

Knowledge Integration in the European CSR Communication Field: An Institutional Perspective

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Abstract By inspecting contemporary macro-level developments concerning the phenomenon of CSR communication in parallel to scholarly contributions on CSR communication this chapter aims to outline the main institutional logics that shape the field of CSR communication in Europe. The chapter reveals that on both levels a struggle between communicative and non-communicative interpretations of CSR communication is taking place. This conflict is then contextualised both from the perspective of cultural and socio-economic factors, which have conditioned the current state of the European CSR communication field, and from the viewpoint of its future challenges.

1 Introduction

In the recent two decades or so the idea of the societal role of companies and other organisations has come to the forefront of the business and society relationship. Together with these concerns a stream of thought, actions and research under the umbrella term of corporate social responsibility (CSR) has emerged. One of the first institutions to officially map and recognise this field was the European Commission (2001) with its Green Paper on CSR at the turn of the Millennium. Although some scholars and professionals tended to dismiss the idea of CSR as a mere fashion fad, social demands and the popularisation of CSR have given this idea the necessary recognition and strategic importance and have firmly anchored it both in academia and practice.

The meaning of CSR is linked to stakeholders' expectations about the acceptable behaviour of business towards society and nature. One way to look at these expectations is through social constructionism and understanding CSR as a participative process where communication has a vital role. "CSR communication thus reflects the ways firms engage in social processes on a communicative level. It points out how firms communicate about CSR but also about how the meanings of the messages are construed and shared among firms and stakeholders" (Golob,

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2016). Communication perspective is therefore important for the ways to think about CSR (e.g., Golob et al., 2013; Verk & Golob, 2014).

With universally higher stakeholder expectations about CSR and sustainability issues the role of CSR communication has been increasingly recognized as important. The attention CSR communication is receiving is shown in the number of research studies dedicated to different aspects of CSR communication, on the one hand, and in the progressively visible communicative practice of CSR-related issues by corporations, on the other. The amount of CSR-related practices and messages developed by the corporations shows that CSR communication tackles a variety of issues concerning “the ways that corporations communicate in and about” the process of implementing their CSR (Ihlen, Bartlett, & May, 2011, p. 8).

In the 2013 study by KPMG, which continuously monitors CSR communication and reporting of the world’s biggest corporations, it is indicated that CSR communication has become a mainstream business practice worldwide with 93 % of the world’s largest corporations engaging in different CSR communication practices and reporting. In addition, the biannual CONE 2015 global CSR study among consumers shows that nearly nine in ten global consumers (88 %) are eager to hear about CSR initiatives and progress.

Recognised as an important part of CSR, CSR communication has become a focus area of wider academic and professional debates at conferences and symposia. This indicates that the field of CSR communication is evolving and as it develops it is important to evaluate the progress that has been made so far and reflect on the directions taken in this progress.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide such a contemplative moment for the field by examining how CSR communication has been established as a research area and practice in Europe. Idowu, Schmidpeter, and Fifka (2015, p. ix) recently acknowledged that “Europe has contributed immensely to developments in the field of corporate social responsibility (CSR) as we know it today”. With the European development of CSR in general the communicative aspects of CSR have also developed and we can rightly assume that Europe-based professionals, organisations and academics have contributed their expertise and knowledge to a great extent to the CSR communication area as well.

2 Institutional Perspective as a Conceptual Frame for Studying CSR Communication

An institutional perspective, recently often used to discuss CSR-related phenomena (Brammer, Jackson, & Matten, 2012) seems to be an appropriate frame for thinking about how CSR communication has become established in the European context. The institutional perspective suggests that decisions and discourses about CSR communication are not purely instrumental but are “framed vis-à-vis a broader social context” (Jackson & Apostolakou, 2010, p. 374).

A new field such as CSR or CSR communication evolves around new institutional arrangements that give more satisfactory responses to certain problems. Once responses are examined and compared, participants engage in theorisation to institutionalise solutions. Institutional construction can be either “demand-sided”, where there is a demand for solving certain problems (e.g., societal expectations of businesses to address certain issues in society) and institutions are crafted from scratch by those who are challenged, or it can be “supply-sided”, where certain types of actors (e.g., scientists, professionals) have the ability to “devise and promote new schemas, rules, models, routines, and artefacts” (Scott, 2008, p. 104) to solve the problems.

