Abstract

The EU still lacks a truly European public sphere. On this level, there is still a clear lack of integration between individual member states. This means that national public spheres and cultures are still of great importance for European communication and media professionals. Comparative research into the similarities and differences between different nations is therefore valuable for cross-border PR communication activities. This paper lays out the methodological foundation for such research, discussing possible approaches and difficulties associated with comparative research. The author then introduces a potential heuristic framework for comparative analysis: the International Corporate Communication Compass. This framework is applied to five case-study EU countries (Denmark, Germany, France, Poland and the UK), showing the differences and similarities in a range of different contexts that affect public communication in all its forms. The conclusion examines how the results of such studies could be used in order to compare communication identities of different countries. This can potentially help in the development of a European public identity on the long run and in a first step can lead towards a better, more adapted communication structure about European citizenship. Ultimately, communication structures within the EU might become more Europeanized than they are today.

Keywords: communication; Europe; methodology; identity; case-study.

1. Introduction: The Lack of a European Public Sphere

“Same same but different” is a Thai-English quote for something that appears to be similar at the first look, but isn’t at all at the second. It became quite famous in 2009 with German film, a love story directed by Detlev Buck, awarded different movie awards (IMDb, 2009). But this phrase is not only valid in Asia, but also in good old Europe – and what this means for communication within the Europe is the subject of this article.

The year in which this article intends to be published has been designated by the European Commission as „The Year of the European Citizen“. The background to this nomination is not only the 20th anniversary of the so called Maastricht Treaty, but also the low turnout at the last elections for the European Parliament. The European Commission wants to be closer to and more accepted by the European citizens. Even the Nobel Peace Prize, awarded to the European Union as a whole last year, has not really changed the relatively low acceptance of the EU among its citizens, and has certainly not affected their understanding of them.

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selves predominantly as national, regional or local citizens rather than as European citizens. National, regional and local identities are still ranked much higher than European identity.

The reasons for this are various (Sievert, 2007; Sievert, 2010b). Twenty years ago, for example, the former director of the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies, Gerhards (1993, p. 96) stated that “while the process of economic and political integration has made great strides, the development of a European public sphere is lagging far behind.” In the same period, Mattélart (1996, p.4) observed that the “the homogenisation of societies is inherent to the unification of the economic field”. The German weekly newspaper “Die Zeit” put it even more bluntly: “Europe has no public opinion. Opinions in and about Europe, yes, but they are always shaped by a national perspective” (Schmid, 1996, p. 51). Gramberger (1997, p. 1) also writes of a “history of neglected dialogue”, and Kopper (1997, p. 10) even talks of “sand in the gearbox”, although, at the same time, unity dictates that “the information necessity about the European Union is growing” (Friedrich, 1998, p. 23).

Even in the next decade, the majority of studies still clearly indicate the existence of two speeds of integration (various articles in Bach (2000)); though alongside this trend, some other scholars postulate the idea of an “issue-specific communications community” (Eder, 2000, p. 167). What Eder is referring to here is a communicative society, whereby the type and level of communication is entirely dependent on the issue at hand. Admittedly Risse (2002, p. 22) observes a low level of attention for European topics, but also “a topic-specific communications community with divided structures of significance across national borders”, again directing a great focus towards ascertaining a form of communication appropriate to the issue discussed. This gives rise to the question “can political journalism exist at [the] EU level?” (Baisnée, 2002, p. 108). This question, however, is still usually answered in the negative. “[T]here is, so far, simply no European journalism to be found in Europe,” as Ruß-Mohl (2003, p. 205) rather provocatively summarises. The problem that arises from this is increasingly described as a democracy deficit and an (excessively) great influence of PR and lobbying, that, in contrast to journalism, increasingly pursue an “integrated European strategy” (Dagger & Lianos, 2004, p. 16). For Burton and Drake (2004, p. 15), “the idea of a “European media landscape” is in itself a misnomer: they remark that “nothing much links the sensationalism of Albania to a British broadsheet or a long French analytical feature.” Differences between countries can also be observed on a greater scale than just media or journalism. According to Delanty and Rumford (2005 p.104), “the European public sphere differs from conventional public spheres, whether national or transnational, in that it is poly-vocal, articulated in different languages and through different cultural models and repertoires of justifications, and occurs in very different institutional contexts”. It is clear that the European media landscape is, at the moment, fragmented and varied. There also seems to be little hope for a more homogenous situation in the future. Seifert (2007, p. 31) also talks of the “unfulfilled longing for Europe”, and complains that “the national perspective continues to dominate media coverage”.

However, even in the five years prior to the writing of this article, these negative assessments of the Europeanisation of communication are further supported. European identity in times of crisis seems to be even more challenged than in the comparatively comfortable situation that had existed previously. For example, a survey conducted by the European Association of Communication Directors (EACD) and Institute for Media and Communication Management (MCM) among communication professionals in Europe shows that less than eight percent fully (and less than twenty percent partly) agree that “a European public sphere
will develop a new forum for communication on transnational issues.” (EACD, 2008, p. 68).

