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## *The Geopolitical approach to creativity*

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What are the links between the geopolitics of management and creativity? To answer this question, we have carried out a research project based on a corpus analysis of the *Harvard Business Review* (1922-2018), a reference journal in the field of management<sup>1</sup>. The aim is to study how representations of creativity have evolved in response to geopolitical issues from the early 20th century until the start of the 21st. Particular attention is given to the concepts of ideology and democracy.

Our article explores the links between geopolitics, management, and creativity in the wake of Armand Mattelart's research into information and communication sciences (1992), and Paul Ricoeur's work in political philosophy (1997). In an earlier work, Ricoeur proposed rethinking the intersection between ideology and utopia in the social imagination, and their mutual exchange. It seems, indeed, he wrote, "*that we always need utopia in its fundamental function of contestation and projection into a radical elsewhere, in order to carry out an equally radical critique of ideologies. But the opposite is true. Everything happens as if, to cure the utopia of the madness into which it increasingly risks sinking, it was necessary to appeal to the healthy function of the ideology, to its capacity to give a historical community the equivalent of what we called yesterday a narrative identity*" (Ricoeur, 1984, p.63-64). Armand Mattelart observed the post-1945 displacement of the "ideology of progress" by the "ideology of communication" and analysed international communication. He demonstrated how the term "propaganda" was gradually replaced by the more acceptable term of "psychological warfare" in a context where

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<sup>1</sup> The results of this research are published in an article in the journal *Questions de communication* (ANDONOVA, 2021): <http://journals.openedition.org/questionsdecommunication/25660>

"the foundations of the synergy of private enterprise-Pentagon, industrial production-military research, university research, and the need for national security are laid" (Mattelart, 1992, p.102). It is in this specific geopolitical and intellectual context of the beginning of the Cold War that we have identified the emergence of the reference to creativity, research into which has grown exponentially in the United States since 1950. More precisely, it is in the American management discourse of the mid-20th century that we find the first signs of the appeal to creativity. How can we place the emergence of this hegemonic discourse on creativity in the professional world? What are its origins?

Based on this observation, we decided to conduct a study into the evolution of representations of creativity in American management thought through a corpus analysis of the HBR. Published since 1922, it is one of the world's oldest journals in the field of management, and an undeniable opinion leader in American publishing (Spector, 2006). Launched 14 years after the founding of the Harvard Business School, it played a central role in extending the authority and influence of the Business School across the Atlantic. It has published work by numerous prestigious researchers, practitioners, experts, business leaders, and consultants. The attraction of the HBR means it has a huge network of potential authors and case studies. The textual analysis we implemented was based on a keyword search and a thematic content analysis of all HBR articles covering the 96 years of publications.

Several significant results emerge from this study. We will here discuss only a few of them, more specifically those related to what we call the "geopolitics of management of creativity". Creativity has given rise to a prodigious number of discourses and actions in the fields of economics, training, human resources, and corporate communication, among others, as well as scientific writings, first in the United States and then world-wide. Reflecting on the geopolitical events of the 20th century, our study shows that the HBR has been one of the most influential actors in structuring creative thinking in North American contexts and has profoundly influenced management practices worldwide.