To provide the context for examining the emergence and construction of the CSR communication field in Europe, we would like to focus mainly on the cultural-cognitive aspects as sources for “shaping and interpreting individual and organisational activities” (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008, p. 103). These include institutional logics defined by Friedland and Alford (1991, p. 248) as “a set of material practices and symbolic constructions which constitutes its organising principles and which is available to organisations and individuals to elaborate”. Thornton and Ocasio (1999) propose different mechanisms by which institutional logics can shape organising and knowledge integration at the field level. One relevant for the purpose of our examination is that the “meaning, appropriateness, and legitimacy . . . are shaped by the rules of the prevailing institutional logics” (Thornton & Ocasio, 1999, p. 806). The second is related to the issues that are relevant in terms of CSR communication and that shape the cognition of social actors and organisations. And thirdly, “the assumptions, values, beliefs, and rules that comprise institutional logics determine what answers and solutions are available and appropriate” for CSR communication practice (Thornton & Ocasio, 1999, p. 806).

Scott (2008, p. 186) notes that there are multiple frameworks differentiated around specialised arenas such as political, financial, (anti)consumerist and so on, which are all governed by their own different logic, that shape heterogeneity, stability and change in the actors working at the meso-levels within these arenas (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). One such level is the notion of the (organisational) field that connotes the “recognized area of institutional life” where the common meaning system is being established together with the interactions among participants that are more frequent with one another than “with actors outside of the field” (Scott, 2008, p. 86). Hence, the field “is a level of analysis; it is a place where institutional logics get played out . . .” (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008, p. 119).

According to Scott (2008, p. 187) institutional logics vary in their contents (the nature of beliefs and assumptions), penetration or vertical depth (general societal understandings vs. specific understandings of how a particular area works), as well as in their horizontal linkage and exclusiveness, or the extent they are being contested. They also vary in terms of the level on which they are formed. They may, for example, emerge within the field through competing institution-building projects or actors, or alternatively, they may be shaped by higher-order logics (e.g., political, economic etc.; Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). The emergence of the

institutional field is also related to how knowledge is built and how ideas are integrated into existing (and new) contexts (Becker-Ritterspach, 2006).

Continuing with our observation of the CSR communication field in Europe we can trace several arenas where institutional logics emerge. Our attempt is not to analyse all of these, as this would be beyond the scope of this chapter. We will nevertheless examine multiple levels by which institutional logics may influence the field. First, we will look at the *macro-level* (i.e., institutional logics as supraorganisational patterns; Thornton & Ocasio, 1999) and focus on such societal-level institutions as business and political systems, transnational associations, different stakeholders (especially nongovernmental organizations) and society in general. Then we will turn our attention to the *field level* and examine how some of the actors within the field—carriers and promoters such as academics—are shaping CSR communication in Europe.

3 Institutional Construction of the CSR Communication Field

3.1 National and Transnational Institutions

Focusing first on the macro-level, we start our discussion with the institutional logics of *national business systems* based on the varieties of capitalism theory (VoC; Hall & Soskice, 2001) and of other national institutions (Matten & Moon, 2008) that have helped to shape CSR and CSR communication. The importance of national (business) systems has already been established in the literature by those scholars—many of them European—favouring the institutional perspective on CSR (e.g., Gjølborg, 2009; Matten & Moon, 2008). According to Hall and Soskice (2001), national business systems are shaped by two opposite systemic equilibria—liberal market economies (LME) and coordinated market economies (CME). LME is associated with a predominately market-based type of coordination and CME is reflected in institutionalised coordination that governs the welfare state, political systems and the role of civic culture. Somewhere in-between are mixed-market economies (MME), which belong to the CME family, as they also rely mostly on non-market coordination (Hassel, 2014).

The literature (e.g., Gjølborg, 2009; Hassel, 2014; Preuss, Gold, & Rees, 2014) suggests that most of the continental European countries are either CMEs or at least belong to the CME family. The exception comes in the form of some of the newer EU member states, which developed a system closer to that of LMEs (Preuss et al., 2014). Traditional LMEs in Europe are the two English-speaking countries, the UK and Ireland (Hassel, 2014).

The VoC perspective combined with new-institutional theory (Gjølborg, 2010) has led to the idea of “explicit” and “implicit” CSR practices (Matten & Moon, 2008), where LME business systems are associated with more explicit CSR

practices due to the lack of institutional stakeholder involvement. Governed by the market forces, explicit CSR practices also tend to evoke more vocal and explicit language of CSR to be communicated extensively to stakeholders. Implicit CSR practices, which are associated with CME, are not supported with explicit communication: CSR represents compliance to the laws, normative pressures or reflect a societal consensus about the appropriate CSR levels, hence there is no need to widely advertise CSR (Jackson & Apostolakou, 2010).

