

**Call for Papers**  
**Symposium in Public Relations**  
**and Public Affairs 2020**  
**SymPR&A 2020 – *Societal***  
***Engagement***

School of Media, TU Dublin  
27<sup>th</sup> March, 2020

**Keynote speaker**

Dr Lee Edwards, LSE

**Deadline for abstracts**

6 January, 2020

**Theme: Public relations, public affairs and societal engagement**

A clue to the principal locus of public relations and public affairs (PR&A) in practice lies in their names. Yet the concept of public has tended to focus on corporate matters and stakeholders, reducing the focus on the societies in which organisations are active, on whose citizens they rely, and within which their social legitimacy is constructed. The concepts of communitarianism, social capital and civil society are relatively recent words in the PR&A lexicon, and scholars are beginning to explore them as phenomena within the broad communications canon.

Increasingly, organisations need to demonstrate their fitness to gain societal legitimacy, and constantly strive to retain it. Purposeful and mutually advantageous engagement permits organisations to enter into dialogue with society at large and the specific geographic and demographic communities that populate it, thereby facilitating the anticipation and addressing of publics' preoccupations.

The nature of engagement itself, however, is so broad as to be multifarious, invoking aspects of communication, psychology, and sociology, as well as PR&A. The impact



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of engagement on participatory networks that address mutual matters, and foster stakeholder relationships, remains under-researched and under-reported.

To address this knowledge deficit, this symposium invites empirical and theoretical contributions from academics that interrogate and (re)define PR&A's societal engagement, and practice-based contributions from PR&A professionals whose work demonstrates excellence in generating meaningful, outcome-focussed engagement with various publics in society.

Topics that are particularly welcomed in this call for papers may include, for example:

- Is societal engagement an evolution of corporate social responsibility, or a revolution?
- The challenges for societal engagement
- What are the strategic and tactical processes for societal engagement?
- How can PR&A measure both engagement and the outcomes of engagement?
- Where does societal engagement sit within schools of PR&A thought – rhetorical, critical theory, systems theory etc?
- Inter-disciplinary approaches to engagement – *inter alia*, sociology, mass and behavioural psychology, media reporting, ethics, linguistics, marketing, management.
- Practitioner-led case studies that explore these topics

This list is not exhaustive and imaginative proposals from disciplines outside these suggestions are welcome.

Abstracts will be blind peer reviewed.

**Abstract requirements**

- Abstracts should be 300-400 words, in 1.5 line spaced Times New Roman or similar, standard font.
- Include 4-5 keywords.
- The proposal should be communicable in a paper of approximately 20-25 minutes, excluding questions and answers.
- Abstracts should contain no identifying detail of the proposer. A short proposer biography (150 words), contact details and abstract title should be submitted on a separate document.