Crisis Communication Research in Eastern Europe

The Cases of Poland and Hungary

Gyorgy Szondi and Paweł Surowiec

Introduction

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, 29 countries have emerged out of the eight former communist countries in Eastern Europe. These countries are often referred to as transitional countries because of the transitions from a single-party political system toward a pluralistic society, and from a centrally planned economy toward a market economy. Societies in transition are especially prone to experience crises, as fundamental changes in the political, economic, and social systems have given rise to vulnerabilities and social unrest which are not experienced by more advanced democracies (Elster, Offe, & Preuss, 1998).

Eastern Europe covers a wide range of countries, which are culturally, linguistically, ethnically, and politically diverse. Therefore, it is unrealistic to typify a particular approach to crisis communication that would characterize the entire region. Some commonalities, however, can be identified, which stems from the transitional nature of the countries.

The Context of Crisis Communication Research in Eastern Europe

The most comprehensive project in the region so far has been the CM Baltic/Europe research program which was launched in 1997 in close collaboration with the Swedish Agency for Civil Emergency Planning. The project focused on the following goals (Stern & Sundelius, 2002, p. 72): (1) To develop and refine theoretically based analytical tools for studying and learning from crisis experiences; (2) to promote the development of crisis studies (as a multidisciplinary academic sub-field); (3) to promote national and transnational dialogue between the academic and practitioners' communities in Europe through training workshops and thematic conferences; (4) to encourage scholars and practitioners from other European countries (especially from the new democracies around the Baltic Sea area) to document, analyze, compare, and share knowledge of their crisis experiences; and (5) to promote confidence building and the development of a capacity for political/operational collaboration among the governments and international organizations of the region.

The research program identified ten analytical themes for the structurally-focused comparison of various types of crises. They are explored in the publications of the Crisis Management

Research and Training Center (CRISMART) that analyzes crisis management in the following Eastern European countries: Estonia (Stern & Nohrstedt, 2001), Latvia (Stern & Hansén, 2000), Russia (Porfiriev & Svedin, 2002), Slovenia (Brändström & Malešič, 2004), Bulgaria (Engelbrekt & Förberg, 2005), Lithuania (Buus, Newlove, & Stern, 2005), and Poland (Bynander, Chmielewski, & Simons, 2008). In these volumes, the authors explore the special context of crises in the particular country followed by case studies, the majority of which are of politically driven. Each volume concludes with a comparative analysis of the case studies, based on the propositions characteristic of the region. Crisis communication is one of the analytical themes explored in the country-specific case studies. The authors focus on the relationship between the information available, its timely and appropriate dissemination, perceptions of a crisis, actions taken to solve it, and how the crisis was reported in the mass media. In most cases, however, communication during the crisis is not analyzed in a systematic way but based on observations or limited media coverage.

The vital role of media in crisis communication is widely acknowledged; however several factors can influence how crises are covered and contextualized by the media, which themselves are prone to crisis. The media have been affected by the financial crises, having lost 30 to 60 percent of their income across the Eastern European countries. An Open Society Institute (2010) study explored the impact of the financial crisis on media and news delivery to citizens in 18 Central and Eastern European countries. The study identified the following trends in the region: a “ratings war” among the broadcast media, with a tendency to turn the main news broadcasts into infotainment shows; lower quality, lesser frequency, and narrower range of topics in investigative reporting; decreased diversity of sources, with stories often based on one interview; increasing reliance on PR materials, news agencies, and unconfirmed reports on the internet; blatant hidden advertising of both a commercial and a political nature; increased attempts to use media as a political tool; changes in political rhetoric about the role of media in democracy (persistent accusations of producing “only bad news,” frequently addressed to outlets pursuing accountability journalism); in coverage of the financial crisis, a distinct absence of credible expertise and context; shallower and infrequent coverage of culture and social issues; cuts in regional and international coverage resulting in capital-city-centered and inward-looking reporting. All these issues have bearings on how crises are reported in the media or how the media can create scandals to sustain or increase audience numbers.

The following sections will discuss crisis communication research in Poland – the biggest Eastern European country in the European Union – and in Hungary, which was not featured in any of the CRISMART volumes.

Crisis Communication Research in Poland

Crisis communication as an area of academic inquiry in Poland dates back to the end of the 1990s, so the field is still at its infancy. While research and publishing on crisis management are under way, analysis of crisis communication is largely approached in an *instrumental* way and lacks critical approaches. Crisis communication studies in Poland are characterized by legacies of the pre-1989 state socialist political economy. In the hindsight, since the end of 1970s, crisis was an ongoing feature of organizational life (Czarniawska, 1986) and public affairs (Surowiec, 2013) in Poland when the emerging social movements, such as Solidarity, campaigned (1980–89) for better labor conditions and industrial relations, allowing the union an input into the state economic policies and organizational management.

The political economy transition in Poland has changed this ideological position and scholars have begun to account for practices accompanying crisis management by revealing communicative relationships between stakeholders at the times of crisis. With a few exceptions (e.g., Kundzewicz, Szamalek, & Kowalczyk, 1999) disclosing shortcomings in media reporting on crisis management

during the Great Flood of 1997 in Poland, the beginnings of the 2000s brought about a steady stream of research into crisis communication.