We could thus conclude that traditionally institutional logics of national business systems in Europe determined different rules for the appropriateness of CSR communication: organisations in CMEs were traditionally more focused on “walking the walk”, while those in LMEs were more inclined to be “talking the talk” (Strand, Freeman, & Hockerts, 2014). To label these two institutional logics from the CSR communication point of view we could refer to the former as the *non-communicative logic* and to the latter as the *communicative logic*.

The balance between them, however, has changed significantly over the years due to various reasons. The majority of them can be attributed to rapid globalisation processes in which the former managerial and business-driven CSR concept increasingly became an instrument of national and global governance with the potential to fill in the gap that emerged after the power of global corporations increased (Gjølberg, 2010).

Consequently, global and transnational diffusion of explicit CSR has transformed the national institutional models of CSR (Gjølberg, 2010; Matten & Moon, 2008). From this point of view there are two moments that contributed most to the establishment of CSR communication in Europe. The first such moment is related to the enhancement of *competitiveness based on CSR and sustainability*, which is strongly promoted in many of the European Union’s documents, also suggesting a softer approach to CSR policies (Steurer, Martinuzzi, & Margula, 2012). The competitiveness perspective should give European companies an advantage when competing on non-European markets. Thus, the communication part of CSR is indispensable when building such advantage.

The second such moment is reflected in a document titled *A renewed EU strategy 2011-14 for Corporate Social Responsibility* (2011). In this document, the European Commission explicitly considers what Gjølberg (2010) labels *global governance*. There are three areas where communicative logic is dominant. First, there is the need to stress the importance of issuing relevant information about CSR and sustainable actions, which should be a crucial element of public accountability. Second, the need to recognise marketing communication malpractices to prevent green- and other forms of washing. And third, the need to align European approaches to CSR to those used globally. Here the Commission is referring to different global principles: UN Global Compact, ISO 26000 Guidance Standard on Social Responsibility, OECD guidelines, and the Global Reporting Initiative that is directly related to communication practices of companies.

Both, *CSR competitiveness* and *global governance* have caused communicative logic to become much more influential for CSR communication development in Europe. This shift encouraged actors to apply the CSR label to their efforts and

communicate about them more openly. Especially those companies that come from the CME oriented countries needed to start learning about “talking the walk” (Strand et al., 2014).

3.2 *Society and Stakeholders*

When considering the role and importance of CSR, the national business system and VoC perspective need to be complemented with the socio-cultural character of particular environments (Gjølborg, 2009). Culture, informal institutions and such values as post-materialism, trust, tolerance, and social activism seem to be very important in determining what is driving CSR. Gjølborg (2009) observes that the socio-cultural context is the institutional factor bearing the highest correlation with the country’s CSR leadership.

While such values are not necessarily directly related to the “explicitness” of CSR—the notion of non-talking was supported by the findings of Morsing, Schultz, and Nielsen (2008), where citizens in Denmark wanted organisations to engage in CSR but not talk too much about their activities—they do tend to raise the CSR expectations of stakeholders and society in general. Consequently, stakeholders might also demand more information about CSR to be able to evaluate the behaviour against their expectations. The European Commission Eurobarometer survey (2013) confirms this: around 79 % of Europeans are interested in what companies do to behave in a responsible manner. However, the results of this survey also show an information gap: only 36 % of Europeans feel informed in this area. Citizens also need to be informed and knowledgeable about CSR activities so that they can take action. According to the Eurobarometer survey, around 50 % of Europeans think they themselves should take the lead role in influencing the CSR actions, mainly through their buying behaviour.

The first definition of CSR by the European Commission (2001) puts stakeholder engagement in the centre of how CSR is perceived in a European context. Hence, the development of CSR communication is not encouraged only by the expectations of citizens to be more informed about CSR activities of companies but also by the need to balance interests of different stakeholders. One such stakeholder are NGOs gaining a very influential role as social movements that have a potential power to influence the business community at multiple levels (Burchell & Cook, 2013, p. 508). NGOs together with “the broader civil society and community interests that they represent, clearly constitute an important and increasingly influential element of the institutional environment” (Doh & Guay, 2006, p. 54). Doh and Guay (2006) observe that the role of NGOs (and other stakeholders as well) is highly situational and also dependent on the institutional context. Comparing the US and the European institutional environment they argue that this context has resulted in different ways of accepting stakeholders as a relevant partner in the policy-making process and has framed the development of attitudes towards CSR and its implementation (Doh & Guay, 2006).