Even this year, Rebel and Linders (2013, p. 5) highlight “the lack of interest and involvement of the European citizen” and “the gap between the citizens and the institutions of the EU”, which “led to growing attention for communication by the EU-institutions”.

If a European public sphere or at least a Europeanization of national public spheres is a condition precedent to a European identity, it seems to be very important to be able to compare the existing national public spheres and the communicative players that are contributing to them, because they play a key role in at least pre-defining public perceptions of identity-types within the EU.

If, for example, a successful citizen education is to be realised, then it is crucial to know more about these different and common, collective and multiple identities. This effectively means that comparative research on European and other communication in the existing EU member countries and regions is needed as a basis, which once again requires a profound methodology. The foundation of this methodology will be explored in this article (subchapter 2), followed by a proposal of an heuristic analytical framework (subchapter 3) and its application to five case study countries within the EU (subchapter 4). A short conclusion will offer a summary and attempt to define different possible future areas of research (subchapter 5).

2. Methodological Foundations: Comparative Politics as a Starting Point

As regularly stressed, comparative transnational research, especially in media and communication, is – with the exception of a few positive examples – very much in its infancy. Most studies conducted within the framework of individual contexts of national journalistic or PR systems have been restricted to national level only, even when based on lengthy methodological prior thought and planning. Many also face methodological difficulties and have to be repeated frequently (Sievert, 1998; Bentele 2004; von Ruler & Vercic 2004; Sievert 2008c).

Admittedly, there is an extensive list of competent, regular and country-specific publications with a focus on media systems and media institutions. Whilst this is also very helpful for PR, these studies have yet, for their part, to combat the problems associated with comparison. In the context of an initial introductory methodological contribution to a comparative analysis of the European television landscape, Hofmann (1992, p. 105) stresses: “that even excluding the traditional ‘battleground’ between competing methods of audience measurements, very basic indicators were defined and used differently. Moreover, there has more than once been a serious problem with regard to the reliability of data, even when the figures were provided by prestigious sources”. The reliability and comparability of such statistics are said require appropriate and detailed prior thought. The situation regarding literature in the contexts of media statements and media actors is even more problematic.

Here, one finds only a few exceptional studies that compare a number of different countries with one another on a broad, empirical basis. Of these studies, the majority are monothematic. Moreover, the following summary seems to be perfectly valid, especially with regard to EU analyses: the more empirical the issue – more than likely entirely related to the level of time commitment – the lower the quantity, and unfortunately, more often than not, the poorer the quality of the resultant studies. Literature on the methodological problem of transnational analyses is also rather rare in the field of the communications sciences, so much so that attention will be drawn towards „comparative politics“, as well as transnational market and
product research, in the context of this study. Admittedly, one is confronted on the one hand with „diverse theoretical, methodological and practical research problems“ (Niedermayer 1992 [1986], p. 71) when undertaking interrogative research in this field. On the other hand, however, there is here, as in the field of cross-border market research, a comprehensive and extensive research volume that has mirrored itself largely positively, also concerning more general methodological thought.

The core problem of such „cross-national studies“ (cf. Berg-Schlosser & Müller-Rommell, 1992 [1986], p. 13) lies – as banal as this statement may initially seem – in the comparison. Aarebrot and Bakka (1992 [1986], p. 51) set this correctly and completely in stone: „If [transnational] comparative analyses are not based upon a solid, methodological concept, the results become somewhat pointless“. Furthermore, when other political science components or disciplines sometimes use the comparative method as a means of comparison, scepticism arises, whereby concern is manifested at the comparing of different and seemingly unique phenomena. On the other hand, it could be correct „that every observation that is not compared with other observations is without significance“ (Aarebrot & Bakka, 1992 [1986], p.57).

According to Niedermayer (1992 [1986], p.75), the „specific operational problem of international comparative studies“ is particularly shown through the fact „that the social phenomena to be investigated are associated with differing system contexts“. Concerning Europe in particular, David (1995, p.37) formulates this difficulty: „the problem facing Europe is the taking into account of all the local specifics, and then combining them into one common objective.“ In the field of communications research, one can resort to this dictum from Johnson and Tuttle (1995, p.463): „At the most general level, different cultures represent different contexts for the study of communication“.

The possibilities that arise from this dilemma are exemplified by Niedermayer (1992 [1986], p.75) within the context of survey research; his solution approaches can, however, serve just as well for the content analysis of this study. In order to guarantee the comparability of data gathered in the research process, it is necessary, in his opinion, to operationalize the theoretical concepts used in an „inter-systematic equivalent manner“. Equivalence is understood as „functional equivalence“.

This „functional equivalence“ refers to the „function of elements of a certain level of generalisation, to serve as indicators for a dimension on a higher level“ (Niedermayer, 1992 [1986], p.75). Therefore, they describe „the relationship structures between different levels of generalisation – not between the elements and the same level“. In other words, „[t]he characteristics of functional equivalence can only be attributed to two or more elements; when the relationships is between these elements and an individual, a more general dimension manifests itself as an equivalent“(Niedermayer, 1992 [1986], p.75). This ‘functional equivalence’ is just the first factor that must be borne in mind when conducting a transnational content analysis. This aspect is just as important when determining the investigation and analytical continuities as when determining the timeframe of the study, as well as when creating a category system that is transnationally employable.

