« *Teaching the sushi-chef* » : travail identitaire et transformation de la démarche RSE d'une multinationale japonaise par ses managers de filiale

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Résumé:

A partir des recherches sur l'identité organisationnelle et sur le travail institutionnel, cet article étudie les pratiques et stratégies des responsables RSE (Responsabilité Sociale de l'Entreprise) / Développement Durable lorsqu'ils mettent en place les processus destinés à remodeler l'identité RSE de leur entreprise. Pour ce faire, nous utilisons des données de recherche qualitatives collectées à l'occasion d'une étude de cas approfondie de la société ASICS, entreprise multinationale dont le siège est au Japon. A travers ce cas, nous montrons de quelle manière les équipes RSE européennes sont engagées dans un "travail institutionnel" pour à la fois rendre l'approche RSE compatible avec le contexte japonais, et en même temps transformer l'approche du siège vis-à-vis des questions de RSE. Nos résultats couvrent le travail dialectique entre l'identité organisationnelle et le caractère RSE, réalisé par les responsables RSE, grâce à trois niveaux de pratiques : 1) ancrer la RSE au sein des routines et de la culture organisationnelles, 2) impliquer les parties prenantes externes et internes, 3) bouleverser les pratiques existantes grâce à la promotion d'une nouvelle vision, d'outils de collaboration et de l'innovation.

Mots-clés : Responsabilité Sociale de l'Entreprise (RSE), Agents du Changement, Entreprise Multinationale, Travail Institutionnel, Identité Organisationnelle

"*Teaching the sushi chef*": how CSR professionals from subsidiaries may change the recipe of firm CSR organizational identity

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Abstract

Drawing on organizational identity and institutional work, this article investigates the practices and strategies performed by CSR managers when they initiate processes to reframe the CSR identity of the company. To do so, we draw on qualitative data from a research conducted within ASICS, a multinational firm headquartered in Japan. We show how local European CSR teams engaged into "institutional work" to both make CSR compatible with the Japanese context and to transform the headquarter approach to CSR. Our findings uncover the dialectic work of CSR managers in between organizational identity and CSR character, balancing three types of practices: 1) anchoring CSR within organizational routines and culture, 2) engaging internal and external stakeholders, 3) disrupting existing managerial practices by promoting new vision, collaboration tools and innovation.

Keywords: CSR, Change Agents, Multinational Company, Institutional Work, Organizational Identity

1. INTRODUCTION

If Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and sustainability have spread globally over the last decades (Aguilera, Rupp, Williams, & Ganapathi, 2007; Campbell, 2007), they still remain ambiguous and multifaceted concepts (Garriga & Melé, 2004), taking local meanings, interpretations and operational forms. Following previous scholars who have contributed to the maturation of the field (Bowen, 1953; Carroll, 1999), we define CSR as the management of business and society interactions. A growing body of literature is concerned with how the concept of CSR is "glocalized", i.e. diffused globally while adapted locally (see for example: (Boxenbaum, 2006; Gond & Boxenbaum, 2013). These studies investigate how global scripts and concepts (such as Socially Responsible Investment, or diversity management) are translated during their process of diffusion, and adapted to better fit the local cultural/national contexts in which they diffuse.

The diversity of meaning and approaches to CSR raise important questions when considered from the perspective of a multinational corporation, with different teams simultaneously operating in various institutional and cultural contexts (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 2002). Multinational corporations have different divisions facing different priorities, social issues and expectations (Crilly, Zollo, & Hansen, 2012). Each division or operational unit may assess differently the salience of social issues (Mitchell, Agle, & Wood, 1997); CSR issues may be raised in contexts far away –both physically and culturally- from the decision making bodies; and different CSR sensemaking profiles may coexist within the same firm (Basu & Palazzo, 2008). In such a context, it is important to understand how CSR professionals navigate through such sources of complexity, how they share perspectives and engage organizational transformations towards tighter organizational coupling or looser integration across organizational units. And how local CSR professionals, working in organizational divisions far away from strategic decision-making, deploy strategies to gain influence and make themselves be heard by headquarters and may ultimately transform the firm CSR identity.

Unfortunately, existing research has largely bypassed such issues (Howard-Grenville, 2006). Research on the contextualization of CSR (Boxenbaum, 2006; Boxenbaum & Gond 2013) is conducted at the field / national level, and do not question managerial practices, tactics and

processes leading to diffusion inside organizations. The micro-level of the CSR institutionalization process is overlooked. Within organizations, CSR change agents, acting as institutional entrepreneurs, have been recognized as key drivers in organizational transformation processes (Cramer, Jonker, & van der Heijden, 2004; Cramer, van der Heijden, & Jonker, 2006). However, the nature of such professionals' activity, their strategies to overcome their lack of formal power, as well as the influence of everyday tactics and practices within the organization remains largely overlooked (Daudigeos, 2013).