Along with accepting the rise of power of such stakeholders as NGOs which, in the European context mainly represent consumer, environmental, citizen, and social groups (Doh & Guay, 2006), the corporate world also needed to accept a more collaborative approach for interacting with stakeholders based on exchanging opinions and informing each other (Jonker & Nijhof, 2006). Hence, they needed to accept the importance of communication as the process which contributes the most to balancing different interests and reaching a mutual understanding about the relevance and application of certain norms and directions related to CSR (Jonker & Nijhof, 2006). Kaptein and Van Tulder (2003) argue that we can see these communication processes as being aimed at co-creating CSR strategies.

To sum up, both societal expectations and stakeholder interests in CSR activities have empowered the *communicative logic* towards CSR—a logic presuming that CSR communication is something appropriate for business to adopt; not only to inform but also to engage and deliberate common understandings of CSR-related facts and their implementation.

4 Structuration Processes in the CSR Communication Field

Thus far we have examined some of the institutional factors that have contributed to the development of the CSR communication field from a macro-level perspective. The macro-level institutional construction mainly serves as a framework that orders reality, provides meaning to actions taken by social actors, and gives a sense of direction for the future development of the field (Thornton & Ocasio, 1999). In our further investigation we will turn to the field level, which presents a boundary that produces sources that structure the decision-making and practices of CSR communication. Here, the focus will be on the academic contributions as an important source of institutionalisation.

Therefore, our field level analysis aims to identify (1) main types, sources, and numbers of academic contributions based on the thematic scope, and (2) research streams (i.e., institutional logics) in the European studies on CSR communication on the basis of examining their discursive (content) orientation as a main indicator defining a particular logic.¹

¹Our insight into the nature of contemporary European studies on CSR communication is grounded on a systematic literature review. With the intention of placing the emphasis on the latter, our sample is composed of those studies on CSR communication, which can be considered as a product of European scholars. Accordingly, academic papers were included into our sample if at least the first author of a particular study was identified as a member of a European-based institution/university. A total of 103 papers were collected by scanning relevant marketing and management online databases (SAGE, ScienceDirect, Proquest, and EBSCO) and using a standard keywords search (keywords used: corporate social responsibility/CSR communication, communicating CSR, CSR disclosure, CSR advertising, and CSR reporting). After an initial inspection

The vital role of the academic community in shaping social reality seems tightly connected to its knowledge-generating, reflective and integrative nature. Namely, the process of generating new theoretical and empirical knowledge regarding the concept of CSR communication depends on scholars' ability to detect the main characteristics of macro-, meso- (i.e., organisational) and micro-level (i.e., individual level) processes of institutionalising CSR communication (Schultz & Wehmeier, 2010), to critically reflect upon them and explain how these levels intersect to drive the institutionalisation. Institutionalisation can also be seen as socially constructed outcome of knowledge integration processes in a certain field.

4.1 Types, Numbers and Sources of Contributions on CSR Communication

In the early 2000s, European scholars (along with their North-American colleagues) from various academic disciplines started taking an interest in the communication aspect of the CSR phenomenon and have since then broadened the discursive terrain of CSR communication field considerably. As a result of CSR being adopted by a wide range of disciplines, the body of research on CSR communication is often labelled as "heterogeneous" (Schoeneborn & Trittin, 2013, p. 195), thus integrating knowledge by developing a repertoire of ideas and building a web of connections among ideas. The repertoire of ideas means that various and sometimes conflicting views are involved, sorted into knowledge webs based on scientific principles, conceptual proximities, or critical analysis of similarities and differences (Linn, Eylon, & Davis, 2004). Our data analysis supports this notion by showing that European authors have published their papers on CSR communication in 39 different publication sources, ranging from marketing, public relations and management journals to journals of organisation studies and accounting. Yet, only a quarter of these journals (25.6 %) contain more than one CSR communication-related paper. In fact, 58.3 % of all papers have been published in a total of six journals. Two of these leading publication sources—*Journal of Business Ethics* and *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*—seem to be by far the most targeted by the European authors, as both of them together contain more than one-third (38.5 %) of all papers from our dataset. These observations are consistent with findings presented by Golob et al. (2013) in their overall literature review of CSR communication papers. By taking this into consideration, we can arguably confirm that both European and Non-European authors contribute to the current fragmentation of the CSR communication field.

91 papers were selected for further content analysis. The majority of papers excluded from the final sample addressed the topic of CSR reporting with the emphasis on accountability standards, not communication.