For example, this can mean that all media chosen should practise or exercise an equivalent „function“ or a previously defined system limitation, in any case a „service“, within the journalistic social system where they operate; they should at least have an established plausible or similarly large influence on „publication“ or „published opinion“ in their respective country. Only when these conditions are satisfied does a comparison concerning further con-
tent criteria and a discussion of national and European issues seem useful. This is also very important for International Corporate Communication.

The concept of „functional equivalence“ forms a necessary, but not completely sufficient factor for a transnational analysis. In addition to this comes the aspect of a certain „formal similarity“, tied in with investigative consistency and categorical systemisation (Kromrey 1991 [1980], p.244-247). This is important primarily for pragmatic reasons, as for all national studies – although Niedermayer does not explicitly comment on this himself. In the final consistency, the concept of „functional equivalence“ is likewise mentioned, yet on a seemingly low logical level. To give a concrete example, in terms of a content analysis study in which one wishes to compare in which country, to what extent, in what form and with which significance e. g. for the European Union an information is given, it seems sensible to compare two analysis consistencies that demonstrate a relatively high level of “formal similarity”. It is easier to compare two new magazines like “Der Spiegel” or “L’Express” from two European countries than comparing a newspaper article of “Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung” and a television news contribution from “TF 1”.

In summary, „functional equivalence“ and „formal similarity“ represent two factors that are essential when conducting a realistic transnational-orientated content analysis – in order to combat the aforementioned theoretical and methodological problems. In addition to this, one must consider the aforementioned practical research problems and potentially more in the subsequent data analysis (Niedermayer 1992 [1986], p.80-84). Essentially, they arise through language problems.

3. Heuristic Framework: Basics for an International Communication Compass

The question now is, how to apply these „functional equivalence“ and „formal similarity“ in a precise study? The main problem seems to be that for each individual indicator, a full theoretical research project has to be undertaken and a clear definition has to be arrived at – often in academic discipline where the communication scientist is only a guest and not a key player, such as legal issues or specific financial data. Therefore, the best way to solve these problems seems to build mainly on secondary analysis, i. e. on already existing knowledge and existing comparative studies from various other academic disciplines. Only where this is unsuccessful does a new comparative approach seem to make sense and, indeed, be unavoidable. Even then, however, it would be preferable to work together with experts from the research field concerned. This seems to be a quite simple and practical approach, but the author is convinced that it can contribute to solving the shortcomings of previous comparative studies in communication who tried to build up too many and too complex content in a new and independent way for the area of communication.

How this can be done practically, is currently being shown by the “International Corporate Communication Compass” (ICCC), a joint international research project led by the author of this text. Since its results are not only valid for the corporate world, but also for public administration or civil society, it could also be given the more general name of an “International Communication Compass”. The ICCC is – in Europe – an official project of the “European Public Relations Education and Research Association” (EUPRERA) and, on a global level, integrated into Commission on Global PR Research at the “Institute for Public Relations” (IPR),
based in Gainesville, Florida. The ICCC is based on a heuristic working model for the social subsystem of „corporate communications” that is as differentiated as possible.

The model proposed by the author is built on four contexts that are of immense importance when it comes to all kind of communication activities from one country to another one or also from a supranational institution to different nation states. Therefore, it can be used for the overall navigation of Global PR activities as well as for organizing focussed transnational corporate or product communication or for more difficult political subject like e. g. communicating the idea of European citizenship towards the European citizens. The last one could be done by the European institutions within their communication activities within a better kind of political mobilisation (CEC, 2005), but also by local and regional intermediary frameworks of all kinds within their activities if transantional.

Taking into account an idea for describing journalism of Weischenberg (1992), the social subsystem of corporate communications can be represented by the layers of an onion, but also by a kind of compass showing the various important dimensions (cf. diagram 1). Economic and political systems and the respective media environments in which corporate communications occur form the normative context. The author of this paper appreciates that in no way, in the modern world, is PR simply media relations, but rather that it concerns many other fields of application. There is a certain narrowness to the perspective when these two terms are used synonymously. The understanding of media systems, however, continues to be vital for PR work, and therefore this definition seems to be wholly justified. In the structural context, specific foreign target institutions, usually corporations, are scrutinized with regard to their financial and leadership structures.

The functional context primarily involves cultural dimensions and conflicts that can (and should) influence the contents of international corporate communications to a great extent. Last but not least, the role context examines international target actors against the backdrop of their different features, expertise, and attitudes.

For each of these contexts within the ICC, research could be carried out regarding the individual countries which are the targets of international communications. This research would look at the extent to which distinctions can be made between the contexts or the extent to which differences in other industries or corporate cultures flow from them. In this way, for each communication situation confronted in practice, a grid could be developed that would cover all target countries, institutions, media and actors. PR agencies could use the grid as they planned and evaluated campaigns and strategies.

