

Ricceri M.

Communication Management to support EU-Russia relations: a methodological proposal. The case of EURASIA project

Premise

In the scenario of globalization, a major open question concerns the large asymmetry that exists between the interests and behaviors of the key development actors as: public entities (states, public administrations with their service systems, specialized agencies, regional and local institutions) and private entities (business, communities, civil society organizations).

In a world increasingly projected towards unification, with the continuous overcoming of all boundaries and barriers, the public entities, by their nature, are linked to the spatial dimension of their territory, the interests and needs of their national or local communities. This applies, for instance, to the nation states.

On the contrary, this does not hold for private entities, such as businesses. More and more often they operate above and beyond the boundaries of the territory in which they took the start, pursue profits and make investments where they find major opportunities and conveniences.

For its part, civil society – the other individual-collective, major player of development – is living a kind of profound contradiction. On the one hand, more and more extensive and widespread is its involvement in the events of the world, but, on the other hand, still remains rooted in the particular area where the protection of its own best interests is better implemented. For example, a local community, a private association, a family, cannot live well without the support of the many public services provided by the local institutions.

In this condition, full of growing uncertainty and continuing tensions it is objectively difficult to identify some stable points of reference, to organize some balanced situations, partly because the process we are dealing with presents a constantly changing, accelerated evolution.

Nation-states, for example, try to organize what is commonly known as a new form of governance, both within their borders and internationally. But attempts are weak and decisions slow. In any case, most of the times decisions are made in the sign of a run-up of phenomena which have a far faster changing dynamics.

In the absence of an effective public governance of such phenomena, more and more companies, in different sectors, are able to establish their own way of governance and regulation of the economic processes. This happens, for example, in important sectors such as

energy, air transport, etc.. Also civil society, understood as a private individual-collective subject, is able to organize its connections and movements beyond traditional boundaries, creating supranational associations and sending its own representatives in international institutions.

The strategic resource of communication

Compared to this scenario, outlined in summary, the comments to be done are the following:

i – one of the main factors driving the evolution of globalization process is the transmission of data and information; in other words, everything that refers to the word "communication" and the related strategies, processes, technologies;

In this contest we are in the heart of post-industrial society, in which the strategic resource is no longer the fruit of the land as in the agricultural society, or the raw material, as in industrial society.

Who produces, organizes, manages communications, operates in practice the gateway to the scientific and technological progress, to the production and distribution of wealth; it set the development conditions as well as the terms of competitiveness.

ii – in a situation, marked by intensive changes and high competition, it is primary interest of the public entity, first of the nation-state, to set up the conditions of real progress to its own country. But this is possible only by creating a real system of conveniences and opportunities in its own territory to attract the new nomads of world capitalism; at the same time, by supporting and spreading outside the competitiveness of its own system, as a necessary step to strengthen its role and its credibility on the world arena.

With reference to the management of communication processes, the nation-state must therefore be able to prove, in particular, two types of capabilities:

i – the ability to communicate outside the values it represents, and to offer them, in terms of opportunities, to the international players;

ii – the ability to communicate the results achieved with the adjustment efforts of its internal system to the changing conditions of development, with reference to economy, the international geo-political set-up, the international credibility.

In both cases, nation-state must be able to face properly the challenges of global communication management.

To better understand the value of this challenge, it is useful to deepen further the reflection on some aspects of the globalization process as well as on the type of innovations introduced recently by the major industrialized countries in the functioning of their

bureaucratic structures. Finally, it is useful to consider a case study as the Russian project Eurasia and its understanding and evaluation in Europe.

Globalization as a “chaos”

The first consideration to introduce this argument is the following: globalization is a phenomenon quite different from that of internationalization, which identified specifically the international dimension of trade. In fact, globalization is a process that involves the same structure of society, the lives of individuals and communities. Therefore, we must ask ourselves this question: this process reflects an "order" or a "disorder"? When the international summits talk constantly of the need to establish a new governance, to regulating conflicts and tensions and give an order to the development, this confirms that we are experiencing a period of great disorder. Globalization, in short, reflects a chaos - a chaos that can also be creative, not only destructive – in which it is particularly difficult to predict and control the effects of plans, programs and actions.