As a result, this article builds on the literature on organizational identity and institutional work to investigate the practices and strategies performed by CSR managers within their firm, in order to reframe the CSR identity of the company, and engage the firm in a process of strategic change.

To do so, we draw on qualitative data from a research conducted within ASICS, a multinational firm headquartered in Japan. We show how local European CSR team engaged into sensemaking and action to both make CSR compatible with the Japanese context and to transform the headquarter approach to CSR. Our findings uncover the institutional work of CSR managers, balancing three types of practices: 1) anchoring CSR within organizational routines and culture, 2) engaging internal and external stakeholders, 3) disrupting existing managerial practices by promoting new vision, collaboration tools and innovation.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. Organizational identity

The concept of organizational identity (Albert & Whetten, 1985), relating to the identity of the organization as a whole, is characterized by an "amazing theoretical diversity" (Cornelissen, Haslam, & Balmer, 2007: S3). As Puusa summarizes it, "organizational identity seeks to answer to the question of "who are we as an organization" (2006: 24). Organizational identity embodies the characteristics of an organization that its members perceive to be central, distinctive, and enduring (or continuing) in an organization when past, present and the future is taken into account (Albert & Whetten 1985). According to Ashforth and Mael (1996), the central character of the organization is rooted in the "more or less internally consistent system of pivotal beliefs, values, and norms, typically anchored in the organizational mission that informs sense-making and action". "Organizational identity tends

to be seen as an interpretative system or a system of shared meaning, cognitions and behaviours" (Cornelissen, Haslam & Balmer 2007: S3, see also Scott & Lane (2000)). While it shares similarities with the concept of organizational culture (Schein, 1984), the concept of organizational identity differs from the latter because of its self-reflective dimension. The concept of identity is often associated with intentional efforts of people to define themselves and their organizations, while the concept of culture often refers to hidden assumptions that participants may be unaware of.

2.2. CSR and Organizational identity

CSR, sustainability and organizational identity are interrelated in different ways. First, different works have shown that CSR is shaped by organizational identity and central values (Howard-Grenville, 2006; Linnenluecke & Griffiths, 2010). Because of the normative and ethical dimensions of CSR, sustainability transformations implies major shifts in managerial values, employees belief systems and organizational identity (Crane, 2000), in particular those related to the interdependence of human and ecological systems (Gladwin, Kennelly, & Krause, 1995; Purser, 1994). Identity orientation is thus considered as playing a critical dimension in CSR sense making processes (Basu & Palazzo 2008).

The other way round, CSR is also influencing organizational identity construction. CSR issues, in the form of social issues or crises are major occasions for sensemaking, identity work and identity transformation. For example, Dutton & Dukerich (1991) have shown how the issue of homelessness in public transportation system in New York has led to a complete revision of the organizational image and identity of the New-York Port Authority. As non-market issues often imply difficult trade-offs between economic objectives and social values, they are likely to be central triggers for institutional work and revision of organizational identity. In the remainder of this work, we will define CSR organizational identity as one dimension of organizational identity, related to the central, enduring and distinctive characteristics of an organization when managing business and society interactions. CSR organizational identity is about answering the question of "who we are and how we manage business and society interactions?"

2.3. Changing CSR organizational identity: exploring the institutional work of CSR professionals

Scott & Lane (2000) describe organization identity construction as the "processes, activities and events through which organizational identity becomes specified in the minds of organizational managers and stakeholders". This dynamic and iterative process involves different stakeholders, both internal and external. First, top managers have a unique role as compared to other stakeholders, as they have decision making power and represent the organization in its relationship with other stakeholders. Second, other organizational stakeholders reflect stakeholders' appraisals and influence organizational identity.

So far, most attention of CSR researchers has been devoted to the role of top management as a central ingredient of organizational change, adopting a hierarchical and top down perspective on CSR organizational change (Acquier, Daudigeos, & Valiorgue, 2011), where change is initiated by the highest level of the organization (Ackerman & Bauer, 1976; Cramer et al., 2006). By contrast, the role of other internal stakeholders in CSR organizational change, although highlighted as crucial for a successful CSR implementation (Werre 2003; Maon et al. 2009), has received more limited attention. Some research underlines however the critical role of change agents (Cramer et al., 2004). These works reveal the critical role of CSR professionals to materialize abstract concepts through actual organizational practices (Cramer et al., 2004 and 2006) and show that the change processes they engage are complex and often non predictable.