Further literature analysis reveals that the ranking order of leading publication sources can also serve as an indicator for identifying main conceptual frameworks on which authors build the understanding of CSR communication. Among European authors the issue of CSR communication is most frequently examined within the framework of corporate communication, management and marketing frameworks (see Fig. 1 for main conceptual origins of CSR communication studies). This can be of relevance when assessing the nature of CSR and CSR communication studies, as the literature shows that a choice of a specific conceptual framework can influence the thematic focus of studies (May, 2011; Nielsen & Thomsen, 2012). For example, Nielsen and Thomsen (2012) report that papers adopting a corporate communication or a management approach to CSR communication primarily deal with CSR communication strategies and strategies of stakeholder engagement as well as their influence on corporate reputation. On the other hand, the studies embedded within the marketing communication framework focus on CSR communication effects in relation to consumer attitudes and behaviour.

Apart from their academic contributions published in a wide range of journals, the active role of European scholars in constructing the CSR communication field is evident from their participation in organising special issues on CSR communication. To date, they have served both as editors and co-editors of five special issues on this topic, however, only in three of them does CSR communication act as a central issue.² The first CSR communication-related special issue was published in *Journal of Marketing Communications* in 2008. Despite that, the highest level of involvement of European authors in the making of such special issues with respect to their content can be detected in two issues, which appeared in *Corporate Communications: An International Journal* as a tribute to the first and second international *CSR Communication Conference* (held in 2011 and 2013, respectively). These particular issues have also been the source of some progressive papers in terms of their dedication to: (1) exposing a need for adopting a constructionist approach to CSR communication (Schoeneborn & Trittin, 2013), (2) outlining new 'social media'/interactivity challenges for CSR communication (e.g., Colleoni, 2013) and (3) providing an overview of the development and the characteristics of CSR communication as a research field (e.g., Elving, Golob, Podnar, Nielsen, & Thomsen, 2015; Golob et al., 2013). Generally speaking, special issues have added to the visibility of the concept of CSR communication and inspired a much anticipated, albeit subtle, increase in the number of CSR communication studies, which can be noted, if we compare the period after the publication of a first special issue to the period of the early and mid-2000s. Still, the annual rise in volume of European-based CSR communication studies has remained

²Special issues published in *Journal of Business Ethics* in 2013 and in *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management* in 2010 addressed the topic of CSR communication in a more implicit way as they were primarily focused on new media as facilitators of new forms of interaction between responsible business and its audiences and on emerging discourses on CSR, respectively.

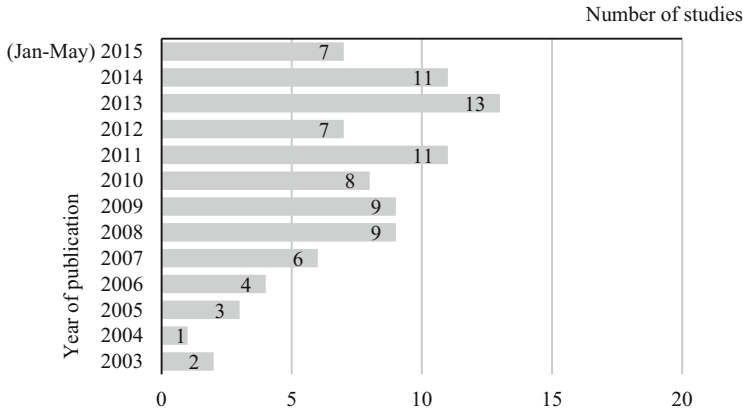


Fig. 1 Number of CSR communication studies by year of publication

relatively slow and inconsistent for more than a decade (see Fig. 2), which suggests that the issue of CSR communication has yet to gain a more prominent place in the mindset of a broader pool of European scholars from business and communication disciplines and from different European countries.

The papers we examined originate from 18 different European countries, the indicator being the origin of the first author of selected papers. Further, scholars from Denmark and United Kingdom, whose studies together account for 30.8 % of all European-based CSR communication studies, appear to be in the forefront of the European academic debate on CSR communication. This might, in some ways, be a result of Denmark (Midttun, Gautesen, & Gjørberg, 2006) and the United Kingdom (Jackson & Apostolakou, 2010; Vertigans, 2015) often being referred to as those countries, which pull ahead of other members of different European regions, both with regard to public policies on CSR and actual business behaviour.