Definitions and Approach: Towards a Crisis Managing Society

After a reflective review of the body of literature on crisis management in Poland, we follow a broad approach of understanding crisis communication – as organizational (in the private sector), sociopolitical (political or economic, religious, security), and natural (disasters, emergencies, risk perceptions) as they are intertwining in terms of consequences and responsibilities held by stakeholders' in preventing and/or managing responses to crisis communication (Rydzak, 2009).

Yet, to date, Polish academia has not produced an extensive research tradition on crisis communication. The initial period of adopting crisis management studies into the curricula and research agendas of several academic institutions (e.g., the University of Warsaw, the University of Wrocław, or the Poznań University of Economics), professional events (e.g., the Congress of Public Relations in Rzeszów; the University of Silesia's annual Conference on Crisis Communication), or central and local governmental institutions (e.g., the Government Centre of Security and its network of Crisis Management Centers established in 2007), combined with the dissemination of the Western literature in the country (e.g., Anthonissen, 2013; Mitroff & Pearson, 1998), has resulted in the growing interest and public policy-oriented requirement for studying the subject academically. In theory, the 2012 governmental policy statement *The National Plan for Crisis Management*, published by the Government Center for Security, should enhance the scope of research on crisis communication and shape some new research avenues.

The field can be broadly classed into several strands: crisis communication (e.g., financial, political, and organizational), risk communication, and security and emergency studies. Initially, the approach taken to crisis communication focused on presenting descriptive or conceptual accounts, primarily emerging in public relations scholarship (e.g., Budzyński, 2001; Kięłdanowicz, 2002). Sporadically produced case studies have enabled reflection on organizational strategies accompanying their communication in the context of a crisis (e.g., Rozwadowska, 2002). Those accounts contributed little to the overall body of knowledge in terms of the empirical or conceptual advancements. In fact, they represent introductory “handbook-style” narratives drawn up from the synthesis of secondary sources on crisis communication.

The taxonomy in the field of crisis communication in Poland has been shaped by various disciplinary approaches (e.g., public administration studies, such as Sienkiewicz-Małyjurek & Krynojewski, 2010) or taxonomies derived from Western literature (e.g., Benoit, 1995; Coombs & Holladay, 2011). Consequently, there is no unified definition of crisis communication in the Polish academic discourse and its local explanations focus on defining crisis management rather than its communicative features. The term “crisis communication” coexists with the notion of “crisis public relations” (“*kryzysowe public relations*”) as a descriptor of (mainly organizational) communicative practices enacted in crisis situations (Rydzak, 2001). Also the typology of crisis has been a subject of interest to scholars in Poland (e.g., Smektała, 2013).

Key Research Avenues: Systemic and Organizational Perspectives

The ongoing institutionalization of research on the subject in Poland has taken diverse trajectories. One of the most prominent contributions made by Polish academia in terms of analysis of crisis communications comes from the Poznań University of Economics and a research group exploring crossovers between economics, organizational management, and communication studies. Indeed,

a research group at the Department of Economic Journalism and Public Relations, headed by Prof. Ryszard Ławniczak, undertook an analysis aimed at closer integration of macro-economic transformations in Poland, financial crises scenarios, and public relations as a crisis communication oriented practice. By embedding their work on public relations into the settings of political economy transition, they demonstrate how crisis communication practice is an inherent feature for organizational management at the times of systemic transformations. The production of the first PhD thesis on crisis communication in Poland has been attributed to this research institution (Rydzak, 1999).

The group also instigated the first academic commentary on crisis communication in Poland, *Public relations contribution to transition in Central and Eastern Europe*, in which Rydzak (2001) showcases the early organizational approaches to managing crisis communication in a volatile economic environment. The subsequent works of this research group also fit into the theme of crisis management, crisis communication, and transition in Poland. Either by taking a systemic approach to account for mediation of the crisis (e.g., Ławniczak, 2005) or by revealing organizational perspectives on crisis communication (e.g., Rydzak, 2009, 2010), their analysis focuses on examining the impact of market forces on crisis communication.

Another strand of research produced by scholars from this research department focuses on complexities of relationships between 2007 financial crisis, structures of capitalism, and public relations as a mediator of a crisis. The 2009 annual *EconPR* conference hosted by the Poznań University of Economics was devoted to exploring the role of communicative practices in the global financial crisis. The outcome of the round table discussion entitled *World economic crisis and public relations responses: More global or national?* produced a set of research articles informed by events unfolding as part of the 2007 global financial recession. This contribution supports the development of crisis communication research by extending its focus to financial crisis and interrogation of its impact on organizational performance, government relations, corporate social responsibility, reputational risk management, and relationships between various stakeholders examined through the prism of political economy.

A quantitative examination of crisis communication by Łaszyn & Tworzydło (2007) and Tworzydło (2010), embedded in organizational settings, has accounted for a series of items characterizing the preparedness of private sector organizations in Poland for handling the crisis. Their study, a product of collaboration between academia and PR industry in Poland, accounted for a number of items, such as factors leading to crisis situations; preparedness for crisis in terms of communicative plans; anti-crisis teams and responses to crisis, training in crisis communication; and social media and response strategies. The overall conclusions for the 2007 pioneering phase of their study argued for a greater education of senior management in developing a skill-set for managing crisis communication responses.