All this could be summed up into a kind of “compass” showing different intensities for different Key Performance Indicators on each level. That again can be used for a gap analysis to show parallels and differences between different countries (cf. diagram 2). It illustrates the importance for a globally-engaged corporate communicator to be knowledgeable about the levels of target countries, target institutions, target contents and target actors (or why he or she should ensure that employees or service providers have the necessary knowledge). With the right information at hand, PR professionals are in a position to create a kind of ICC compass with regard to dichotomies in all four contexts presented.

How many and which particular compass axes should be selected for an individual strategic communications goal depends upon the situation. In each and every case, however, by combining the points on the individual axes, a kind of rough map emerges. When the cultural expressions of the individual contexts for all axes are compared to the map, the greatest cultural differences between the systems in which a communications project originates and those of the target system become apparent. This background knowledge is of great use for professionals directing cross-national and cross-cultural corporate communications. It does not deliver an eternally valid image of the communicative structure of each country, but it gives a very good and quite complete impression based on existing, but newly combined academic research results.


For its development, the ICCC was first tested on five European countries. The results of this test are first published here; so far, only internal working paper for the IPR on this had been written (Sievert, 2010a); a second was done not on a country cases, but on an interna-
tional corporate case (Sievert & Craig, 2012). Countries were chosen where it was uncomplicated to find existing secondary analysis from other disciplines for the normative, functional and role contexts, where functional equivalence was already properly defined and could just be used for the cross-cultural PR context. Often, most or all the indicators that we needed were already included in one and the same study. In these cases, only a critical reference to the study had to be done. This also means, that at this first step of testing the ICCC no new own data was collected and existing data from different studies was only compiled within one indicator if absolutely unavoidable. The main idea is for this stage is not new empirical research, but the interdisciplinary compilation of existing data in an intelligent way to get a new perspective on the subject that is interesting and useful for both, academics as well as practitioners. The idea behind this is classical emergence, understanding the whole as greater as the sum of its parts.

However, the structural context proved much more complicated. Here, we needed to define some new indicators, e.g. the attribute „finance source“ had to be measured by the percentage of the equity ratio in the different countries (Sievert 2009, pp. 6-7) The higher the equity ratio is, the more autonomy companies have in deciding how to communicate, without taking other stakeholder into account. Functional equivalence had to be checked and argued carefully here. If the ICCC is now moving on to a global scale from 2013 on, such processes will probably occur even more often. This will make the work on it more complicated, but also more interesting and rewarding.

However, even this ICCC is only a basic tool and a lot of work remains to be done in the future. It has to be mentioned that all the above remarks on cross-cultural PR research are based on a very classical and quite conservative idea of a mono-cultural nation state. This makes sense for reasons of simplicity and manageability, although from a pure academic perspective, we need to differentiate in much more detail in future cross-cultural PR studies.

Differentiation is mainly needed into two directions. According to the author of this paper, the first differentiation necessary for the future is due to partial internal dissolution of nation state based communication areas as a result of immigration and, especially, because of the development of special media use by immigrants. Therefore, within one nation state we might have a dominant PR and media system, but we always have to consider that there are many other smaller subsystems (Dorfner, 2009). Therefore, the connection of identity, citizenship and migration within the EU, its member countries, its regions and its local bodies are a very important subject for future research.

The second differentiation required for a new age of cross-cultural PR studies is due to the partial external dissolution of nation state based communication areas due to the growing importance of social media. These might have two effects: firstly, the creation of cross-border or even global communication areas on special subjects, and secondly, more regionalisation or even localisation of content (Qualman, 2011).

Both dimensions will force us to rethink carefully what functional equivalence and formal similarity mean in the context of cross-cultural PR research – might this be qualitative or quantitative. In any case, it is obvious that the existing concepts (including the current state of the ICCC) are not sufficient to answer all questions that will arise in the future, but they are a good basic tool for a comparative analysis within the almost non-existent European public sphere.
4. Country Cases: Analyzing the communication structure of five EU countries

The following section will present some very first results on the ICC compass for European countries. The selected European countries are Germany, the UK, France (selected due to being three of the largest countries within the European Union, representing the three different cultural backgrounds of Germanic, Anglo-Saxon and Romance), Poland (as the largest Eastern European EU member) and Denmark (as an example for Scandinavia). We will describe the results by context, not country, in order to make direct comparison easier. This seems to be important basic knowledge for successful European integration through political communication via public mobilization.

4.1. Normative context

The first context which will be examined for the five countries is the normative context. This context is concerned with the norms that are generally recognized within a media system (Sievert 2009, p.5). For this purpose, the model developed by Hallin and Mancini (2004) can be used to compare characteristics of the political and media systems in the chosen societies. The authors defined nine parameters, by which the general political perspectives and the media system in concrete are analysed.

This comparison is focused on only five of these parameters. This focus seems reasonable, given that corporate communication is more directly influenced by these factors than by the others. The attributes are: „general role of the state“, „reach of newspaper distribution“, „parallelism between politics and media“, „qualification of the communication profession“, and „importance of the state in media systems“.

The criterion „general role of the state“ is characterized by either a dirigiste attitude, which implies that the state is actively involved in market and the media, or more liberal behavior, where the government tries to remain independent of the above-mentioned areas (Hallin & Mancini 2004, p.127).

