

Organizing CSR Communication: Challenges for Integrated CSR Communication from a PR and Organizational Communication Perspective

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Abstract In today's interconnected society, organizations are challenged by new "social" communication structures and internal processes of decision making, communication and sensemaking; accordingly, process and practice approaches to organizational communication as well as public relations and stakeholder management are constantly changing. In parallel, organizations are stimulated to rethink their values as corporate citizen and meet their social responsibility. Assuming that every organization related interaction can be described as process of organizational self-structuring and that, furthermore, every interaction in an organization and between organizations is operated communicatively, in this paper we state that every responsibility is allocated and taken communicatively. Inspired by core values like trust, transparency and dialogue, communication management has to be refined. At the intersection of CSR and Communication theory a new concept of integrated CSR communication arises, fueled by PR theory as well as concepts of managing responsibility. These complementarities of theoretical concepts and practical implications are discussed in this chapter.

1 Growing Relevance of CSR and CSR Communication

With the growing public discussion about sustainability, social responsibility became one of the major challenges of corporate communication. More recently, corporate social responsibility seems to be a "must have" in the corporate strategy and corporate communication of multinational enterprises. However, even some of the established corporations have problems integrating responsibility actions in their business and management strategy and are often blamed for greenwashing.

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The communication of sustainability related activities and CSR strategies and projects is even more complex. Here, Public Relations seems to be the link between business and responsible behavior, on an institutional level as well as in every communication process in an organization and between the organization and its publics. Looking at organizations' everyday practice, mostly the PR department is responsible for CSR strategies and activities; besides, Public Relations implies communicating basic values, new issues like green energy, resource management plans etc. and taking responsibility in relation to the stakeholders as well as in internal processes of decision and sensemaking.

Beyond, the increasing amount of literature on CSR communication shows the potential as well as the challenges and limitations to communicate CSR. Here, mostly scholars with a background in PR and/or organizational communication contribute with their reflections on PR functions, communicative responsibilities and PR ethics. In fact, CSR communication is mostly worked out and discussed in the field of public relations and organizational communication (Weder, 2010, p. 177ff.). Initial examinations with communication-strategic questions are found in this context with regard to Sustainability Communication (Michelsen & Godemann, 2005; Schönborn & Steinert, 2001; Weder & Krainer, 2011) or CSR (Bartlett, May, & Ihlen, 2012; Ihlen, Bartlett, & May, 2011; Karmasin & Weder, 2008, 2009; May, Cheney, & Roper, 2007; Raupp, Jarolimek, & Schultz, 2010; Schmidt & Tropp, 2009; Seitz, 2002). This literature shows that Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and CSR communication go hand in hand with PR, but are not similar to PR and/or organizational communication. Here, CSR is mostly seen as a distinct management concept, whereas PR is conceptualized as the management of external and internal communications (Clark, 2000; Daugherty, 2001; L'Etang, 1994). In the following section, we will give a short overview of approaches to CSR communication from a communication scientific and, in particular, from a PR perspective. Hereby, organizational communication in general is understood as a process of sensemaking and value creation in an organization as well as between the organization and its stakeholders. This theoretical analysis is followed by a subchapter on how much PR theory has inspired and influenced CSR communication research and vice versa. Furthermore, we will pick several examples to show those influences and interactions between CSR and PR research in detail as well as future research potential, if CSR communication is understood as "integrated communication management".

At the end, it will be obvious that PR and CSR communication are indistinguishable and complement each other; integrated CSR communication means both, communicating CSR activities as well as responsible organizational communication, which is inherent to PR.

2 CSR: Not Without Communication

Individual and collective responsibility is a centuries old philosophical issue; responsibility mostly describes a relation between people or organizations and people or groups of people, their stakeholders. It's about being responsible for someone and the process of allocation of and taking responsibility itself. Especially in western European countries from the 80s onwards, the "green movement" did not only influence political but also economic discourses. Today, the CSR "movement" is no longer an alternative to traditional business concepts, it has already "spread to the corporate mainstream" (Hollender, 2011, p. Xiii).