On the other hand, Tworzydło's (2010) findings considered the role of the financial crisis and social media in the survey. While 60% of the examined enterprises in Poland revealed that the 2007 financial crisis did not encourage them to introduce additional crisis communication strategies, compared with 33% who reported that the economic bust provided an encouraging environment for the introduction of more complex communicative responses to the crisis. This report also offers some statistical insights into the use of social media response tactics in crisis situations.

While the Polish Research Group for Crisis Management produced an examination of numerous actors managing crisis situations, crisis communication professionals from Poland also added to the understanding of crisis communication (e.g., Podraza, 2010) in which they reveal how companies manage (or mismanage) crisis communication in the situations of industrial disputes, manufacturing accidents, natural emergencies, personal data leaks, industrial accidents, and technological flaws of services. The case study approach provides insights into crisis communication frequently popularized by the media. Having said that, a contribution of media studies to the interrogation of crisis communication is limited in scope but focuses on culturally-significant organizations and events in Poland.

Media and Audiences Studies Perspective

Another strand of analysis of crisis communication efforts in Poland focuses on the Roman Catholic Church. Przybysz (2010, 2011a) has analyzed how and why the media convergence and a multiplatform media approach to engaging with the activities of the Church has changed the dynamics of crisis communication by this institution. Her work also accounts for organizational features in handling the media at the time of crisis: both from management (Przybysz, 2007) and organizational culture studies perspectives (Przybysz, 2011b). While those studies provide an illustration of how a religious organization manages its crisis communication, the significance of crisis to the reputation management of the Church remains to be explored – there is no analysis of the changing receptions of this traditionally powerful institution in Poland.

Media studies approaches have also emerged as an outcome of scholarly analysis of the Smoleńsk plane crash in April 2010 resulting in 96 casualties, including the president of Poland. In September 2010, the National Sociological Convention featured some of the early works on this crisis, subsequently published in an edited volume exploring political, social, and media reactions to this crisis. Among the contributions of media studies approaches to post-crisis media reporting are those exploring crisis on social media and using the network analysis perspective (Siuda, 2011), media representations of the president in the post-crisis settings (Drzazga-Lech, 2011) or the features of politicized (e.g., national moods and attitudes) and mediated aspects of this crisis as a discursive event (Zieliński, 2011) in Polish affairs. Those articles produce insights into the Polish media's reporting on crisis, localizing representations of this event in national settings, but still limiting considerations for international relations (as the crisis happened in Russia and caused diplomatic backlash).

Media studies approaches to crisis communication have been used by Polish scholars to examine risk perceptions in crisis situations. The development of this research theme extends the body of research in crisis communication to studies of audiences. For example, Kapuściński (2014) uses framing analysis to explore mediated receptions of international crisis (context: terrorism and political instability) by media audiences and ways receptions translate in the decision-making process when choosing a travel destination. Set in a different context, a comparative study (with participants from the United Kingdom and Poland) by Pearce *et al.*, (2012) examines motivational and behavioral features of peoples' reactions to emergency situations and considers responses to versatile communication items on health advice in the crisis. This study was an output of a larger research project entitled '*The public health response to chemical incident emergencies.*' Marchwińska-Wyrwał *et al.* (2012), on the other hand, explored perceptions of risk communication in Poland and their study was one of the few examining environmental risk communication.

Other Research Avenues

Among the remaining research themes emerging in studies on crisis management, but accounting for crisis communication, is scholarship bridging the gap between international relations and crisis management (Chmielewski, 2012) or examining the role of cross-cultural communication in resolving, responding to and mediating international crisis. Given the presence of the Polish military corps in Afghanistan, this policy-oriented theme has been explored by scholars from the National Defence Academy. In February 2011, this research center held a conference entitled *Cross-cultural communication in crisis response operations* which resulted in the publication of a volume aligning international relations studies, cross-cultural theories, and crisis communication (Czupryński, Elak, & Schreiber, 2012).

In Poland, crisis communication has also been of interest to scholars researching crisis situations in domestic security settings. A body of works produced by Stawnicka (2012, 2013) applies linguistic and paralinguistic frameworks to the analysis of crisis communication by policing forces.

The Context of Crisis Communication in Hungary

Although crisis communication is widely practiced in Hungary, there is very little systematic research on crisis communication as a field of study. The early 1990s can be considered the emergence of crisis communication but more out of necessity than a consciously established field. The first book exclusively devoted to crisis communication was published in 1996, which was a collection of essays and theoretical overviews on crisis communication from communication, psychological and financial perspectives (Barlai & Kővágó, 1996). A year earlier, *PR Herald*, a monthly magazine for PR practitioners was launched which regularly featured articles and case studies on crisis communication. The second peak in crisis communication research is linked to the financial crisis when the emphasis was on the role of communication during the financial crisis from different stakeholders' perspectives. In order to analyze the emergence and current state of crisis communication practice and research in Hungary, first basic terminology needs to be defined.