Since noticeable differences as well as similarities exist among different European countries with regard to the implementation of CSR, scholars have been able to identify (usually) four mainstream CSR models that have emerged and now co-exist in the European context. These CSR models, at least for the most part, coincide with the political, economic and cultural heritage of different European regions. Further, they show us how a particular cluster of European countries approaches CSR regulation and implementation, CSR reporting and CSR communication (e.g., Argandoña & Hoivik, 2009; Lenssen & Vorobey, 2005). Following this idea, we decided to inspect the distribution of European-based CSR communication studies not only according to their country of origin but also according to their approach to CSR (communication), taking into account that institutional environments tend to guide the process of knowledge integration. How ideas are integrated into cognitive systems of actors depends on social-system conditions, which means that “different actors not only come cognitively to different translations but have different resources at their disposal” (Becker-Ritterspach, 2006, p. 364).

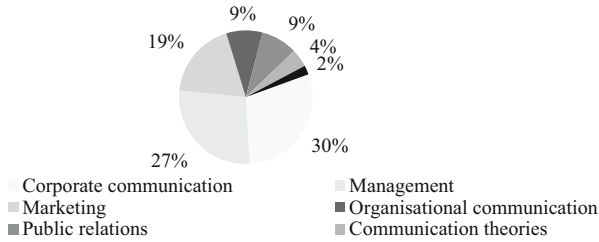


Fig. 2 Distribution of CSR communication studies according to their conceptual origin

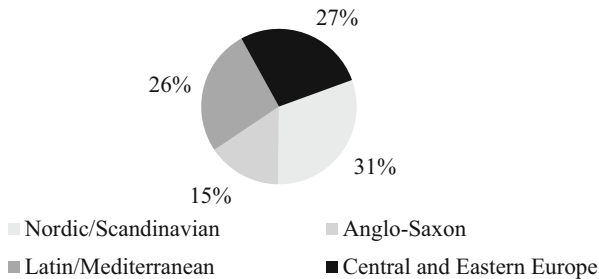


Fig. 3 Distribution of CSR communication studies by models of CSR in Europe [*Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark—Nordic/Scandinavian model; United Kingdom, Ireland—Anglo-Saxon model; Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, France—Latin/Mediterranean model; Slovenia, Poland, Belgium, Germany, The Netherlands, Switzerland, Austria—Central and Eastern European model (for classification see Argandoña & Hoivik, 2009; Lenssen & Vorobey, 2005; Midttun et al., 2006).*]

Our analysis reveals that European authors, who come from countries which employ a Nordic, Anglo-Saxon or Latin CSR model, have contributed a rather equal share to the total number of European-based studies on CSR communication (see Fig. 3). Authors from Central and Eastern European countries, which have adopted their own approach to CSR (Argandoña & Hoivik, 2009), are lagging somewhat behind. This could be related to scholarly observations on how governments as well as business entities in these countries still struggle with developing and/or following CSR standards (Argandoña & Hoivik, 2009; Idowu et al., 2015).

4.2 Discursive Orientations Guiding Contributions in CSR Communication

By turning our attention to the content of European-based CSR communication studies, we can arguably identify what we refer to as three ‘camps of thought’ or three institutional logics on CSR communication. On the one hand, our literature

review upholds the observation made by Nielsen and Thomsen (2012), which reveals that so far discourse on CSR communication has been largely governed by *operational and transactional logic* of business-society relations. On the other hand, *constructionism*, together with a CCO (i.e., communication constitutes organisations) perspective, has served as a basis for a set of alternative discussions on CSR communication. Most recently, an idea of following a third model, a *holistic approach*, has been employed by a rather small group of European authors (e.g., Elving et al., 2015; Seele & Lock, 2014) as an attempt of bridging the gap between instrumental-strategic and constructionist interpretations of the nature of CSR communication.

An extensive amount of studies on the CSR phenomenon has adopted an instrumental approach to evaluating its value for companies, disregarding its social embeddedness at the same time (Garriga & Melé, 2004). This business-centric approach, which focuses on the operational use of CSR as a managerial tool and the measurement of CSR outputs in terms of profits and corporate reputation (Secchi, 2007) has also provided a resource for discussion on ('not more than') a supporting role of communication in relation to CSR behaviour.

