



Call for Papers
PRECONFERENCE
Public Relations Division

Metamodern Public Relations:
Navigating Inequality, Engagement, and
Transformation in Complex Contexts
June 4th, 2026

Hosted by

Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT)

ADDRESS: CPUT Cape Town Hotel School and Restaurant
48 Beach Road, Mouille Point, Granger Bay, Cape Town

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/tgyQLpgdWUyf4kvV9>

Programme, June 4th 2026

TIME	ACTIVITY
09:00–09:10	Welcome, framing, and overview of the metamodern theme
09:10–09:30	Food for thought: Daniel Görtz / Hanzi Freinacht
09:30–10:20	Session 1: Metamodernism: Rethinking theoretical principles <i>16 min presentations + 34 min dialogue</i>
10:20–10:30	Break
10:30–11:20	Session 2: Sustainability, Power, and Transformative Practice <i>16 min presentations + 34 min dialogue</i>
11:20–12:10	Session 3: AI, Algorithms, and Infrastructural Communication <i>16 min presentations + 34 min dialogue</i>
12:10–12:45	Lunch
12:45–13:35	Session 4: Engagement, Leadership, and Communication in Public Life <i>16 min presentations + 34 min dialogue</i>
13:35–13:50	Break
13:50–14:30	Session 5: Capstone Dialogue: Crisis, Inequality, and Historical Repair <i>8 min presentations + 32 min dialogue</i>
14:30–15:45	Reflective keynote: Prof. Nina de Klerk, University of Johannesburg and: Full-group dialogue across all sessions: common tensions, methods, and future collaborations, next steps
15:45–16:00	Closing reflections, takeaways, and next steps / Road to Glasgow

Note for presenters: no more than 3 min of presentation / focus on key aspects of your contribution and create a strong link to metamodernism and the session theme!

Welcome and Opening Framing

Opening remarks introduce the central theme of metamodern public relations and frame the day around three recurring concerns: how inequality is made visible or obscured, how engagement is imagined and practiced, and how communicators navigate transformation in complex contexts. Chairs are encouraged to invite participants to listen for recurring tensions across the day, especially those involving agency and structure, ethics and pragmatism, participation and control, and optimism and critique.

Food for Thought: Daniel Görtz / Hanzi Freinacht

Session 1: Metamodernism: Rethinking theoretical principles

This session grounds the day conceptually and gives everyone a shared vocabulary.

1. *Uncertainty as Method: Metamodernism as a Meta-Critical Horizon for Communication Research* – Ana Adi / Thomas Stoeckle
2. *Agency wars: The pendulum strikes back* – Nils Förster
3. *A typology of public relations agency: From managerial modernism to metamodernism and beyond* – C Kay Weaver / Franzisca Weder
4. *Listening, Weaving, and Co-Creating: Toward a Latin American Metamodernity in Organizational Communication and Public Relations* – Gabriel Sadi

Panel Description

This opening panel establishes the conceptual architecture of the preconference. Taken together, these papers revisit foundational questions about agency, critique, the role of theory in public relations scholarship, and the origins of metamodernism itself. Rather than positioning metamodernism as a simple replacement for earlier paradigms, the panel explores how it has emerged, and its usefulness as a productive orientation for inhabiting contradictions: between realism and constructionism, critique and reconstruction, organization and actor, western and non-western ontologies. As the first session of the day, it provides participants with a shared vocabulary for understanding later empirical papers on sustainability, AI, platform labor, crisis, and public engagement.

Chair: Franzisca Weder

Session 2: Sustainability, Power, and Transformative Practice

These papers all deal with sustainability, transition, and communicative action under pressure.

1. *Living to Fight Another Day: Sustainability, Power, and Professional Cultural Logics in Indian Political Public Relations* - Marc Rasquinha / Helen Sissons
2. *Transformative PR: Navigating power in strategic sustainability communication* - Franzisca Weder / Chiara Valentini
3. *Metamodern Micronarratives and Ethical Engagement: Student Communication Practice, Local Economies, and Inequality in Platform-Mediated Contexts* - Eloisa Klein
4. *Explicating the Concept of Social Issue Environment to Better Understand Green Transition Debates* - Katerina Tsetsura / Inker-Anni Sara / Eli Skogerbo

Panel Description

This panel examines sustainability not as a settled virtue but as a contested communicative terrain shaped by political pressure, institutional fragility, structural inequality, and competing visions of the future. Across cases from India, Europe, Australia, Brazil, and Arctic Indigenous contexts, the papers explore how sustainability discourse is enabled, constrained, or distorted within professional practice and public debate. Together, they move beyond celebratory accounts of green communication by showing how sustainability can function as aspiration, strategic resource, fragile script, and rhetorical environment all at once. The panel foregrounds metamodernism as a way of understanding transformative communication not as coherence or consensus, but as oscillation among care, visibility, conflict, and power.

Chair: Howard Nothaft

Session 3: AI, Algorithms, and Infrastructural Communication

A strong technology cluster focused on AI, platforms, algorithmic power, and professional authority.