There are two words in the Hungarian language which can be translated as crisis in English: "válság" and "krízis." Etymologically, the first word derives from the verb "become," which is related to "change," so "válság" and "change" are related words in the Hungarian language. Although they are often used interchangeably, Kővágó (1996) clearly distinguishes between the two terms. He defined "válság" as "a severe disturbance, difficult situation in the life of a person, a group or a society the outcome of which can be positive or negative" (p. 9). Krízis is "the decisive moment, turning point of 'válság' when the severe events can still be avoided" (p. 10). Most Hungarian authors on crisis and crisis communication refer to the original meaning and context of the word *crisis* as it was first used in medicine to describe the near-death state of a patient and the drastic and immediate interventions needed for the patient's survival.

The philosopher Balogh (2012) argues that the term "crisis" is defined and redefined all the time in various contexts, given that the term has lost its original meaning and it is increasingly used as a metaphor. According to Balogh, crisis has become part of normalcy as it rarely triggers emotion and only faintly refers to its original meaning. As a result, the sense of permanent crisis has evolved.

The conceptualization of crisis communication in Hungary has been based on the notion of the *critical space*, which is the gap between the seconder and primer reality. Primer reality is the actual crisis situation while the seconder reality is how the crisis is perceived and assessed by the public. The aim of crisis communication is to narrow this critical space (Fekete & Sándor, 1997). Effective crisis communication is the "quick and consistent application of factual and well-founded information in order to narrow the distance between the two realities" (Fekete & Sándor, 1997, p. 47). Based on the works of Dr. Gyula Nagy – a professor of economics who spent significant time in Germany to research catastrophes from economic and social perspectives during the 1980s, publishing his work both in Hungarian and German as J. Nagy – Fekete and Sándor (1997) distinguished three orientations of crisis communication research: communicator-, media-, and recipient-focused.

The most frequent types of crises in Hungary are political crises, organizational crises, and industrial accidents. Hungarian politics and the country's political culture are particularly characterized by permanent crises, which have both domestic and international dimensions. *Political crisis communication* is very dominant, given that any types of crises

(organizational, natural, or industrial crises) will have a strong political dimension and consequences by becoming (over)politicized. Several case studies have been produced about *organizational crisis* which include international merges and acquisitions, when the multinational company did not live up to its promise or the expectations of the stakeholders. Examples include the boycott of the Danone brand when Danone announced in 2001 that it would close the plant producing an iconic Hungarian biscuit brand, despite the company's initial promise not to close down the factory. The national airline MALEV went bankrupt in February 2012 and its lack of crisis communication has become a textbook example of bad crisis communication.

Institutional Perspectives

The Marketing and Media Department of the Budapest University of Economic Sciences published the first textbook (Fekete & Sándor, 1997) on crisis management and crisis communication in 1997, focusing largely on economic and organizational perspectives and approaching crisis communication from a public relations perspective. The first doctorate in crisis management and communication was defended in this department in 1996, the topic of which was the Hungarian tobacco industry. Its author, Gabor Rácz, was the former PR manager of British-American Tobacco in Hungary. Another textbook was published seven years later (Barlai & Kővágó, 2004) which also approached crisis management and communication from an interdisciplinary perspective, including psychological, managerial/organizational, economic, and ecological perspectives. While in Poland several English language books on crisis communication have been translated, there is only one book which is available in Hungarian translation (Anthonissen, 2013).

One of the authors of the Hungarian textbook on crisis communication was a lecturer at the College of Foreign Trade (today Budapest Business School) where the first Public Relations department was established in 1994 (Szondi, 2008). Crisis communication has been a core module in the PR curriculum from the early 1990s at Budapest Business School. Today several universities offer crisis communication modules and provide the richest pool of crisis communication research made up by the dozens of BA and MA dissertations, which focus on crisis communication, using case study as the methodological approach. In September 2014, a postgraduate course in crisis and catastrophe communication was launched at the Budapest College of Communication leading to a postgraduate certificate in crisis communication.

It was also in the early years of the 1990s that the first crisis communication workshops were offered, particularly for companies prone to crises. Conferences and workshops on crisis communication have been organized for practitioners on a regular basis whereas academic conferences on the topic are few and far between. In 2012, the Society of Applied Philosophy organized an interdisciplinary conference entitled "Crisis and Communication." The presentations were published as a book (Karikó & Szécsi, 2012) in which philosophers, economists, sociologists, and political scientists analyze crisis and communication and their relationship. The main focus of the book was the financial crisis; however, several political and economic crises communication are also the subject of analysis.

In 2013, the Communication Management Committee of the Economics Section of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences organized a conference on the impact of the financial crisis on corporate communication, where papers were presented from public relations, communication, and intercultural communication perspectives, focusing on the crisis communication strategies of CEOs, the role of web communication in crises, communication skills and competencies in crises, or the intercultural aspects of crisis communication, to name a few topics.

Media and Stakeholders Perspectives

Political Capital, a political consultancy and research institute, published a collection of studies and essays on political crisis communication in 2007 (Sajti, Somogyi, & Szabados, 2007). The authors analyzed several political scandals and events from a crisis communication perspective focusing on the communication strategies of the actors or the media representation of the particular political crisis. Kiss and Szabados (2007) provided a comprehensive analysis of Hungarian politicians' sex scandals and how the crisis was managed and communicated by the actual politician, the political party they were associated with and what the outcome was, regarding the career of the politicians.