As in the case of international contributions on the topic of CSR, the predominant share of European authors has adopted an *instrumental-strategic* approach to investigating CSR communication. Their contributions account for more than three quarters (79.1 %) of all papers from our sample. This group of authors strives to assess the corporate efforts related to communicating CSR. Their rhetoric is thus either concentrated on CSR communication as a tool for increasing the visibility of CSR practices, enhancing brand/corporate reputation and achieving profit-related goals, or on managerial strategies and models for effective CSR communication. Adopting a Habermasian perspective, Elving et al. (2015, p. 120) argue that such studies try to institutionalise CSR communication as a form of "instrumental/strategic" action and imply that CSR-related disclosure is used merely "as a medium of self-presentation". More specifically, European authors, who focus on CSR communication as a tool of marketing or corporate communications, orient their research around the characteristics of channels used for delivering CSR messages and their content. Their goal is to provide answers to questions about 'what' is being communicated and 'how'. Special attention, as previously pointed out by Golob et al. (2013), is given to the characteristics and challenges of CSR communication within the online environment. This thematic focus, as indicated by our data analysis, is most prominent among authors originating from a group of countries with a Latin model of CSR, especially Spain and Portugal (e.g., Capriotti & Moreno, 2007; Chaves, Mozas, Puentes, & Bernal, 2011). Moreover, studies with their focus on the 'form of delivery' of CSR messages also frequently expose CSR communication as an in vogue advertising topic (Lauritsen & Perks, 2015; Mögele & Tropp, 2010).

From an integration perspective on CSR communication this implies static integration based on an intra-organisational approach (Johansen & Esmann Andersen, 2012). Static integration is exhibited by integrating CSR behaviour with business strategy and by further aligning it with CSR communication to support the fit between CSR programs and strategy. The aim is to minimise the scepticism

of external stakeholders regarding CSR practices and enhance value creation in terms of CSR.

Such explicit forms of CSR communication are questioned by another stream of authors, who argue that companies can employ different strategies when communicating about CSR. Two main typologies of such strategies appear in the European-based literature. The first one inspects the approaches to CSR communication on the implicit-explicit continuum (e.g., Ligeti & Oravecz, 2009; Morsing et al., 2008). The second one categorises the same approaches on the basis of the level of stakeholder engagement in the process of CSR communication employed by a certain company. Stakeholders' role in CSR communication, from this perspective, can range from stakeholders being passive receivers of information to being actively involved in the co-creation of CSR meanings (Morsing & Schultz, 2006). By pointing out that companies across Europe take on different approaches to communicating CSR, we could argue that they are not so much confronted with a Hobson's choice whether to communicate about their CSR or not, but rather with a dilemma regarding the extent and the dialogical potential of their communication. If the value of implicit CSR communication strategies is, at least for the most part, more thoroughly explored by Scandinavian authors (e.g., Morsing et al., 2008; Morsing & Schultz, 2006), no such region-specific observation can be made with regard to studies on explicit CSR communication. However, this could serve as an indicator of the 'invasion' of explicit CSR communication practices, traditionally favoured by Anglo-Saxon countries, into other parts of Europe (Jackson & Apostolakou, 2010).

A strong stakeholder orientation could also be recognised as a common denominator of studies dealing with strategic approaches to CSR communication. The main goal of CSR communication from a corporate point of view is to align expectations of multiple stakeholder groups and gain their trust in order to optimise CSR-related profits (Chaudhri, 2014, p. 3). The focus in European studies is mainly on investigating consumers' expectations regarding CSR communication (e.g., Schmeltz, 2012; Colleoni, 2013; Bögel, 2015; Lauritsen & Perks, 2015). According to our analysis, mixed findings on consumers' expectations regarding the preferred style of CSR communication can be identified within the European context: from not expecting any explicit communication (Morsing et al., 2008) to demanding detailed and explicit information about CSR (Bögel, 2015). Either way, the emphasis in this type of studies appears to be on organisational reactions to stakeholders' expectations and demands, not on their proactive role in constructing CSR meanings. Moreover, these studies might concentrate on different communication strategies, but only a few of them explicitly address the value of CSR communication as a strategic instrument which, if aligned with the overall corporate strategy (e.g., Nielsen & Thomsen, 2009; Podnar, 2008), can help to offset stakeholder scepticism towards CSR-related messages (Chaudhri, 2014).

In recent years, as indicated by our findings, European authors have responded to the criticism of the limitations of instrumental approach to CSR communication by shifting their focus from the operational to the performative (i.e., constitutional) role of CSR communication (Christensen, Morsing, & Thyssen, 2013). This shift

builds on the idea that the institutionalisation of “a language of CSR in Europe” has provided European companies with the opportunity to act in a more socially responsible way (Matten & Moon, 2005, p. 335). CSR communication, in this case, is seen as the imperative for CSR actions, meaning that organisational talk about CSR has the power of instigating, shaping, directing and redirecting organisational CSR-related practices (Christensen et al., 2013). As such, “CSR is not a preexisting, out there idea, but one that is constructed . . . through communication” (Chaudhri, 2014, p. 5) and should on this account be inspected through the lens of communicative logic. Authors, who adopt a constructionist approach to CSR communication, are said to offer a fresh and alternative view on the role of CSR communication if compared to a more established instrumental-strategic camp (Elving et al., 2015). As a result, studies with a constructionist background make up less than one-fifth (15.4 %) of our sample. In Europe, the idea of communication being a cornerstone of organisational reality seems to be most readily accepted among the Scandinavian scholars, who take centre stage in the current constructionist debate on CSR.