Responsible activities have always been inherent to corporate behavior; values of business organizations as well as the proper role of business in society are important questions that are addressed within organizations as well as from the outside. Today, organizations and organizational relations to their stakeholders have become more complex; thus, processes of organizing, decision making as well as sensemaking are getting more intense through new core values of trust, transparency, dialogue and participation. Here, *Public Relations* comes into play. In the following two sections we will firstly show major concepts of corporate responsibility and related concepts of communication management while looking at references to PR theory and practice and the idea of responsible in the sense of participatory, transparent communicative behavior in general. In concrete, we will explore the coherences between communication management and CSR.

2.1 CSR: A Conceptual Framework with a Focus on "Organizing Processes"

The idea of corporate social responsibility can be found close to industrialization and the first big companies, e.g., in the steel industry. The term refers to the book by Bowen, "The responsibility of businessman" from 1953. Over the years, there were several discussions on sustainability and responsibilities of corporations, first of all in *business & society* research. Until today there is no clear definition of CSR, while its development was forced by corporate practice (Raupp, Jarolimek, & Schultz, 2011).

In academia, several authors refer to the pyramid of responsibility by Carroll (1979), who systematizes different responsibility areas (economical, juridical, ethical and philanthropical). After that, the definition by the European Commission (2001) was widely spread among communication practitioners and picked up by scientists as well. That definition includes criteria of voluntariness, relation to core business, and stakeholders as well as fitting to concepts of business, management and management communication (European Commission, 2001, 2011).

As said, CSR has a clear connection to the concept of sustainability. The latter started with the report "Our common future" by the United Nations. It focused in

the beginning mainly on ecological topics, more recently it has also begun to include economic and social issues. The three pillars of economical, ecological and social responsibility connect both concepts. Most authors refer to this as the triple bottom line, described by Elkington (1997). Scientists and practitioners from different fields were concerned with the two concepts; therefore, there was a constant process of reframing CSR and the discussion became more and more focused on the organization (Weder, 2015a, b). So, even if “today the conceptualization of CSR as well as the definition of CSR is not stabilized” (Lee & Kim, 2010, p. 288), all definitions have a common core, which can be stated as *organizations as entities have responsibilities towards society*. CSR seems to be an umbrella term (Scherer & Palazzo, 2007), used to describe the dedication to responsibility of an organization in general. Corporates themselves communicate their understanding of the perception and realization of responsibility towards society (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012; Golob et al., 2013; Ihlen et al., 2011, Podnar, 2008). As such, CSR is perceived as a management concept that questions the convergence of economy and society, driven by societal processes of globalization, medialization and also the shift from shareholder to stakeholder thinking in general.¹ Thus, incorporating CSR in management strategy means to take responsible actions in every stage of the supply chain and additionally involves corporate citizenship engagement. In the past, corporations more or less added the responsibility idea to the existing strategy, while more recently, they have integrated it in business and communication strategies. Following the idea of integrated forms of organizational processes, we do assume a constitutive role of communication for organizations (McPhee, 1985; Putnam, Nicotera, & McPhee, 2009; Schoeneborn & Blaschke, 2014); thus, organizations and corporations of all sizes are an effect of communication—not its predecessor (McPhee & Zaug, 2000). Therefore, conceptualizing organizations’ “corporate responsibility” implies an integrated concept of all processes of *allocation* as well as *taking of responsibility*. CSR self-structures an organization, memberships in the organization as well as stakeholder relations are (newly) negotiated, activities are coordinated with different strategic implications and the organizational positioning also gains a new dimension. Furthermore, CSR brings up the difference between communication as “talk” only (worst case scenario: greenwashing) and communication as “action” (processes of allocation and taking responsibility).