A peak of political crises occurred after the national elections of 2006, when the "former-communist-turned-billionaire prime minister," Ferenc Gyurcsány, admitted in a speech addressing his party that he and his socialist-liberal government "was lying in the morning, and was lying in the evening." The speech was taped and leaked to the press, which created a wave of protests against the government and resulted in a deep moral crisis in Hungarian politics which has consequences even today. Several researchers analyzed the communication dimension of the leaked speech and how the government or the parties reacted to it. Kiss (2007), for example, examined the government's communication efforts using three different conceptual frameworks: scandals, spins, and organizational crisis communication; while Makó (2011) analyzed the coverage of the speech in the two leading news portals between 2006 and 2011. The moral and political crisis had an impact on the President of Hungary as well who had to face different types of crisis: the legitimacy deficit of the government, the crisis of the institution of the presidency and a personal crisis regarding his own role and image. Applying Ulmer, Sellnow, and Seeger's (2007) crisis communication model, Juhász (2007) analyzed the president's crisis communication focusing on this three dimensional crisis.

Another significant political crisis occurred when Pál Schmitt, the next president of Hungary from 2010, was in 2012 accused of plagiarism concerning his 1992 doctoral thesis and the circumstances of the doctoral defense, which eventually led to his resignation from his presidential post. His crisis communication strategy became the subject of several analyses, however more in the format of a case study on blogs or portals than a systematic analysis.

All of the above mentioned political crises made international headlines, affecting the reputation of Hungary and the Hungarian government. Efforts have been made to manage the country's reputational crises on a global scale, using nation branding or public diplomacy as national reputation management tools. Not only Hungary but other Eastern European countries and their government had to face reputational crises, which affected the countries' images abroad. Szondi (2007) explored some cases when crisis situations are deliberately created by hostile governments.

Industrial accidents are another type of crisis that Hungary has had to face. The largest gas well eruption in Hungarian history started in 2000, and lasted over three months. The same year, 100,000 m³ of sludge contaminated with cyanide and heavy metals were released into the Tisza – Hungary's second longest river – from a gold-processing plant in Romania. Cunningham (2005) compared the competing narratives about the accident using journalistic reporting, press releases, and statements from government agencies, advocacy groups, and international organizations. Her study concluded that the spill demonstrated the importance of the flow of information in framing and interpreting disasters, suggesting that such an event can go unnoticed or be viewed as catastrophic, depending on the political, historical, and personal struggles that lead to its publicity. Garamhegyi (2002) empirically examined the consequences of the disaster on tourism and the factors that influenced choosing the affected area as a tourist destination, focusing on crisis communication and place marketing.

In October 2010, a waste depot dam broke – which was storing millions of tons of red sludge – resulting in the deaths of 10 people and wounding more than 120 people. The original flood of 700,000 m³ of sludge turned into a two-meter high torrent and covered a vast area with an

8–10 cm high toxic surface of red sludge. Sarlós and Szondi (2014) analyzed the media coverage of the red sludge spill, focusing on the analysis of stakeholder communication through their media representation, including the patterns, frames, and messaging of the key stakeholder groups.

The industrial and natural disasters during the last decade – including the red sludge spill and serious floods, storms, and droughts – resulted in the total reorganization of disaster management in Hungary from January 2012 to better coordinate the activities of the organizations involved. A new law was passed by Parliament to enable organizations to effectuate extraordinary measures in case of disasters and emergencies and establish a uniform disaster management system. The law defines roles and responsibilities in terms of information provision and communication as well.

Risk communication research is another avenue particularly if it is viewed as a necessary and vital part of crisis preparation. In Hungary the two main fields of risk communication are food/health-related risks and industrial risk, including nuclear power and safety. Hungary's only nuclear power plant in Paks suffered an accident in 2003 resulting in the discharge of radioactive gases for several days after the incident, although the Hungarian Atomic Energy Agency determined that the radiation levels adjacent to the plant were only about 10% above normal. A study by Századvég (2003) analyzed the press statements released during the crisis and the media coverage of the incident concluding that it was controversial communication more in the form of propaganda and manipulation of public opinion rather than a professionally managed crisis communication. Sarlós (2015) analyzed political narratives of the discourse on the future use of nuclear energy in Hungary, arguing that the nuclear communication strategies of political parties show distinct approaches. Communication is situational with content and style of narratives varying over time in relation to changes in individual, party and government strategy, focus, situation, and audience. Food safety and risks received increased attention only during the past decade not only in the media but as a subject of systematic analysis as well. Lakner and Kasza (2009) for example reviewed several food safety cases and scandals during the 2000s calling for a more coherent strategy for food safety risk communication on behalf of the government.

As far as the global *financial crisis* is concerned, it induced both political and company-based crises, including banks and their communication about foreign currency mortgages when borrowers lost out due to exchange rate changes, or companies having to make employees redundant. A comprehensive study by the Budapest College of Communication explored the public communication dimension of the financial crisis. A total of 11,880 news items were analyzed (published between August 1, 2008 and January 1, 2009) to identify how the financial crisis was framed and communicated to the public in the media. The study also analyzed the public speeches, interviews, announcements, press releases and various types of writings of 338 communication actors, including the government, political parties and the Hungarian National Bank.