A second consideration is the following: it is usually in the weakness or absence of an order that the struggle of power traditionally develops, namely the attempt by some people to abolish the existing order and to organize a new order and a new system of rules to impose on others. This attempt always produces winners and losers. The increasing and widespread conditioning by economic operators on the public activity is a proof of this process. Who is trying to assert its own order, always starts from the devaluation of the existing order, weakens the rules, exploits the contradictions and limitations, emphasizes the contrasting factors; and all this to impose its own rules. One of the main elements on which he acts is that of a change bound to a mobility pushed to the limit of nomadism, to overcome of every restriction and consolidated relations system, for example, the relationship with a community or a territory. Enough with the long term! – states Richard Sennett in *The Flexible Man*¹ – the occasional association relationships are more useful than long-term bonds.

A third consideration is dealing with the new dimensions of space and time. The global élite, the global market players committed to meeting the opportunities of the "disorder" have no boundaries, are not bound or constrained by specific situations, such as the policies of nation states or union agreements, etc.. They can, or they try, to abandon them at any time, de-localizing activities according to the opportunities they see, or the profitable conditions which they are able to set up in the most diverse areas of the world. In fact, this global élite is acting in a dimension of space and time which is very different from that in which the majority of citizens live and work, in which the traditional institutions carry out

¹ Sennet R. *The Flexible Man*. Milan, 2009.

their activities. For these élite, for example, geography simply does not exist anymore. The historical past does not exist since long time.

The Institutional Economy, a strategic factor of competitiveness

This global reality is, therefore, a great challenge for politics and public institutions. One thing is certain: despite the current changes, the greatest burden of ensuring a high level of competitiveness of its own system in any case, even today, is up the public operator, the state with its institutions, services and operations.

In fact, the public operator is not unrelated to the market dynamics. On the contrary, it interacts significantly with market forces through the political stability, its vision of progress, the guidance and conditions of the development plans, its regulatory system of the economic and social activities. The positive or negative conditioning of its own system carried out by the state, for some time has led economists (for example, J. Williamson, P.P. Kuczynski², J. Stiglitz³, P. Krugman⁴), to assess the crucial role played by the so-called "institutional economy", which deals with the relationship among institutions, rules and economic behaviors, economic and social performances. The institutional economy - a factor underpinning the competitiveness of a system – allows, in summary, to evaluate the functionality of the set of rules, regulations, administrative provisions that set up, for instance: the start and closing down of production activities, the procedures for licenses and authorizations, fiscal discipline, the degree of opening to foreign markets, the functioning of the labor market, the protection of property rights, access to credit, the administration of justice, transparency in the relationships system between public and private operators and the fight against corruption, the quality of education and vocational training, environmental and health protection. All these are key factors for building a positive relationship between public institutions and private market structures.

At this point it is clear that the challenge of globalization requires the states and their executive-administrative structures: i) to intervene on the quality of its regulatory system of the economic and social activities, by organizing a governance of the development process less and less rigid and more flexible ii) to evaluate in a systematic way (ex ante) the possible impact of the norms on the results to be achieved as well as to monitor continuously (during the execution and ex post), the net outcomes, in order to intervene with the necessary

² *Williamson J., Kuczynski P.P.* After the Washington Consensus. Restarting Growth and Reform in Latin America. Washington, 2003.

³ *Stiglitz J.* Globalization and its Opponents. Turin, 2002.

⁴ *Krugman P.* The Return of Depression Economics. Milan, 2000.

adjustments. In short, globalization requires the states to change deeply the set up and management of its own operations.

This challenge is twofold: firstly, it requires the governments and parliaments the ability to renew the production of rules and the development plans, and second, it requires public authorities to significantly increase their overall productivity to ensure success to the efforts of political operator. Currently, the strategic planning for results is the primary tool with which public authorities of the major industrialized countries pursue the goals of maximizing the efficiency and effectiveness of its own services. As part of this operational system, the communication management raised to some time a decisive importance.