Looking back, CSR started with defensive communication strategies, ad hoc interventions mostly oriented at shareholders or governmental institutions—it was mainly about *talking CSR*. In a philanthropic stage, corporations were focused on special communities and CSR was more or less project based (donations etc.). Visser (2011, p. 18f.) describes Marketing and Public Relations as third stage of CSR efforts by business with the general public and therefore a focus on reputation and image—still with a focus on *talking* about responsibility. Today, CSR is more

¹In addition to the original meaning, the familiar concept of corporate social performance (CSP) tries to measure the influence of CSR activities on business performance.

and more implemented in management strategies and influences the products. CSR is getting into *action*. The ideal is also described by Visser (*ibid.*) as “Systematic CSR”, responsibility is realized in business models. Moreover, the European Communication Monitor shows clearly that linking the strategy to business is one of the major challenges in the view of communication managers in the past years (Zerfass, Tench, Verčič, Verhoeven, & Moreno, 2014).

To summarize: There seems to be a general agreement among social scientists and marketers, amongst economists and communication scholars that CSR can be defined as “the organization’s status and activities with respect to its perceived societal obligations” (Beckmann, Morsing, & Reisch, 2006, p. 17; Brown & Dacin, 1997). Taking responsibility management as core strategy of business as well, communication management and public relations in particular have to deal with the allocation and taking of responsibility in organizations. How this is (re)conceptualized in PR theory will be discussed in the following chapter.

2.2 *CSR and Communication*

The overview of CSR concepts shows that they have either a focus on *talking about CSR* or a stronger focus on CSR activities and *action*. The relevance of Public Relations and/or Marketing activities for the realization of CSR is mentioned, but mostly with a “promotional” goal. “[C]orporate sustainability and responsibility is seen mainly as a public relations opportunity to enhance the brand, image and reputation of the company” (Visser, 2011, p. 19). From this perspective, corporations engage in CSR for a better position in the market (stories, corporate brand) (Paine, 2003).

Here, we want to look deeper into CSR as well as PR concepts and discuss the common core and the reasons for coherences. From the author’s point of view, the common core is the engagement in values, more specific: processes of sensemaking, negotiation and with it the establishment of corporate values in (internal and external) stakeholder relations. Stakeholder relations are the basis for corporate responsibility, if we take responsibility as relational term, as described above; additionally, the stability of relations to the organizations’ stakeholders is the main focus of PR, taken as process of relation building. With this in mind, organizational responsibility management can be explained as core process of strategic thinking, decision making in general, organizational change, venturing, enactment of technological change and innovation processes.

A literature review of CSR, PR and newer approaches on CSR communication shows that stakeholder relations is the most used term as well as concept to justify the need for CSR, PR and CSR communication in particular. CSR communication itself is most likely perceived as the communication of CSR activities to different internal and external stakeholders. Indeed, in today’s media and information society there is an “increased pressure to not only engage in CSR efforts but also to communicate about this engagement” (Beckmann et al., 2006, p. 13). Thus,

professional CSR communication means “integrated CSR communication”; CSR communication has to be part of CSR management (Nies, 2013, p. V). Communication is seen as strategic core of CSR, stakeholder relations as groundwork for CSR communication (Heinrich, 2013, p. 65f.). But still, most of the literature deals with CSR communication from a marketing perspective; here, the dominance of a promotional view on CSR communication mentioned above is obvious.

A broader definition is offered by the literature based on communication and media studies. Here, there is a clear connection to public relations and organizational communication. With its combination of CSR topics and the operative PR activities, CSR communication can be defined as “the communication from and about organisations addressing actions within the organisation that are (1) longer term measures (sustainable); and (2) voluntary (not legally bound). The actions reported have (3) a clear connection to the organisation’s activities, but are not their objective. CSR communications can usually be found in all public communications (PR, corporate webpages, corporate magazines, as well as in journalism and in special CSR media like the CSR-report). Issues of CSR communication can be subdivided into social, economic and environmental responsibilities” (Jarolimek, 2014, p. 22). Corporate Citizenship actions should be added.