The attribute „reach of newspaper distribution“ examines the newspaper circulation in the relevant countries, by analysing the percentage of a population (older than 14 years) which reads a newspaper (Hallin & Mancini 2004, p. 63). Following this, the aspect „parallelism between politics and media“ investigates how strongly media organizations are tied to political organizations (Hallin & Mancini 2004, p. 38). „The qualification of the communication profession“ examines how professionalized the communication business is (Hallin & Mancini 2004, p. 289). Finally, the parameter „importance of the state in the media systems“ describes the extent to which the state can directly intervene in the media system in the country (Hallin & Mancini 2004, p. 49).
Table 1. Results normative context.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country / Attribute</th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>France</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>Poland</th>
<th>United Kingdom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Role of the State</td>
<td>Dirigiste</td>
<td>Dirigiste (mixed)</td>
<td>Dirigiste</td>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>Liberal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reach of Newspaper Distribution</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parallelism between Politics and Media</td>
<td>Medium (neutral)</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium (neutral)</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium (neutral)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualification of Communication Profession</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of the State in Media Systems</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Following Hallin & Mancini (2004), table 1 shows their proposition for indicators within the normative context. These proposition can be confirmed by other sources, e. g. the government in Germany and Denmark is more actively involved (Hassel 2006, p.315; Schild & Uterwedde 2006, p.167), while the United Kingdom and Poland have a more constricted state (Dolgowska & Hishow 2006, p.1). France represents a special case here, as it transformed from a dirigiste to a more liberal state (Hallin & Mancini 2004, p.127) also in the media sector (Balle, 1994). With regard to the newspaper circulation in the examined countries, Denmark leads with a newspaper reach of almost 80 percent, followed by Germany with 76 percent, then United Kingdom with 48 percent and France with 45 percent (Wruck 2006, p.2). Poland, with a newspaper reach of 23 percent, has the lowest newspaper circulation in this comparison (Wyka 2008, p.60).

With reference to the aspect of „parallelism“, Germany, the United Kingdom and Denmark have a medium degree of parallelism between politics and media, where the political influence is mainly embedded in a neutral commercial press (Hallin & Mancini 2004, p.67). In contrast, France and Poland are characterised by a high degree of political parallelism, where the government model of broadcast governance is dominant (Hallin & Mancini 2004, p.67; Wyka 2008, p.57).

Concerning the „qualification of the communication profession“, the media systems in Denmark, Germany and United Kingdom are self-regulated and show a high level of professionalization (Hallin & Mancini 2004, p.67), whereas France and Poland have a less professionalized system (Hallin & Mancini 2004, p.67; Wyka 2008, p.60). Finally, the importance of the state in the media is relatively high in Germany, France, Poland and Denmark, where the state can actively intervene in the media system (Hallin & Mancini 2004, p.67). An exception is the United Kingdom, where the state plays only a minor role in the media system (Hallin & Mancini 2004, p.67). Table 1 shows a summary of the results.

4.2. Structural context

After analyzing the general normative context of the target countries, the structural context will look at the target institutions, focusing on the financial structures and the cultural implications associated with them (Sievert 2009, p.10f). One might argue that this issue is not that important for communicating European citizenship, but the author deeply believes it is. This is because non-profit institutions of civil society also have an economic basic. Further-
more, the current understanding of the EU by its citizens is much based on (currently mainly negatively defined) economic facts (cf. subchapter 1 of this article) which gives an additional importance to this context.

Building on the work of Berglöf (1997), Williams and Conley (2005) and Mallin (2006), the target countries will be analysed based on five variables, which cover the dimensions of corporate finance and corporate governance. These five dimensions are: „finance source“, „control culture“, „board system“, „target group“, and „CSR orientation“.

The attribute „finance source“ is measured by the percentage of the equity ratio in the different countries. A higher equity ratio indicates a higher level of autonomy, enabling the company to decide how to communicate without necessarily having to take other stakeholders into account. „Control culture“ indicates if a more control-oriented or an arm’s length control culture prevails. In an arm’s length control culture, investors do not intervene in the company as long as payment obligations are met. In a control oriented control culture, investors’ intervention is typically based on a control block of equity or a position as exclusive or dominant creditors (Buckley 2004, p.44).

The factor „board system“ analyses what kind of board system is predominant in the countries. It is divided between unitary and dual board systems. In a dual system, two control instances are responsible for the company, to ensure a balance of power within the company (Thompson 2001, p.81). The „target group“ criterion explores whether country corporations are focused on their shareholders or if they also take other stakeholders into account (Skrzipek 2005, p.9ff). Finally, the „CSR orientation“ is another benchmark in this comparison. In this category, the emphasis placed upon corporate social responsibility in the enterprises in the investigated is reviewed.