The strategic planning for results

This tool has been spread and perfected since the early 90's, from what has been called reinventing government revolution⁵. Among the most advanced experiences are the following: the U.S., with the GPRA – Government Performance and Result Act of 1993; France, with the law LOLF – Loi organique des lois de finances, in 2001, which operates on three levels, Missions (the major policies of the state), Programs and Actions, prepared annually by the ministries; Great Britain, with two laws, both of 1998, Comprehensive Spending Review (Analysis focused on the reform of public spending) and PSA-Public Services Agreement (under which the performance improvement of the services is a counterpart of the resources allocated to the various ministries). In Italy, the strategic planning for results was introduced with a government directive of 2002, later completed with acts of 2005 and 2009 (Enabling Act n.15/2009 and Legislative Decree n.150/2009 on productivity and efficiency of public administrations).

The essential points of this widespread cultural, political and administrative innovation are basically three: i) public administrations have to be considered as enterprises, according to the approach of new public management, ii) public administrations have to be considered as a single complex in which the provided services are intended as "products" and in which the "services-products" provided by a single administration are closely integrated with those of other administrations, iii) the transition, in all major countries, from budget policies aimed at supporting the government programs to budget policies linked to the concrete results achieved. The keywords of this new guidance are taken from the vocabulary of business and are as follows: "efficiency," "effectiveness," "productivity"," transparency" but, above all, "result". And the result is about the performance both of the structure as a whole and of the single employees.

⁵ Archibugi F. Introduction to the Strategic Planning in the Public Sector. Florence, 2005.

In general, the organization's scheme of the strategic planning for results provides, for each administration, the following stages: a) the definition of the overall mission assigned to an administration; b) the broad strategic objectives to be pursued in medium term, generally three years c) the specific objectives - consistent, clear, measurable - linked to specific operational performance plans, to be achieved in a short period, usually one year, d) an indication of the key factors, external to the administration and outside of its control, that could significantly affect the achievement of the targets, also in a decisive way; e) identification of the external stakeholders interested to the programs; f) the instruments (inputs) available to achieve the assigned results (outputs and outcomes). These instruments relate to the organizational structure, human resources and their skills and competences, the stock of capitals, technologies, information resources; g) processes for assessing and monitoring the outcomes (indicators). The higher are the quality, completeness, consistency of the plan, the greater are its chances of success.

Global communication as strategic goal of the new planning system

As part of strategic planning for results, the "global communication" has been gradually recognized as a real strategic objective of the whole structure. For example, in the planning model introduced recently (2009) by the Italian government in the economic public agencies⁶, promoting a culture of global communication has been identified as the first strategic objective of an administration and organically linked to the other two strategic objectives: the optimization of the integrated service system offered by a public structure and the diffusion of innovation to improve the organizational and managerial quality of such structure.

In the most common planning models, even the communication management should be organized according to: i) general plans (often for three years), ii) operational plans (annual); iii) specific actions for achieving results, monitoring, measurement and assessment of the final performances.

Given its strategic nature, to be truly comprehensive and effective communication management should operate in two directions, outside and inside the administrative structure.

In the external projection, public administration should communicate: i) the degree of achievement of results obtained by its services; ii) the level of efficiency and effectiveness achieved by its services with the available resources; iii) the elements of knowledge and guidance useful for the action of citizens and operators. The more a public administration service works under the criteria of transparency, the more it creates favorable conditions to

⁶ *Council of Ministers Legislative Decree №150/2009. Rome.*

involve users in its own activities; in the same time, it also opens the possibility of increasing their level of satisfaction and consensus on the value of the service provided.

Under this aspect of the relationship with the users, external communication, provided by the strategic planning, will work only if the communication activities will not be limited to one-way transmission of data and formal information from the administrative service to the users.

An effective communication system requires, however, a deep and continuous involvement of service users, stakeholders and citizens, based on a process of interactive exchange. In other words, communication management can achieve the best results only if it is able to promote the organization of a system of active participation that is essential for three aspects: i) to verify that the mission and the development plans of a specific public service are really known and appraised for their value by the users; ii) to monitor and measure the degree of appreciation by the users (companies call it “customer satisfaction”), iii) to collect all the information, suggestions, proposals by the users of services useful to improve the performances of the public service as well as of the specific program the administration aims to implement.