A communication and media studies based approach to CSR communication also shows that corporations have to communicate responsibly as a meta level of CSR that is described as the quadruple-bottom-line (Karmasin & Weder, 2008, see Chapters “CSR as Common Sense Issue? A Theoretical Exploration of Public Discourses, Common Sense and Framing of Corporate Social Responsibility” and “CSR as Economic, Ethical, and Communicative Concept”) or the ethical dimensions of communication managers (Jarolimek & Linke, 2015). Defining CSR communication from a multi-disciplinary perspective (Beckmann et al., 2006, p. 28) reflects the increased interest in communicating CSR as well as communicating responsibly (Weder & Karmasin, 2014). The PR research tradition has multi-disciplinary approaches as well as a core of theories and therefore can be defined as demarcated research area. We find a systematization of definitions and concepts with more process related perspectives on PR activities (information, persuasion, relation building etc.), an organizational perspective (PR as management function, communication as important for business success etc.), and a macro view on strategic communication activities as type of public communication in general (overview in Heath, 2001; Röttger, Preusse, & Schmitt, 2014, p. 23; Weder, 2010). This helps to understand a concept of “integrated CSR communication” that enfolds everything from the core of an organization to the stakeholder relations. Internal and external legitimation is a condition for gaining social capital, social capital can be captured with concepts like trust, reputation or organizational culture and ethical concepts like transparency and credibility. Internal and external legitimation is also necessary for building and maintaining a core of social values such as participatory democracy while growing, becoming more complex by meeting today’s challenges and still being financially successful. In the following section we will focus on those core concepts of CSR, PR and organizational communication to explore the coherences between PR and CSR communication to show the

contribution of PR research in particular to develop and work with a theoretical concept of integrated CSR communication.

3 PR Concepts in the Debate About CSR Communication—And Vice Versa

As shown above, PR theory influenced the conceptualization of CSR communication; vice versa, the allocation and taking of responsibility by organizations is perceived as something that is not possible without the management of communication. The following examples point out three concepts where *responsibility as intersection* between CSR and PR theory and practice is discussed: trust, transparency and organizational culture. In other words: PR and CSR cannot be discussed without each other, because responsibility is a core character of communicatively constructed internal and external stakeholder relations. Thus, integrated CSR communication works with stakeholder relations (as already suggested above), trust, transparency, reputation and value management as key concepts.

3.1 *Transparency and Trust*

Responsibility as well as the mentioned key values of trust and transparency are essentials of today's concepts of strategic communication. In public relations research there are some theoretical discussions on responsibility and trust, e.g., Bentele and Nothhaft (2011) discuss trust as the core of the responsibility debate in general. But only few scholars discuss transparency systematically. With respect to theoretical concepts and empirical studies, there seems to be a strong connection of these concepts: to communicate responsibly, companies have to be trustworthy and, to be trustworthy, they have to be transparent. Transparency seems to be a core value as well as a basic mechanism in public communication from and about organizations. Transparency is not only an issue for political organizations like political parties (public opinion) or economic organizations such as power companies (in the market), but also for media enterprises. Recently, transparency has appeared as 'new godterm' (Christensen & Cheney, 2011), but it is also seen as crucial in discourses about corporate responsibility (e.g., Nadezan, 2011).

Still, there is "a lack of theory about transparency in the academic PR discourse" (Wehmeier & Raaz, 2012, p. 349). To date, transparency definitions are rare in the PR discourse. Wehmeier and Raaz (2012) systematize two groups of available definitions. The first group of sender-orientated transparency definitions, which means full openness, full information disclosure and accessibility would mean to break down the organization's borders that ensure a reduction of complexity. Transparency in this sense is surely a sincere desire, but unrealistic. "Indeed, the

more that information [. . .] is made available to customers, the more modifications they will be enabled to request.” (Vaccaro & Echeverri, 2010, p. 489) To “know everything” and to process “big data” would mean full complexity that hinders social order. A second group of recipient-oriented definitions highlights aspects of understanding and information for stakeholder actions.