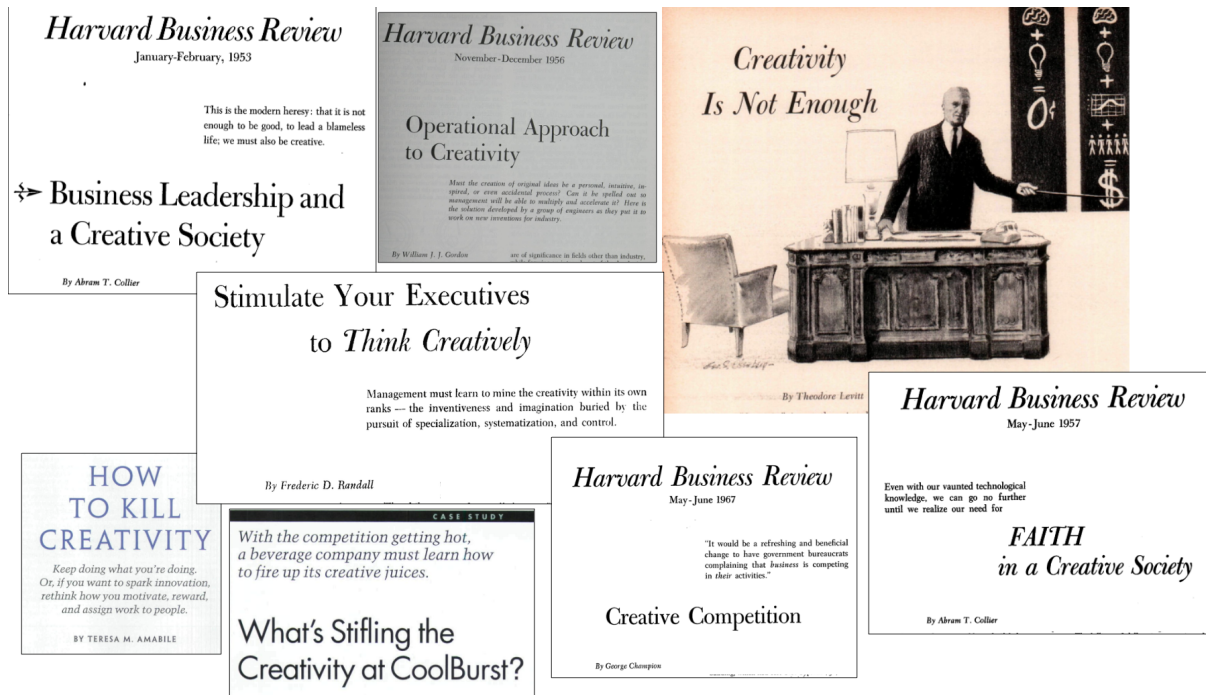


Figure 1: Examples of article titles on creativity published in the HBR

A thematic analysis of creativity in the articles published in the HBR (1922-2018) reveals three types of narratives, which are related to geopolitical, technological, and economic issues. Furthermore, we have identified three main periods of creative thinking in American management:

- The first period is that of the immediate post-war years when the concept of creativity emerges in articles as an individual aptitude, and a powerful tool against the increasing authoritarianism and conformity of the time. In the midst of the Cold War, in the 1950s, creativity was presented in the pages of the HBR as synonymous with patriotism, market power and effective management. These early representations were based on the importance of individual creativity traits, fully justifying the period's fascination with its psychological dimension.
- The early 1960s saw the gradual reduction in the promotion of the virtues of creativity, as opposed to the vices of conformity. Between the mid-1960s to the 1980s, creativity became synonymous with social criticism; as a free-thinking model, creativity would henceforth be closely linked to innovation. As a counter to the "Japanese miracle", innovation and creativity were increasingly referred to, and became central to management styles.

- The third period, from the mid-1980s until the present, is characterized by the deployment of creativity in the service of entrepreneurship, with precedence being given to creative action and the management of creativity. The autonomous creative individual is perceived to be an entrepreneurial ideal. The key words of this stage are agility, creativity management, and design.

Thus, our study concludes that the hegemonic discourse on creativity, born in the framework of North American management, was deeply influenced by the geopolitical and ideological context of the Cold War. It is linked to American creativity management techniques, which are characterized by a strong interconnection of politics (the State, the CIA, propaganda), the business world (philanthropic diplomacy), and academia. Numerous critical works on the creative industries, notably in France, have demonstrated the how creativity is disseminated across all sectors of activity (Miège, 1984; Bouquillion, 2012; Bouquillion, Miège and Moeglin, 2013; Kogan and Andonova, 2019). However, creativity management techniques, which originated in the United States in the geopolitical context that we have previously analysed, are often accepted unquestioningly by managers around the world, disregarding the specific nature of managerial practices, employees' expectations, and existing organizational forms. Thus, in line with Pierre Moeglin (2015), we suggest that this critical approach be extended to the geopolitics of creativity management, placing it in the perspective of a "political economy of creativity".

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**Yanita ANDONOVA** has a PhD, is Full Professor in Information and Communication Sciences at the Sorbonne Paris Nord University, and a researcher at LabSic (Laboratory of Sciences in Information and Communication). She is the scientific leader of the "Work and creativity" project, supported by the Labex ICCA (Cultural Industries and Artistic Creation), and the MSH (Centre for Human Sciences) Paris Nord. She and Anne-France Kogan are co-ordinators of the Creative Shift Studies international network: <https://crea2s.hypotheses.org>. Her current research focuses on the analysis of corporate communication; the social use of digital tools; the visibility and recognition of the individual at work; the geopolitical issues of organizational communication; and the critical approach of the creative industries.