In comparison with instrumental-strategic studies on CSR communication, this group of scholarly contributions replaces the business-centric view on CSR communication with the idea of a plurality of voices, which act as co-creators of CSR meanings. Chaudhri (2014), for example, highlights the importance of stakeholders’ involvement in the dialogical process of CSR communication. CSR meanings, he states, are being constantly negotiated and not merely transferred from business entities to their audiences. The attention is no longer given solely to the content of CSR messages, but to the social context/reality and its constituents as well. Further, the role of stakeholder management in relation to CSR-related activities is not only informative but also relational. The goal is to encourage stakeholders to become actively engaged in a dialogue with a company. In terms of integration of CSR communication these studies can be linked to dynamic or flexible integration (Christensen, Firat, & Torp, 2008), where an organization is focused on integrating different voices and views on CSR that come from stakeholders and co-create the meaning of CSR.

A still emerging logic (5.5 % of papers), the third conceptual camp of CSR communication studies we identified, combines both approaches to studying CSR communication and tries to critically reflect upon the professed incompatibility between the instrumental and constructionist approaches. For instance, it challenges the belief that the CSR communication-action gap can only result in consumer scepticism and argues that such an issue could also lead to improvements in the organisational reality, provided that the performative role of CSR communication is taken into account (Elving et al., 2015). Its holistic/integrative nature also promises to address the gap between academic calls for seizing the interactive potential of new communication technologies and business ‘reality’ (Chaudhri, 2014).

5 Conclusion and Future Outlook

CSR communication has become an important notion inside a wider CSR field, both in practice and research. In Europe, CSR might have had a rather long tradition, however it was mostly practiced in an implicit way. The CSR term as we know it today in Europe was introduced into the lexicon not so long ago, together with the forces that made CSR much more explicit (Strand et al., 2014). The explicitness has brought into the forefront the importance of communication processes in CSR, both from the perspective of sharing information and establishing dialogues. Thus, on a macro-level we seem to be witnessing a dominance of the communicative logic over the non-communicative one. The communicative logic has helped to provide the meaning to actions and set the course for the development of the CSR communication field in Europe.

After establishing the macro-level context for the institutional construction of CSR communication in Europe, offering a brief introduction to the institutional mechanisms, we analysed academic contributions as one of the most influential sources on the “supply-side” that structure and shape the decision-making and practices of CSR communication. Here we have discovered three institutional logics to frame the developments in CSR communication: operational/transactional, constructionist, and holistic. They tend to nicely reflect the “demand-side” on the macro-level where both, the need to be informed and the need to be engaged, included and integrated seem to influence CSR communication.

While the operational/transactional might be the most straightforward reflection of the global diffusion of explicit CSR, the other two are shaped much more by the national institutions and socio-cultural character of European countries. Both are slowly but persistently gaining more power, showing there is a tendency that CSR communication is liable to the process of adaption and translation of how CSR should be thought of in the communicative terms to fit the reality of the European context.

As for the future outlook: the development of the European CSR communication will continue to be about finding a place in the global context, “not about convergence or suppression of difference” (Scott, 2008, p. 206). This has further implications for the process of knowledge integration in the field. The question that could be further addressed in this regard is whether the process of knowledge integration will continue as routinely or as discursively translated (Becker-Ritterspach, 2006). In the former case, communicative logic may not be further contested, while in the latter, the dominant logic may be subjected to continuous conscious reflections by certain actors. Thus, the question is, how will the European discourse on CSR communication revolve around the issue of finding a balance between opening up to explicit ways of communicating CSR and doing this in a European-like, less intrusive and more engaging way, for example, by giving voice to internal stakeholders (Morsing et al., 2008) or brand ambassadors.

6 Exercise and Reflective Questions

1. What kinds of institutional logics can be found in the CSR communication field and how are they manifested?
2. How can policy makers influence the practice and research of CSR communication?
3. In your opinion how does the institutional context influence the academic endeavours? Can the academic research contribute to shaping the institutional context as well?
4. What are the advantages and disadvantages of non-communicative and communicative logics in shaping the communicative CSR aspects in the European context?

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