Table 2. Results structural context.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country / Attribute</th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>France</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>Poland</th>
<th>United Kingdom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Finance Source</td>
<td>35.8% (Equity ratio)</td>
<td>21.5% (Equity ratio)</td>
<td>19.6% (Equity ratio)</td>
<td>40% (Equity ratio)</td>
<td>38.5% (Equity ratio)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Culture</td>
<td>Arm’s length oriented</td>
<td>Control oriented</td>
<td>Control oriented</td>
<td>Control oriented</td>
<td>Arm’s length oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board System</td>
<td>Dual</td>
<td>Unitary</td>
<td>Dual</td>
<td>Dual</td>
<td>Unitary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target Group</td>
<td>Stakeholder oriented</td>
<td>Stakeholder oriented (Mixed)</td>
<td>Stakeholder oriented</td>
<td>Shareholder oriented (Mixed)</td>
<td>Shareholder oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSR Orientation</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With regard to the „financial source“, Germany and France have the lowest equity ratio in this comparison, with 19.6 percent for Germany and 21.5 percent for France on average. Denmark and United Kingdom are in the middle with 35.8 percent and 38.5 percent (INSM 1999). Poland has the highest equity ratio on average with 40 percent (cf. Bass 2007). As far as „control culture“ is concerned, German, French and Polish firms rely on a control oriented control culture (Neuberger 2000, p.26, Buckley 2004, p.45 and Jedrzejczak 1999, p.92),
while English and Danish firms are more arm’s length controlled (Buckley 2004, p.45; IMF 2006, p.119).

The “board system“ of German, Polish and Danish firms is normally a dual board (Du Plessis, Großfeld and Luttermann 2007, p.169; Mallin 2006, p.104). In comparison, the majority of French and English companies have a unitary board system (Mallin 2007, p.172, Thompson 2001, p.83). For the attribute „target group“ it has to be stated that a general trend towards a more stakeholder-oriented management can be recognized (Carroll & Buchholtz 2008, p.57). Nonetheless, in a direct comparison some countries are less stakeholder-oriented than others and are seen as shareholder-oriented. Germany, France and Denmark can clearly be perceived as stakeholder-oriented countries (cf. Cooper 2004, p.18; Zu 2008, p.89; Rose & Mejer 2003, p.335), while Poland and the United Kingdom are more shareholder-oriented countries (Chen 2004, p.51; Bluhm 2007, p.83).

For the last criterion, which is closely connected with the previous attribute (cf. Crane, McWilliams and Matten 2008: 180), it can be seen that all the examined countries emphasise on „corporate social responsibility“ (CSR). Nonetheless, in this comparison, Germany, the United Kingdom and Denmark show a higher priority for CSR than France and Poland (Schrott 2007, p.87; Den Hond, De Bakker & Neergaard 2007, p.206; Perrini, Pogutz & Tencati 2006, p.43; Habisch 2007, p.497). The complete research for the structural context is contained in Table 2.

4.3. Functional context

In this part of the paper, the differences in the functional context are compared. Here, the functional context describes whether the target content can be directly conveyed in a certain cultural context or whether it needs to be transmitted through several interim steps (Sievert 2009, p.13). To analyse the cultural context of the selected countries, the work of Hofstede (2001) serves as an excellent starting point. In his work, he discovered four cultural dimensions (later augmented by a fifth), which differ between countries.

The five dimensions are: „power distance“, „uncertainty avoidance“, „individualism vs. collectivism“, „masculinity vs. femininity“ and „long-term vs. short-term orientation“ (added in 2001). Power distance describes how different countries handle inequality in society. For the uncertainty avoidance factor, Hofstede analysed the differences in how societies cope with the uncertainty of the future. Individualism vs. collectivism reflects on the relationship between the individual and the collectivity that prevails in a given society. The masculinity vs. femininity factor investigates how societies cope differently with the duality of the different sexes. Finally, the long-term vs. short-term orientation dimension examines the different attitudes in societies towards the length of future planning (Hofstede 2001, p.87ff).

While the first four dimensions are covered by the research of Hofstede (2013), the last dimension is not available for all the countries investigated by Hofstede, due to the fact that the dimension „long-term vs. short term orientation“ was introduced after the original study (Hopper, Scapens and Northcott 2007, p.98). Therefore, to ensure a consistent and reliable comparison, the current saving ratio of the different countries is used to investigate the long-term or short-term orientation of the societies.
The first dimension of Hofstede, the power distance, shows that France and Poland are leading with 68 (on an index of 100) and can be seen as the countries where the distribution of power is most unequal, followed by Germany and United Kingdom with 35 each and Denmark with the lowest value of 18 (Hofstede 2010). In regards to the individualism vs. collectivism dimension, Germany, France and Denmark are close together within a 65-75 range. The United Kingdom has the highest emphasis on individualism with 89, while Poland is last with 60 (Hofstede 2010). Germany, the United Kingdom and Poland, with 64-66 value masculinity attributes, score higher than France with 43 and especially Denmark with 16, where “feminine” values seem to be valued more highly (Hofstede 2010). In terms of uncertainty avoidance, Poland with 93 and France with 86 show the greatest willingness to avoid uncertainty. Germany follows with 65. United Kingdom and Denmark, with 35 and 23, tend to be more tolerant towards uncertainty and risks (Hofstede 2010).