Relating to the criteria in transparency definitions, *clarity* in the first group and *information for action* in the second group meet these connections between systems. PR understood as strategic communication implies information as well as clear and open ways of communication—varying from case to case; here, the professionalization of all communication processes supports its realization. Thus, not only practitioners claim that “good” PR implies information clarity. “Good” PR should ensure success in terms of subsequent actions—and avoid the negative image of earlier days. As Bentele (2008, p. 330) pointed out early on, the postulation of transparency is to deduce from the meta criterion verifiability. If this (possibility of) verifiability is called into question, it is a display of distrust. Sometimes, organizations try to regain confidence by acting and communicating responsibly. Therefore, trust and responsibility need to be included in a theoretical conception of transparency. In other words, trust connects the discussion about transparency back to the stakeholder concept, mentioned above. “Trust shifts from a known entity to an unknown one” (Cheney & Barnett, 2005, p. 79) and backwards; therefore, the authors again point out the need for the perception of an organization as network where the relations are communicatively constructed (Weder, 2010). As well, Bentele and Seiffert discussed the relationship of trust and transparency in an “age of transparency”. And it would be quite natural in every kind of network that people have a growing interest to know who’s in control, who’s in charge (Grigorescu, 2008). Structure oriented concepts in organizational theory perceive organizations as complex entities, which tend to be intransparent; recent concepts point out new perspectives in processes like sensemaking and organizing itself (Hernes & Maitlis, 2010; Taylor & Van Every, 2000, 2011; Weick, 1979, 1995) and deconstruct the complexity. Working with the first concept, the organization itself even lacks internal transparency in the sense of a functional problem and external transparency in the sense of a “normative problem” (Bentele & Seiffert, 2009). The further mentioned second concept, a strong process related, constructivist perspective helps to understand transparency as something that is realized in every communication process—in, from and about an organization. The shift from a “theory of organizations” to “organization theory” with a stronger focus on processes and practices helps to understand how an organized state is achieved; therefore, it seems to be useful to understand the relation between trust and transparency and responsibility as an outcome of trust and transparency; in other words: taking responsibility is only possible with trustful stakeholder relations that are constructed and maintained by transparent communication.

That trust and transparency are closely intertwined is shown by the example of how transparency regarding managers’ and politicians’ salaries should reinforce trust—in the managers themselves, the organizations behind them and the economic system overall. Thus, Bentele und Seiffert describe transparency as a “trust-factor”.

Beside other trust factors, transparency has a special position (Bentele & Seiffert, 2009, p. 56). They suppose that transparency increases the chance of emergence and restitution of trust more than other factors. The reason for this presumption is seen in the very nature of the phenomenon transparency. Only transparency allows stakeholder to trust persons, organizations or social systems in general, because trust is also a reduction of complexity, as mentioned above. Other trust factors like expertise, problem-solving competence, adequacy and consistency of communication, social responsibility and ethics of responsibility itself could only be judged when these processes themselves are transparent and can be experienced by confidants (Bentele & Seiffert, 2009, p. 56). Thus, responsibility as normative concept is connected with transparency and is itself one of the trust factors. Other studies point to the “positive impact of transparency on green, collaborative firm-customer programs since information disclosure is considered necessary to guarantee corporate social accountability and, in turn, to get customers’ trust.” (Vaccaro & Echeverri, 2010, p. 497).

Put in a nutshell, transparency as disclosure of information as well as transparency as core concept of organizational communication helps to understand and realize responsibility to reinforce trust. As well, transparency is a normative core concept for other normative mechanisms in organizations. At the same time, the challenge for an integrative concept of CSR communication is the nature of organizations from a structural point of view and the general “impossibility of transparency”. Knowing the expectations of stakeholders, organizations communicate transparency in the sense of strategic information that stakeholders want to have; but this “only” shows responsiveness; thus, responsibility in the sense of a full transparency of structures and processes has the function as moral guideline or normative concept that all organizational processes should be oriented at; the learning from PR theory related trust and transparency for CSR communication therefore is that corporations but also non-governmental organizations have to communicate loudly and strategically to maintain a clearly defined role in society and the public sphere and to obtain a powerful position in discourse with their communication.

As a hierarchical orientation, trust can be considered as second factor that consists of lower facts, including, e.g., transparency, credibility, selectivity of facts, accuracy (Bentele & Seiffert, 2009; Kohring & Matthes, 2007). Beyond the main function of legitimacy, PR and CSR communication focus on the intertwined goals of transparency, trust and credibility, as well as reputation.