In short, the communication management cannot work without the organization of a real-time participatory system between the public service and the reference groups, the real holder of the interests that the administration aims to support and promote with its action. But this can be possible only if the public facility: i) adopt certain practices and working methods (for example, better use of the Internet possibilities, organizing moments of listening, real-time response to user demands, periodic surveys with questionnaires, monitoring the communication effectiveness, changing the internal decision-making procedures and areas of responsibility), ii) shows having sufficient flexibility to adapt its own services to the needs of the users (for example, with the introduction of automated services, personalized services, etc.).

In parallel with the external projection, communication management must operate effectively even with an internal projection which is crucial to achieve the other two strategic objectives, that we already mentioned: the integration of services (for example, those of a ministry) and the diffusion of innovations to improve the quality standards both in the organization system and in its working.

In this case, the basic condition is the availability of data and tools to get a constantly updated information about the working of a public service, its criticality, its strengths. Among the most commonly used tools, we find, for instance, the Directional Dashboard (true

Business Intelligence tool) and the Barometer of Quality (which measures the implementation degree of the quality standards).

The indicators for measuring the communication performances

Finally, to allow a measurement as well as a proper assessment of the performance of a public service, usually the strategic goals are linked to a set of indicators. This applies, above all, for the communication management that in many cases has established itself as the first strategic objective of a structure. In this case, for example, the indicators are used to measure (external communication) how many users have visited the website of the public service or have been reached by public communication, which is the degree of user satisfaction about the quality of such communication, which is the degree of its effectiveness, that is, if the communication has led to increase the number of users of a service. With regard to internal communication, indicators allow to measure the impact of this activity on the services integration as well as on the spreading of organizational innovations.

A comparison among different planning models shows that each of the strategic objectives is usually combined with a number of indicators that can be also very high: in many cases, more than a hundred. With regard to the communication management, different indicators assess, in particular, its relevance for the whole, the degree of understandability, its reliability, completeness, timeliness and frequency, the technical equipment used, cost centers, the nature of information sources and their degree of responsibility, trustworthiness, etc.. It is important to note that in many planning models, the indicators are not used only to measure the past activities, to give a picture of what has been done by a particular administration. More often, however, they are elaborated as "planning indicators", linked to the performance targets to be achieved in the future. They are tools, in short, projected on continuous and overall improvement of the public service activity. It is easy to understand, finally, that the use of these methodologies for the measurement and assessment of the performances entails a continuous, intense involvement both of the entire internal structure, with a continuous dissemination of operational sheets distributed to all offices, and of external stakeholders and users of the services.

Communication management in the case of EURASIA project: an open question

What is EURASIA? This question, asked recently in Rome and in Brussels, in occasion of very qualified meetings and conferences, still generates in EU citizens a considerable confusion and uncertainty. Generally the answers are the most diverse. Eurasia is a Russian territory on this side of the Urals and beyond. Or, is a geo-political strategy for

repositioning Russian Federation in the world arena based on a closer approach to the realities of the East Asia. Again: EURASIA is a collaboration agreement between different states promoted by the Russian Federation; an unspecified connection structure, a bridge between Europe and the Far East.

The news taken by newspapers, magazines, websites, describe an initiative which is still with uncertain features, but nevertheless which looks as very important. Let us see, in summary, the facts described by the media and take as an example what was written by the Russian newspaper *Izvestia*, which published October 4, 2011, in English, an article by Vladimir Putin called "The future in construction"⁷. In the article, the Russian premier states that he wants to bring the member states of CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) inside a Eurasian Union. This Union is defined as an essential project of integration. The first stage of this project is the constitution January 1, 2012 of a Common Economic Space (CES) between Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan. The model of this project is European Union, whose roots are in CECA, the Coal and Steel European Community formed in 1950. As was the case for the EU, the stages of the Russian project include, in progression, the establishment of a Customs Union (which took place July 1, 2011), then the organization of the Common Economic Space (effective at the beginning of 2012) and, finally, the constitution of the Eurasian Union. "A market of 165 million people will have only one law and the free movement of capital, services and workers". It is important to note that between the Russian Federation and Belarus there are for some time major connecting structures, such as the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Eurasian Economic Community; in addition, that among the most fervent supporters of this project there is just one of the signatories, Nursultan Nazarbaev, the current president of Kazakhstan, who started to support this project since 1994⁸.