Finally, within the last dimension, it must be anticipated that overall European and Anglo-American countries traditionally have a short-term orientation in a global comparison (Lussier & Achua 2009, p. 392). Nonetheless, in this differentiation, France and Germany with a saving ratio of over 10 percent show a slightly stronger long-term orientation (Finanz-Geld Finanznachrichten 2008), while Denmark, with −3 percent, has a clearer orientation towards short term planning (OECD 2012, p. 63). The United Kingdom with 1 percent and Poland with 4 percent are in the middle (Kollewe 2008, OECD 2012, p. 63). Table 3 summarizes these findings.

### 4.4. Role context

Finally, in the role context, the target actors in the chosen countries are reviewed. Due to the fact that communication actors work in manifold disciplines and professions, this context is primarily focused on journalism, where a cross-border comparison is applicable (Sievert 2009, p. 15). For this, Weaver (1998), which analyses with regard to their journalistic proficiency and identifies various features and attributes which can be fulfilled to a higher or lesser extent, can serve as a basis for comparison.

Alongside some general characteristics, the role context is analysed by means of five attributes: „statistical sex ratio“, „academic degree“, and „degree in journalism“, which cover general journalistic characteristics, and the aspects: „provide analysis“, and „be a watchdog of the government“, which describe the attitudes towards the occupational role as a journalist. The first characteristic describes the distribution between the sexes within the journalistic profession in the countries investigated.

### Table 3. Results functional context (* = estimated values). |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country / Attribute</th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>France</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>Poland*</th>
<th>United Kingdom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Power Distance Index</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualism vs. Collectivism</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculinity vs. Femininity</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertainty Avoidance Index</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-Term vs. Short-Term Orientation</td>
<td>-3%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Following this, the overall academic degree and the percentage of journalistic degrees in particular are compared. After that, the professional attribute „provide analysis“ examines how important it is for journalists to provide analysis and interpretation of complex problems (Weaver 2007, p.139) and the criterion „be a watchdog of the government“ describes the extent to which the journalists identify themselves as a „fourth estate“, covering ideas of the press as representative of the public, critical of government and advocate of policies (McQuail 2005, p.284; Weischenberg & Sievert 1998).

Table 4. Results role context.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country / Attribute</th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>France</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>Poland</th>
<th>United Kingdom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statistical Sex Ratio</td>
<td>High (45% female)</td>
<td>Medium (39% female)</td>
<td>Medium (37.2% female)</td>
<td>High (50% female)</td>
<td>Low-Medium (30% female)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Degree</td>
<td>High (60%)</td>
<td>High (69%)</td>
<td>High (60%)</td>
<td>Medium (45%)</td>
<td>Medium (49%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree in Journalism</td>
<td>———</td>
<td>———</td>
<td>Low (13%)</td>
<td>Low (11%)</td>
<td>Low (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide Analysis</td>
<td>High (79%)</td>
<td>Medium (40%)</td>
<td>High (74%)</td>
<td>High (78%)</td>
<td>High (83%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be a watchdog of the government</td>
<td>Medium (43%)</td>
<td>Medium (40%)</td>
<td>Low-Medium (33%)</td>
<td>Medium (56%)</td>
<td>Medium (56%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Poland and Denmark have the highest percentage of women in journalism. Poland has a ratio of 50 percent (OBP 2005) while Denmark has a ratio of 45 percent (Absalonsen 2006). France, with 39 percent (Creedon & Cramer 2007: 165) and Germany, with 37.2 percent (cf. Köstler 2008: 8) show a medium percentage. The United Kingdom has the lowest percentage for of this attribute: „only“ 30 percent of the English journalists are female (Creedon & Cramer 2007: 165). The statistical sex ratio also shows the overall social situation of journalism as a profession which is important for executing transnational communication issues, too (Creedeon & Cramer 2007).

With regard to the „academic degree“ of the journalists, France with 69 percent and Denmark and Germany with 60 percent each have the highest parameter value (Sievert 2008a, p.21; Schorr, Campbell and Schenk 2003, p.21 and Huck 2004, p.89). The United Kingdom and Poland show a lower percentage, with 49 percent and 45 percent respectively (Anyonomous 2005; Sievert 2008a, p.21). When it comes to a particular degree in journalism, a far smaller percentage is displayed for the countries selected. 13 percent of German journalists possess a journalistic degree, compared to 11 percent of Polish journalists and just 4 percent of British journalists (Wahl Jorgensen & Hanitzsch 2009, p.43; Anyonomous 2005; Weaver 1998). Denmark and France have to be excluded from this attribute, due to the fact that these countries do not provide sufficient information about the percentage of journalists with a journalistic degree.

After analyzing the general characteristics, attitudes towards journalism are examined. The United Kingdoms’ journalists value the attribute „provide analysis“ the most with 83 percent, followed by Denmark with 79 percent, Poland with 78 percent and Germany with 74 percent (Hovden, Bjørnsen, Ottosen, Willig and Ziliacu-Tikkani 2009, p.161, Sievert 2008a, p.21;; Weaver 1998). French journalists show a medium degree with 40 percent (Siev-
In the final category, "be a watchdog of the government"; the United Kingdom and Poland both show the same percentage, 56 percent (Weaver 1998; Sievert 1998). 43 percent of the Danish journalists and 40 percent of the French journalists perceive this element as important (Hovden et al. 2009, p.161; Sievert 2008a, p.21). “Only” 33 percent of German correspondents value this remark (Weaver 1998). A summary of the results can be found in Table 4.