1. *Navigating AI-Induced Tensions: A Qualitative Study of PR Practitioners in Research Organizations* - Lea Greminger / Sophia Volk
2. *Post-authorial public relations: Speaking with authority without authorship* - Anca Anton
3. *Visibility without Public Dialogue: Public Relations and Trust in China's Platform Economy* - Qiqi Zheng
4. *Illegibility as Governance: Queer Drivers and the Calibration of Recognizability in Algorithmic Work* - Leona Yinglan Pang

Panel Description

This session centers the infrastructural transformation of communication under AI and platformization. The papers address how algorithmic systems alter professional judgment, public trust, worker recognizability, and communicative authority. Across research organizations, food delivery platforms, ESG and listening systems, and rideshare labor, the panel highlights a common concern: communication increasingly occurs downstream from systems that pre-structure relevance, visibility, and accountability. Rather than approaching technology through simple optimism or pessimism, the panel reflects a metamodern concern with entanglement, examining how practitioners and workers navigate authority without control, recognition without relationality, and visibility without genuine dialogue.

Chair: Jens Seiffert-Brockmann

Session 4: Engagement, Leadership, and Communication in Public Life

These papers share a concern with participation, legitimacy, and communication amid societal transformation.

1. *Extending Public Relations Engagement Theory: Examining Citizen Experiences in a Collaborative Governance Program* – Maureen Taylor / Maria Jose Canel / Xabier Barandiaran Irastorza
2. *Oscillation as Leadership Practice in Saudi Arabia's Sociocultural Transformation* – Steven Smith / Dalien R. Benecke / Anne Gregory
3. *Between algorithm and agency: A metamodern vision of human-AI collaboration in disaster risk communication* - Jenny Hou

Panel Description

This panel brings together papers concerned with how communication can support collective life and flourishing. Ranging from collaborative governance in the Basque region to Saudi sociocultural reform and disaster communication, and from challenges to the public sphere to a fundamental re-thinking of what the 'public' means in disaster communication, each paper asks what forms of leadership, deliberation, listening, and engagement are possible when communicators must work across the asymmetry, uncertainty, and cultural complexity that characterize metamodern contexts. The papers offer new directions for thinking about spaces for engagement, inclusion, leadership and collective life, characterized by oscillation and multiple relational possibilities. Together, these papers open a broader, more globally situated understanding of metamodern public relations and public life.

Chair: Lee Edwards

Session 5: Capstone Dialogue: Crisis, Inequality, and Historical Repair

These two papers work well as a shorter capstone because both deal directly with structural harm, ethics, and repair.

1. *Beyond Control and Deconstruction: A Metamodern-Queer Framework for Crisis Communication* - E. Ciszek
2. *Unraveling the case against national health care: A metamodern perspective to face a legacy of health inequity in the U.S.* - Luke Capizzo

Panel Description

This capstone session pairs two papers that confront crisis as a structural and historical condition rather than an isolated event. One rethinks crisis communication through a metamodern-queer lens attentive to harm, normativity, and ethical obligation; the other examines the historical role of public relations in producing durable health inequities in the United States. Together, the papers shift attention from reputation and restoration toward accountability, memory, and repair. As a shorter closing panel, this session is designed to concentrate the day's recurring questions about power, ethics, voice, and inequality, preparing participants for a broader collective conversation.

Chair: Ana Adi

Reflective Keynote (Prof. Nina de Klerk, University of Johannesburg) and Full-Group Dialogue: Cross-Cutting Tensions, Future Research, and Collaborative Possibilities

This extended discussion is the intellectual center of the day. After the lightning presentations and panel conversations, participants gather to identify common tensions, conceptual overlaps, and future directions for metamodern public relations research. The aim is not to force consensus but to map productive differences across topics such as sustainability, AI, public engagement, crisis, epistemic justice, platform labor, leadership, and the public sphere. This dialogue format following a response and inspirational keynote by Prof. Nina de Klerk recognizes that metamodernism is itself a language for staying with complexity, and it invites participants to consider what kinds of methodologies, ethical commitments, and transnational collaborations might emerge from that stance.

Closing Reflections: Takeaways and Next Steps

The closing session synthesizes key insights from the day and identifies next steps for scholarship, pedagogy, and possible future collaboration. This final segment can be used to note emerging themes, acknowledge tensions that remain unresolved, and invite participants into continued exchange beyond the preconference.

Given the breadth of the program, the closing should emphasize that metamodern public relations is not a finished framework, but an evolving field of inquiry shaped by dialogue across contexts, traditions, and empirical problems.

We also want to use the time to briefly think about Glasgow 2027 and the “critical PR preconference” as format.

Looking forward to welcoming you in Cape Town!

Organizers

Franziska Weder, Professor, Vienna University of Economics and Business, Austria

E. Ciszek, Associate Professor, The University of Texas at Austin, USA

C. Kay Weaver, Professor, University of Colorado Boulder, USA

Lee Edwards, Professor, London School of Economics and Political Science, UK

Jenny Hou, Associate Professor, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia

Howard Nothhaft, Associate Professor, Lund University, Sweden

Jens Seiffert-Brockmann, Professor, Vienna University of Economics and Business, Austria

Local hosts

Nirvana Bechan, Cape Peninsula University of Technology, South Africa

Deidre Porthen, Cape Peninsula University of Technology, South Africa

Useful information

Venue: CPUT Cape Town Hotel School and Restaurant,
<https://www.cput.ac.za/cths>

Venue address: 48 Beach Road, Mouille Point, Granger Bay, Cape Town

Google Maps link to the preconference venue:
<https://maps.app.goo.gl/tgyQLpgdWUyf4kvV9>

Google Maps link to the preconference venue (from the main conference):
<https://maps.app.goo.gl/Kphc8qrN5auKasYt7>

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