Conclusions

This chapter outlined the development and current state of crisis communication research in Poland and Hungary. While crisis communication research in Poland focuses on numerous contexts and adopts diverse analytical approaches, research in Hungary is more limited despite the high number of crises that could be the subject of more systematic and empirically based analysis. Although Hungarian textbooks on crisis communication have adopted an interdisciplinary approach to crisis communication, there is much more scope for more collaboration among the different disciplines as well as between scholars and practitioners. The sensitivity of crisis situations and companies' reluctance to reveal confidential information for researchers may also account for the limited number of studies. In Poland, this broadly mapped out field of studies is multidisciplinary in analytical approaches, but limited in terms of dialog between scholars.

Greater collaboration between scholars on this area of research can open up the future avenues for the research in this field and have a potential to go beyond exploring preparedness for crisis communication among organizations, reveal more data on audiences in crisis, explore the features of media consumption in crisis and, potentially, explore computer-mediated technologies in this area of communication practice.

The systematic review of crisis communication research in these countries also demonstrated a lack of international and cross-cultural perspectives despite the common development and similar issues these countries have faced. We call for more comparative research among Central and Eastern European countries and scholars that could further identify trajectories of crisis communication research in these transitional societies.

References

- Anthonissen, P. F. (2013). *Komunikacja kryzysowa [Crisis communication]*. Alpen aan den Rijn: Wolters Kluwer.
- Balogh, L. (2012). Krízis közben: Gondolatok a válságról [During crisis: Thoughts about the crisis]. In S. Karikó & G. Szécsi (eds), *Válság és kommunikáció* (pp. 141–54). Budapest: Áron Kiadó.
- Barlai, R., & Kővágó, G. (1996). *Válság-(katasztrófa) kommunikáció [Crisis and catastrophe communication]*. Budapest: Petit Real Könyvkiadó.
- Barlai, R. & Kővágó, G. (2004). *Krízismenedzsment, kríziskommunikáció [Crisis management, crisis communication]*. Budapest: Századvég.
- Benoit, W. L. (1995). *Accounts, excuses, and apologies: A theory of image restoration strategies*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Brändström, A., & Malčič, M. (2004). *Crisis Management in Slovenia: Comparative Perspectives* (Vol. 26). Stockholm: Swedish National Defence College.
- Budzyński, W. (2001). *Public relations. Zarządzanie reputacją firmy [Public relations: Organizational reputation management]*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Poltex.
- Buus, S., Newlove, L. M., & Stern, E. (2005). *Value complexity in crisis management: The Lithuanian transition* (Vol. 18). Stockholm: Swedish National Defence College.
- Bynander, F., Chmielewski, P., & Simons, G. (eds). (2008). *The politics of crisis management in transitional Poland from 1990–1999*. Stockholm: Swedish National Defence College.
- Chmielewski, P. (2012). Stosunki międzynarodowe: Kryzysy i zarządzanie kryzysowe [Crisis and crisis management in international relations]. In W. Morawski (ed.), *Powiązania zewnętrzne. Modernizacja Polski* (pp. 260–296). Warszawa: Wolters Kluwer Business.
- Coombs, W. T., & Holladay, S. J. (2011). *The handbook of crisis communication*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing.
- Cunningham, S. A. (2005). Incident, accident, catastrophe: Cyanide on the Danube. *Disasters* 29(2), 99–128. doi: 10.1111/j.0361-3666.2005.00276.x
- Czarniawska, B. (1986). The management of meaning in the Polish crisis. *Journal of Management Studies*, 3(3), 313–331. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-6486.1986.tb00957.x
- Czurpiński, A., Elak, L., & Schreiber, H. (2012). *Bezpieczeństwo dla rozwoju – komunikacja międzykulturowa w operacjach reagowania kryzysowego [Security and development: Cross-cultural communication in crisis response operations]*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo AON.
- Drzazga-Lech, M. (2011). Mitologizacja Lecha Kaczyńskiego: Obraz prezydenta RP w wybranych dziennikach. [Mythologizing Lech Kaczyński: Images of the president of Poland in selected dailies]. In P. Gliński & J. Wasilewski (eds). *Katastrofa smoleńska – reakcje społeczne, polityczne i medialne* (pp. 203–229). Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Instytutu Filozofii i Socjologii PAN.
- Elster, J., Offe, C., & Preuss, U. (1998). *Institutional design in post-communist societies: Rebuilding the ship at sea*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Engelbrekt, K., & M. Förberg (2005). *Managing political crises in Bulgaria: Pragmatism and procrastination*. Stockholm: Swedish National Defence College.
- Fekete, F., & Sándor, I. (1997). *Válságkezelés és Kríziskommunikáció [Crisis management and crisis communication]*. Budapest: Budapesti Közgazdasági Egyetem.