3.2 Responsible Reputation and Integrated Values

By discussing stakeholder relations, trust as relational term and transparency as core value and normative pattern of Public Relations and the CSR debate, it becomes more and more obvious that the intersection between PR and CSR and therefore the learning for a concept of integrated CSR communication are

integrated values and the question of integrating values in and via strategic communication.

We would like to go back to our key question: why do companies engage in CSR and why do they have to communicate their engagement? In the literature, different dimensions of CSR engagement are debated: CSR as risk management (globalization, media, critical stakeholders), as civic positioning (license to operate), organizational functioning (involvement, motivation) and market positioning (corporate dimensions) (Beckmann et al., 2006; Paine, 2003). The market oriented and management literature in particular describes CSR communication as something that has to be done, as duty to get heard, the public has to be informed through the means of CSR reports, events and other communication efforts. Additionally, CSR communication is framed as “strategic”, if it follows the corporate strategy, if it is embedded in the business fields.

Looking at PR concepts of reputation or the concept of reputation analyzed and theorized by PR researchers, we can complement this view on the creation of an image of “responsible companies” by the concept of integrated values in the sense of growing an internal and external organizational culture. Talking about reputation and organizational culture, there are some essential questions (Morgan, 1997, p. 141): What are the shared frames of reference (values, regulations etc.) that make organization possible? Where do they come from? How are they created, communicated, and sustained?

The common ground of PR and CSR research is the distinction of organizational culture and corporate culture. Looking for a concept of integrated CSR communication and answering the questions raised above, management approaches such as Deal and Kennedy’s concept of corporate cultures (1982 see also Toth & Trujillo, 1987) have to be complemented with broader concepts of organizational culture. In Schein’s ‘culture-embedding mechanisms’ communication plays only a minor role (1984, 1985, 2004); furthermore, the typologies of Cameron and Freeman (1991), Cartwright and Cooper (1993a, b), but most of all Hofstede’s considerations (2005, see also Hofstede, Neuijen, Ohayu, & Sanders, 1990) are applied in PR research. Again, for an integrated concept of CSR communication there is the need for a more constructive view on organizational culture; working with the assumption that “organizations are communicatively constituted” (Putnam et al., 2009, p. 1; on this see also McPhee & Zaug, 2009; Taylor, 1993; Weick, 1995) we can refer to every communication process as generating social structure. Taylor describes this constitution process as “coorientation” (Taylor, 2009, p. 155) and as a simultaneous relation to something, which must be done, as well as to somebody else, who must do it. “The product of inter-community coorientation—the “bridging”—is the organization itself” (Taylor, 2009, p. 156). This point of view looks reasonable, in this way coordination is also understood as that recursive mechanism, which generates organizational culture. Without going deeper into this upcoming organizational communication perspective, the learning for CSR communication is that rules and value structures are not always set up and realized through management. Rules and value structures develop in the organization and in the stakeholder

networks (Weder, 2007, p. 33). Values facilitate the development and sustainability of a communications network in an organization and to the stakeholder.

Only by bringing the individual actors' values together within the organizational field, by networking *via*—thus self-reflective—communication, is responsibility taken towards the actors, and does 'culture' happen. This way, the understanding of organizations as creators of meaning and providers of orientation within society is also explained.

Thus, integrated CSR communication only works with a constructive view on communication; organization is culture, culture is organization. In other words: integrated CSR communication implies *communicative coordination* between internal and external values as well as talk and action as said above. Therefore, studies on and theoretical concepts of organizational culture are important for further research on CSR communication. From a PR perspective, organizational culture implies emerging structures and processes of communication in and out of an organization, awareness of being included in the value structures and responsibilities of an organization, common patterns and systems of interpretation. Integrated CSR communication embraces all communicative activities that coordinate values and responsibilities, which means the interaction of organizational structure, individual ethics and business culture.

4 Integrated CSR Communication

As discussed above, a corporate management approach to CSR says that taking responsibility as a corporation can only be successful, if it is a business case (Smith, 2003); there seems to be a positive (indirect) correlation between CSR and financial performance—especially in the way critical stakeholders are treated; dealing with CSR influences the stakeholder outreach. Making CSR a business case implies that it isn't just a "management fashion" (see Guthey, Langer, & Morsing, 2006). In parallel, from a Public Relations perspective, CSR cannot be theoretically discussed and practically realized without including communication strategies, management, instruments and stakeholder relations in particular. For us, integrated CSR communication is a term that covers both, an understanding of CSR as inherent concept of business strategy and management and an integrated approach to communication management.

