration, internal organizational practices and job satisfaction in communication management.”

In sum, Ziegele's work shows a rigorous effort and original thinking focused on a little researched but important topic in the field. His thesis is theoretically versed yet practically relevant. As one reviewer put it “I would like to emphasize that this is a laudable work. I can see that the author spent a lot of effort and work hours and can and should be proud of the result!“ The jury could not agree more.