- Garamhegyi, Á. (2002). *Válságkommunikáció a helymarketingben [Crisis communication in place marketing]*. Konferencia-előadás. Szeged.
- Juhász, A. (2007). A köztársasági elnök válságkommunikációja 2006 őszén. [The President's crisis communication during the autumn of 2006] In B. Sajti, Z. Somogyi, & K. Szabados (eds). *Válság? Kommunikáció!* (pp. 39–56). Budapest: Capital Group Zrt.
- Kapuciński, G. (2014). *The effects of news media on leisure tourists' perception of risk and willingness to travel, with specific reference to events of terrorism and political instability* (PhD thesis). Poole: Bournemouth University.
- Karikó, S., & Szécsi, G. (eds). (2012). *Válság és kommunikáció [Crisis and communication]*. Budapest: Áron Kiadó.
- Kiełdanowicz, M. (2002). Public relations w sytuacjach kryzysowych [Public relations in crisis management]. In B. Ociepa (ed.). *Public relations w teorii i praktyce* (pp. 33–71). Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego.
- Kiss, B. (2007). Botrány, spin, válság. Az őszödi beszéd kormányzati kommunikációja [Scandal, spin, crisis. The government communication of the őszöd speech]. In P. Sándor, Á. Tolnai, L. Vass, & Á. Sándor (eds), *Magyarország politikai évkönyve 2006-ról*. Budapest: Demokrácia Kutatások Magyar Központja Közhazsnú Alapítvány.
- Kiss, K., & Szabados, K. (2007). Szexbotrányok a politikában [Sex scandals in politics]. In B. Sajti, Z. Somogyi, & K. Szabados (eds), *Válság? Kommunikáció!* (pp. 57–91.) Budapest: Capital Group Zrt.
- Kővágó, G. (1996). A válság-(katasztrófa) kommunikáció alapjai. [The basics of crisis (catastrophe) communication]. In R. Barlai & G. Kővágó (eds), *Válság-(katasztrófa) kommunikáció. Tanulmányok és szemelvények* (pp. 7–51). Budapest: Petit Real Könyvkiadó.
- Kundzewicz, Z. W., Szamalek, K., & Kowalczyk, P. (1999). The great flood of 1997 in Poland. *Hydrological Sciences Journal*, 44(6), 855–870.
- Lakner, Z. & Kasza, G. (2009). Food industry: Risk factory in the risk society? In K. Millar, P. H. West, & B. Nerlich (eds), *Ethical futures: Bioscience and food horizons*. (pp. 251–258). Wageningen: Wageningen Academic Publishers.
- Łaszyn, A., & Tworzydło, D., (2007). *Raport z badań – zarządzanie sytuacją kryzysową w polskich przedsiębiorstwach [Crisis management in Polish enterprises: Report of findings]*. Alert Media: Rzeszów-Warszawa.
- Ławniczak, R. (2005). *Introducing market economy institutions and instruments: The role of public relations in transition economies*. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Piar.pl.
- Makó, Á. (2011). Az őszödi beszéddel kapcsolatos online sajtómegjelenések néhány jellegzetessége az Index és az Origo hírportálokon [Some features of the online press coverage of the őszöd speech by the Index and Origo news portals]. *Médiakutató*, 12(4), 63–78.
- Marchwińska-Wyrwał, E., Teaf, Ch. M., Dziubaneck, G., & Hajok, I. (2012). Risk assessment and risk communication in environmental health in Poland. *European Journal of Public Health*, 22(5), 742–744.
- Mitroff, I., & Pearson, C. (1998). *Zarządzanie sytuacją kryzysową, czyli jak uchronić firmę przed najgorszym [Crisis management]*. Warszawa: Business Press.
- Open Society Institute (2010). Footprint of financial crisis in the media, media program, January. Available at: http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/sites/default/files/aa-overview-20091201_0.pdf [accessed November 26, 2015].
- Pearce, J. M., Rubin, J., Amlót, R., Wessley, S., & Rogers, M. B. (2012). Communicating public health advice after a chemical spill: results from national survey in the United Kingdom and Poland. *Disaster Medicine and Public Health Preparedness*, 7(1), 65–74.
- Podraza, U. (2010). *Kryzysowe public relations [Crisis public relations]*. Warszawa: Difin.
- Porfiriev, B., & Svedin, L. (2002). *Crisis management in Russia: Overcoming institutional rigidity and resource constraints* (Vol. 17). Stockholm: Swedish National Defence College.
- Przybysz, M. M. (2007). Pytanie o crisis management w Kościele w Polsce [Questioning crisis management in the Polish Church]. In H. Seweryniak (ed.), *Teologia i...*, pp. 125–156. Płock: Płocki Instytut Wydawniczy.
- Przybysz, M. M. (2010). Kryzys medialny w netokracji [Media crisis in netocracy]. *Kultura-historia-globalizacja*, 8, 145–162.
- Przybysz, M. M. (2011a). Media crisis in the Polish Church in the age of netocracy. In V. Khroul (ed.), *Religion and new media in the age of convergence* (pp. 31–56). Moscow: Faculty of Journalism Press.