Talking about trust, transparency, dialogue etc. works with an understanding of organizations as embedded in a broader network of relations to their stakeholders, as already discussed and indicated above. Beyond that, organizations are understood as communicatively embedded in the society. In management studies, the idea to engage in an organization's political-social-economic-network is mostly framed as "stakeholder management approach" (Carroll, 2004; Carroll & Buchholtz, 2003; Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Freeman, 1984). The relation to internal and external groups can be more or less intense and more or less symmetrical.

Furthermore, theories of public relations often try to cover moral requirements and conceptualize ethical principles for individual and organizational behavior and communication (Cheney, Christensen, Zorn, & Ganesh, 2011). Examples include the concept of responsible advocacy and with it professional responsibility (Bentele, 2008; Fitzpatrick & Gauthier, 2001; Förg, 2004), the ideal(istic) model of two-way communication (Grunig, 2000) or holistic models of both, ethically and economic, ‘good’ behavior (Baker, 1999; Ulrich, 2001), which leads to the discourse about Corporate Social Responsibility (Ihlen et al., 2011; Karmasin & Weder, 2008; Raupp et al., 2010). Although the stakeholder concept is often criticized for its ambiguity, most studies focus on the effects of CSR communication on different stakeholder groups.

By acknowledging previous research and the theoretical concept of stakeholder management and stakeholder communication, we go back to our focus on the question of how PR theory as well as CSR research and concepts overlap and can lead to an innovative concept of integrated CSR communication. The previous discussion led to the following assumptions: (1) trust and transparency are basics for stakeholder management; (2) allocation and taking of responsibility happen between the organization and internal and external stakeholders *via* communication; (3) organizational value management can be understood as sensemaking, which is inherently social; (4) strategic CSR communication is “sensegiving” (communicative coorientation). The overall function is good reputation and legitimacy.

The stakeholder relationship is assumed to be an interactive, mutually engaged and responsive relationship (Andriof, Waddock, Husted, & Sutherland Rahman, 2002, p. 9), which shows the focus on dialogue, involvement and participation as key concepts for attached concepts of communication; furthermore, value management, as described above, is perceived as co-creation of shared understanding, as sensemaking process. These are learnings from CSR theory and practical discussions. Bringing it together with PR theory and the concept of strategic communication, the process of sensemaking becomes a process of *sensegiving* (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991, p. 434). The idea of sensegiving has been worked out by Morsing & Schultz (i.e., 2006) and the internal perspective complemented by an external perspective. With this, an integrated approach to CSR communication implies sensemaking processes as well as sensegiving processes, which follows the basic concepts of integrated communication (Bruhn, 1995, 2003, 2006a, b, 2008; Bruhn, Schmidt, & Tropp, 2000; Esch, 2011; Gronstedt, 1996; Kirchner, 2001; Schultz, Tannenbaum, & Lauterborn, 1993; Schultz & Schultz, 1998; Steinmann & Zerfaß, 1995; Zerfaß, 2010).

Integrated communication is described as the coordination and—ideally—perfect matching of internal and external communication processes and activities. Mostly used as integrated marketing communication, we would like to take the term further to our understanding of an organization as communicatively constituted; therefore, integration implies the inclusion of all communication processes that self-structure an organization, all processes of negotiation, activity coordination and institutional positioning (McPhee, 1985). Furthermore, all these processes

not only constitute the organization; in addition, they are affected by other systems, individuals, interests and expectations, and traditions, often described as “stakeholders” and “stakeholder interests”.