By commenting the article of premier Putin, the *Izvestia* journalist Joseph Rozsa⁹ emphasizes two elements which are relevant to the reflection so far developed on the role of communication. The first element is that the idea of a Eurasian Union "has alarmed" many states, especially in the West; the second, that it will be very important to spread in the world "the image" of this supranational institution, to highlight the many benefits it can bring both to the promoting states and outside their specific area.

⁷ *Putin V.* The Future in Construction // *Izvestia*. October 4th, 2011.

⁸ *Russian Analytical Digest: The Eurasian Union Project*, Research Center for East European Studies (Bremen), the Center for Security Studies – CSS – ETH (Zuerich), Resource Security Institute (Zuerich), the Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies (Washington). №112. April 20th, 2012.

⁹ *Rozsa J.* Commenting Putin's Article // *Izvestia*. October 4th, 2011.

In both cases, an effective communication management is considered essential to stress the positive, constructive aspects of this important initiative. One for all, is the fact that the establishment of Eurasia eliminate any ambiguity in the relationships between Russia and the European Union. Historical analysis reminds us that for centuries, the numerous projects developed to promote the integration of European continent always faced with the problem of what kind of relationship should be built with Russia, if Russia was to be considered Europe or not, if Europe should be enlarged up to the Urals, etc.. Thus, at the beginning of the XXI century, in the midst of the globalization chaos, we can be witnesses of the establishment of a new aggregating entity that brings at least, we repeat, a contribution of clarity in the geo-political and geo-economical order.

But in the Western world, as we said, still the elements of uncertainty, ignorance, distorted interpretation, "alarms" for such event are prevalent and widespread. How to correct this situation full of potential negative implications?

The implementation of a comprehensive plan for a global communication applied to EURASIA should be in everyone' interest, first for the Russian public decision-maker that has promoted such initiative. But to be truly valid and useful, this communication plan should be linked to precise goals, translated into strategic and operational objectives; in short, it should be set up and managed according to the methods and practices launched by the new tool of strategic planning for results, described above. In this respect, at this time, the issue remains wide open, at least in the eyes of a European Union citizen.

Bibliography:

1. *Archibugi F.* The Associative Economy. London, 2000.
2. *Archibugi F.* Introduction to the Strategic Planning in the Public Sector. Firenze, 2005.
3. *Bauman Z.* Liquid Modernity. Bari, 2002.
4. *Cassese S.* The Crisis of the State. Yale University Press, 2002.
5. *Council of Ministers:* Implementing Productivity and efficiency in the Public Administration. Legislative Decree n. 150/2009. Rome.
6. *Fukuyama F.* The Great Destruction. Milano, 2001.
7. *Krugman P.* The Return of Depression Economics. Garzanti Libri, 2000.
8. *North D.* Institutions, Institutional Change, Economic Development. Bologna, 1994.
9. *Putin V.* The Future in Construction // Izvestia. October 4th, 2011.
10. *Reimann K.* International Politics, Norms and the Worldwide Growth of NGOs. Cambridge, MA 02138.

11. *Rosza J.* Commenting Putin's Article, The Future in Construction // *Izvestia*. October 4th, 2011.
12. *Russian Analytical Digest: The Eurasian Union Project*, Research Center for East European Studies (Bremen), the Center for Security Studies – CSS – ETH (Zuerich), Resource Security Institute (Zuerich), the Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies (Washington). №112. April 20th, 2012.
13. *Sennett R.* The Flexible Man. Milano, 1999.
14. *Sennett R.* The Culture of the New Capitalism. Bologna, 2006.
15. *Stiglitz J.*: Globalization and its Opponents. Torino, 2002.
16. *Sturmer M.* The Limits of Power. Bologna, 1996.
17. *Williamson J., Kuczynski P. P.* After the Washington Consensus. Restarting Growth and Reform in Latin America. Washington, 2003.