- Przybysz, M. M. (2011b). Wpływ kultury organizacji na proces komunikacji z otoczeniem w odniesieniu do instytucji Kościoła rzymskokatolickiego [The influence of organizational culture on communication in the Roman Catholic Church. *Teologia Praktyczna*, Tom 12, 139–148.
- Rozwadowska, B. (2002). *Public relations – teoria, praktyka, perspektywy* [Public relations: theory, practice, approaches]. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Studio Emka.
- Rydzak, W. (1999). Zakres i uwarunkowania działań public relations w sytuacjach kryzysowych w przedsiębiorstwach [The scope and determinants of public relations practice in crisis situations]. PhD thesis. Poznań: Poznań University of Economics.
- Rydzak, W. (2001). The application of public relations in crisis situations in enterprises in Poland. In W. Ławniczak (ed.), *Public relations contribution to transition in Central and Eastern Europe* (pp. 39–48). Poznań: Printer.
- Rydzak, W. (2009). *Reputacja a działania informacyjne organizacji w sytuacjach kryzysowych a determinaty ich wyboru* [Reputation management in crisis situations]. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego w Poznaniu.
- Rydzak, W. (2010). Strategie komunikowania w sytuacjach kryzysowych przedsiębiorstw w literaturze anglo- i niemieckojęzycznej [The crisis communication strategies in Anglo-American and German academic literature]. *Zeszyty naukowe*, 146, 139–155.
- Sajti, B., Somogyi Z., & Szabados, K. (eds). (2007) Válság? Kommunikáció! [Crisis? Communication!]. Budapest: Capital Group Zrt.
- Sarlós, G. (2015). Risk perception and political alienism: Political discourse on the future of nuclear energy in Hungary. *Central European Journal of Communication* 8(1).
- Sarlós, G., & Szondi, G. (2014). Crisis communication during the red sludge spill disaster in Hungary – a media content analysis-based investigation. *Journal of Public Affairs*, 15(3), 277–286. doi: 10.1002/pa.1526
- Sienkiewicz-Małjurek, K., & Krynojewski, F. R. (2012). *Zarządzanie kryzysowe w administracji publicznej* [Crisis management in public administration]. Warszawa: Difin.
- Siuda, P. (2011). Od czarnej wstążki po pochówek w piramidzie [From black ribbon to the funeral in a pyramid] In P. Gliński & J. Wasilewski (eds), *Katastrofa smoleńska – reakcje społeczne, polityczne i medialne* (pp. 175–202). Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Instytutu Filozofii i Socjologii PAN.
- Smektała, T. (2013). *Public relations w sytuacjach kryzysowych przedsiębiorstw* [Public relations in crisis situations]. Wrocław: Astrum.
- Stawnicka, J. (2012). *Modele komunikacji w sytuacjach kryzysowych* [Crisis communication management models]. Dąbrowa Górnicza: Wyższa Szkoła Biznesu w Dąbrowie Górniczej.
- Stawnicka, J. (2013). *Bezpieczeństwo w sytuacjach kryzysowych: między rytuałem, rutyną, a kreatywnością* [Security in crisis: between rituals, routine, and creativity]. Gliwice-Katowice: Opcjon.
- Stern, E., & Hansén, D. (eds). (2000). *Crisis management in a transitional society: The Latvian experience*. (Vol. 12). Stockholm: Swedish National Defence College.
- Stern, E., & Nohrstedt, D. (eds). (2001). *Crisis management in Estonia. Case studies and comparative perspectives*. (Vol. 3). Stockholm: Swedish National Defence College.
- Stern, E. & Sundelius, B. (2002). Crisis management Europe: An integrated regional research and training program. *International Studies Perspectives*, 3(1), 71–88. doi: 10.1111/1528-3577.00080
- Surowiec, P. (2013). ‘Solidarność’: PR-propaganda of Polish workers’ movement as a struggle for representation. Majority’s or minority’s ‘silent scream’ for changes? Paper presented at the Political Studies Association’s Media and Politics Group annual conference, 13–14 November, Bournemouth University, Bournemouth, UK.
- Századvég (2003). *“Vaksi” kríziskommunikáció. [Blind crisis communication]*. A study by Századvég Műhely, Budapest.
- Szondi, G. (2007). The role and challenges of country branding in transition countries: The Central and Eastern Europe experience. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* 3(1), 8–20. doi:10.1057/palgrave.pb.6000044
- Szondi, G. (2008). The Hungarian Rhapsody – The evolution and current state of Hungarian public relations. In K. Sriramesh & D. Verčič (eds), *The handbook of global public relations: Theory, research and practice. Expanded and revised edition*. New York: Routledge.
- Tworzydło, D. (2010). Wizerunkowo-ekonomiczne skutki globalnego kryzysu w oparciu o badania przeprowadzone w polskich przedsiębiorstwach [Global economic crisis: Research into reputational and economic consequences for Polish enterprises]. *Zeszyty naukowe politechniki rzeszowskiej: zarządzanie i marketing*, No. 272, 479–489.

- Ulmer, R., Sellnow, T. L., & Seeger, M. W. (2007). *Effective crisis communication: Moving from crisis to opportunity*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Zieliński, J. (2011). 'Nie jestem wrażliwa na wzniosłą symbolikę polskiego patriotyzmu'. Dyskurs o patriotyzmie po katastrofie smoleńskiej na przykładzie publikacji 'Gazety Wyborczej'. [‘I am not susceptible to the elevated symbolism of Polish patriotism’. The discourse on the Smolensk disaster in the light of ‘Gazeta Wyborcza’ coverage]. In P. Gliński & J. Wasilewski (eds), *Katastrofa smoleńska – reakcje społeczne, polityczne i medialne* (pp. 264–287). Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Instytutu Filozofii i Socjologii PAN.