5. Conclusion: A joint picture of national communication identities and future steps

It is of fundamental importance to be aware of differences, but also common points within the communicative culture of the different EU member states, not only in the current “Year of the European citizen”. If we take an overview of all results presented so far, especially in subchapter 4, we can draw a kind of new “map of Europe”: a map of its international communication (cf. Diagram 3).

Diagram 3. Result overview for selected countries within the ICC compass.

The main similarities we can see here are linked to the role context. Journalists throughout the surveyed countries considered themselves to some degree to be “watchdogs of government”; they thus generally ascribe moderate importance to investigative journalism. Analysis, in turn, is considered a very important part of the journalistic activity; and the profession as a whole is generally professionalized, in view of the relatively high importance ascribed to higher education training, if not specifically in the area of journalism itself. Similarities between the countries are therefore evident primarily within the “role context” – indicating that journalistic self-perception shows relatively little variation from country to country. However, the normative context is also characterized by a relatively high degree of
conformity between most of the countries surveyed on the level of state influence, as seen in contrast with a distinctively “Anglo-Saxon” media landscape in Britain.

The main differences are the respective results for “power distance” that show considerable variation. Whilst Denmark shows a very equal wealth distribution, the highest scoring country, France, displays a very uneven society. Considerable differences can also be observed within the structural context, largely on account of the fundamental economic differences between “dirigiste” and “liberal” economic models. France, Germany and Denmark show a “dirigiste” relationship between the state and the media, which is, in turn, reflected in the state’s considerable importance in media operations. A notable exception to this rule is Poland, characterized as it is by a “liberal” state but showing significant state influence in the media.

In general terms, therefore, the major differences occur in the regions of functional and structural context, allowing us to conclude that corporate structures and attitudes will be rife with stumbling blocks for international corporate communication, due to the cultural gap which arises between source and target countries.

To conclude we can note that the differences, or “cultural gaps” between the selected countries here are significantly more prominent than the similarities, and that there is therefore no real potential for seeing and describing a homogenized model for “European” journalism. Consequently we must acknowledge that the need for such compasses is great, and that awareness of intercultural structures and attitudes as analysed here is vital in the preparation of any international communication, as the country from which the information comes will invariably possess different values to that into which the information is to be sent. Using the ICC compass, we can provide PR professionals with an adaptable tool to recognize and prepare for the potential problems that arise from intercultural communication, even within Europe.

But does this also help concerning the public communication of the European Union itself? Will this bring us closer to a real European citizenship? On one hand, yes, because increased knowledge of similarities makes it easier to address pan-European issues. Knowledge about differences helps decision-makers to know which points have to be given special attention if they do not wish to alter their own approach. Therefore, a tool like a European communication compass is a necessary condition for the Europeanisation of national public spheres and for the creation of a real European public sphere where European citizens can exchange information.

On the other hand, however, this necessary condition is only one important step, but not a sufficient condition for creating such a public sphere for European citizenship Brousniche (2013, p. 73) is absolutely right that European communication has to satisfy four different requirements:

a. it has to target a broad diversity of receptor cultures and backgrounds,
b. be aware of its vast and unclear symbolic codes
c. aim at unique impact on European framing, while
d. using two-way citizen-centred communications

A European communication compass or an International Communication Compass (ICC) for Europe is mainly satisfying requirement (a). The special situation of requirement (b), however, makes this an indispensable precedent. However, requirements (c) and (d) will also only function on a transnational scale if knowledge such as that contained in the ICC is also used for initiating and motivating the communication within the intermediary frameworks that surround European citizenship. Only if this is taken into account, will there one day also be a
pan-European public sphere for the good of all. And not only a “Same Same but Different” approach.

Rezumat: Aceast articol prezint bazele metodologice ale unei cercetâri comparative asupra diferenelor și similitudinilor dintre diferite state în ceea ce privește practicile de PR și comunicarea transnațională. Autorul introduce un instrument pentru a realiza analiza comparativă – The International Corporate Communication Compass. Acest instrument este folosit pentru a realiza studii de caz asupra a cinci țări din Uniunea Europeană (Danemarca, Germania, Franța, Polonia și Marea Britanie), cu scopul de a a arăta diferențele și similitudinile dintre acestea în ceea ce privește comunicarea publică și contextele care influențează acest tip de comunicare. Rezultatele obținute pot fi utilizate pentru a compara identitatea comunicațională a fiecărei țări analizate. Pe termen lung, aceste studii pot fi folosite pentru a contribui la apariția și dezvoltarea unei identități europene și a unei comunicări mai bine structurate despre cetățenia europeană.

Cuvinte-cheie: comunicare; Europa; metodologie; identitate.

Note

1 The quotations in this paper are from various authors, originally in various European languages. For purpose of better universal understanding, the author has translated all quotations into English.

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