Morsing & Schultz describe stakeholder information, stakeholder response and stakeholder involvement strategies and highlight stakeholder involvement as a two-way symmetrical and therefore “ideal” (Grunig & Hunt, 1984) communication concept; here, sensemaking and sensegiving in “iterative progressive processes” (Morsing & Schultz, 2006, p. 326f) imply a pro-active dialogue with the stakeholders as well as value negotiations with the stakeholders; they explicitly demand “pro-active endorsement” (ibid, p. 150) to involve stakeholders. This complements the understanding of CSR communication as promoted by Karmasin and Weder (2008, 2013), of integrating CSR communication (information about CSR activities and responsibilities that are seen by a corporation) and responsible communication (integrity and value management).

Furthermore, integrated CSR communication means not only to focus on existing stakeholder relations, but even on future and optional stakeholder relations that might arise by acting responsibly. As well, we would like to point out, that integrated CSR communication implies an integration of “CSR talk” and “CSR action”, as mentioned with the CSR concepts above. As long we are concerned with the fundamental formative and therefore constitutional role of communication for organizations, we have to consider the relation between talk and action, which, at the same time, marks one of the “new areas of CSR research”. Instead of distinguishing between talk and action (Brunsson, 1989), today, more and more concepts of CSR communication seek to go one step further (Christensen, Morsing, & Thyssen, 2013). Our discussion of the potential of PR theory for CSR communication research in general and a concept of integrated CSR communication in particular should work as “conceptual building block” for this new area of theoretical concepts. Furthermore, for us, CSR communication builds up relationships to new stakeholder as well as relationships to issues the corporation has not been related to before; therefore challenges for issue management, integrity management of organizational members and managers in particular, as well as internal and external social media management arise. Herein lies future research potential.

5 Conclusion and Critical Outlook

Recent developments in CSR communication show tendencies towards integration and linking CSR issues with the “normal” business strategy. There is an increasing number of corporations providing integrated sustainability reports. However, that combination of CSR and business reports cope with the known difficulties of social engagement evaluation. Beside reports, especially in the United States it has become obvious on corporate websites that corporations tend to integrate responsibility actions in their different business areas. Furthermore, responsibility has also become an important topic in recruiting videos. These are indeed only external

observations, but corporations seem to be learning from the massive external pressure from active publics (*via* Social Media and traditional mass media) in order to prevent accusations of greenwashing and reputational damage. The theoretical discussion presented here seeks to promote an integrative approach to CSR communication to meet those challenges by bringing together an ethical framework of corporate responsibility and concepts of strategic communication.

As seen in the previous chapters, Public Relations and CSR have a common core, the concept of business responsibility is described, discussed and realized in PR concepts of reputation management, stakeholder relations or trust management. In other words, taking responsibility through (CSR) communication happens as creation of culture by integration or completion of individual value systems in respect of an overall-cultural context and *via* an organization as a community of meaning and values (Linke & Jarolimek, 2016), which is described here as *sensemaking*. Furthermore, integrated CSR communication embraces all strategic communicative activities that co-ordinate and co-construct values and responsibilities, which means the interaction of organizational structure, individual ethics and business culture, introduced here as *sensegiving*.

Hand in hand with an integrative theoretical concept, there is the need to discuss the overlaps and intersections from a methodological point of view. Examples of CSR communication in practice show a wide range of CSR understandings on corporate websites (CSR, sustainability, compliance, corporate citizenship) or among managers, customers and journalists. In addition, there is a multiplicity of in-company processes and organizational structures, when CSR is seen as part of PR as well as part (communication) management. Furthermore, current studies are difficult to compare, focusing on different countries, forms of communication or stakeholder groups. Future research needs an integrative methodological approach to not only focus on communication processes and structures *or* CSR issues or stakeholder analyses. Triangulation, intervention and action research could be debated and applied in future studies.

6 Exercise and Reflective Questions

1. How does PR theory complement CSR research?
2. What are the core concepts where CSR and PR research complement each other?
3. Describe an integrated approach to CSR Communication.
4. Why is the stakeholder concept the core of CSR and PR research? What are the implications for CSR Communication research?
5. How far are organizations “communicatively constructed”?
6. What role does communication play for allocation and taking of responsibility in an organization and between an organization and its stakeholders?
7. What role does “sensemaking” play for the realization of CSR in an organization and between an organization and its stakeholders?

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