As other staff professionals (HR managers, internal consultants, safety experts), they occupy an ambiguous organizational position within the firm: they strive to transform existing routines, with neither formal authority over other operational or hierarchical employees, nor established legitimacy within the firm (Daudigeos, 2013). Moreover, their position suffers from another critical peculiarity: they share the organization identity of the firm, i.e. its established system of norms, beliefs and routines that they are supposed to change. This situation reflects the structurationist notion (Giddens 1979), which states that all action is embedded in institutional structures, which it simultaneously produces, reproduces and transform. As compared to other staff employees, the role of CSR professionals appears more challenging, as they question and reframe organizational values and identity, in which they are embedded, through "active engagement" (Whittington 1992), without clear technical base, formal authority, legitimacy, or control. Such mission may be even more complex when CSR professionals are not located at the corporate headquarters as they stand further from formal authority. Accordingly, an appropriate focus to investigate the role of CSR change agents is

on practices of individual and collective actors aimed at creating, maintaining and disrupting institutions, i.e. on "institutional work" (Lawrence et al. 2011). Such perspective emphasizes a future-oriented intentionality, focused on actors consciously and strategically attempting to create, change, maintain, reshape or disrupt institutions (what Battilana & D'Aunno (2009) call "projective agency").

Accordingly the question raised by this article is the following: which practices and strategies do CSR professionals develop in order to reframe the CSR identity of the company?

3. CASE STUDY AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. context

The paper is based on a single case study (Yin, 2003), which enables rich data collection and is particularly fitted for phenomena that have been understudied (Siggelkow, 2007). This research has been developed in partnership with ASICS Europe CSR and Sustainability team willing to better understand the expectations and mindsets of ASICS' employees concerning Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and sustainability in order to shape CSR strategy.

ASICS is the fourth biggest brand worldwide in the field of sport footwear equipment. Its headquarters are incorporated in Japan (which is, according to most cultural studies, distant from European societies, cf. Hofstede 1983). In line with the traditional Japanese corporate culture, Asics is characterized by a "pluralistic style" (Yoshimori 1995) referring to strong ties with stakeholders, both internal and external with which the company shares a common long term commitment and societal engagement towards prosperity.

Its top management, research and production activities (the latter are outsourced) are centralized in Asia. ASICS Europe takes part to the development of products, as well as distribution and marketing. ASICS Europe headquarters are heavily involved in the development and diffusion of CSR policies worldwide. Although it remains highly marked by its Japanese culture and top management, key organizational processes (such as design and marketing) appear to be more distributed across regions than it used to be, and more than some more centralized competitors, such as Adidas or Nike.

In terms of CSR, the company has undergone major changes over the last decade. Historically, the company has faced less public scrutiny than some more visible competitors

(such as Nike, Adidas or Puma), and did not face scandals such as Nike in 1997. ASICS has developed a formal CSR policy since 2003, largely focused on environmental issues and continuous improvement programs. Over the years, ASICS Europe has taken a lead on CSR issues, and reframed the company approach to CSR. Today, one of the major orientations for the CSR department is to foster evolution in the firm's approach to CSR, aiming at moving existing engagement of the firm from a 'compliance', risk management and reactive perspective to a proactive logic where sustainability is more articulated with innovation, both within products and processes (supply chain), and managerial culture.

Thus, the case of ASICS constitutes a favorable empirical setting to investigate how CSR professionals, culturally and physically distant from decision-making bodies, engage in strategic work to reshape organizational CSR identity.

3.2. Data and methodology

Our primary research contacts were working with ASICS Europe. A preliminary step of our research project (based on a survey addressed to all the employees of the ASICS Europe teams) aimed at developing a general perspective on the type of CSR identity felt by employees. The results revealed a shared feeling about the predominance of organizational values and involvement of ASICS for higher purpose rather than an appeal for external communication on CSR and market reward. Such results stand at odds with the "business case" approach (see Elkington (1994)) which tends to pervade among most European and US firms (Vogel, 2005). In an effort to explain these results, we conducted qualitative data collection, based on a series of interviews of internal CSR stakeholders within Asics Europe and Japan. We conducted first 3 explorative interviews with CSR professionals from ASICS Europe, followed by 11 semi-directive interviews with 13 ASICS key managers (15 are planned), including people from Japan. Interview protocol was the same for each interview, in order to facilitate comparability among interviews and future coding. We first asked interviewees to represent on a blank timeframe what they perceive as the historical milestones of ASICS CSR history. Then, we asked the interviewees to detail the timeframe and made sense about the commonalities and differences between the interviewees, in terms of organizational identity features and CSR characteristics.
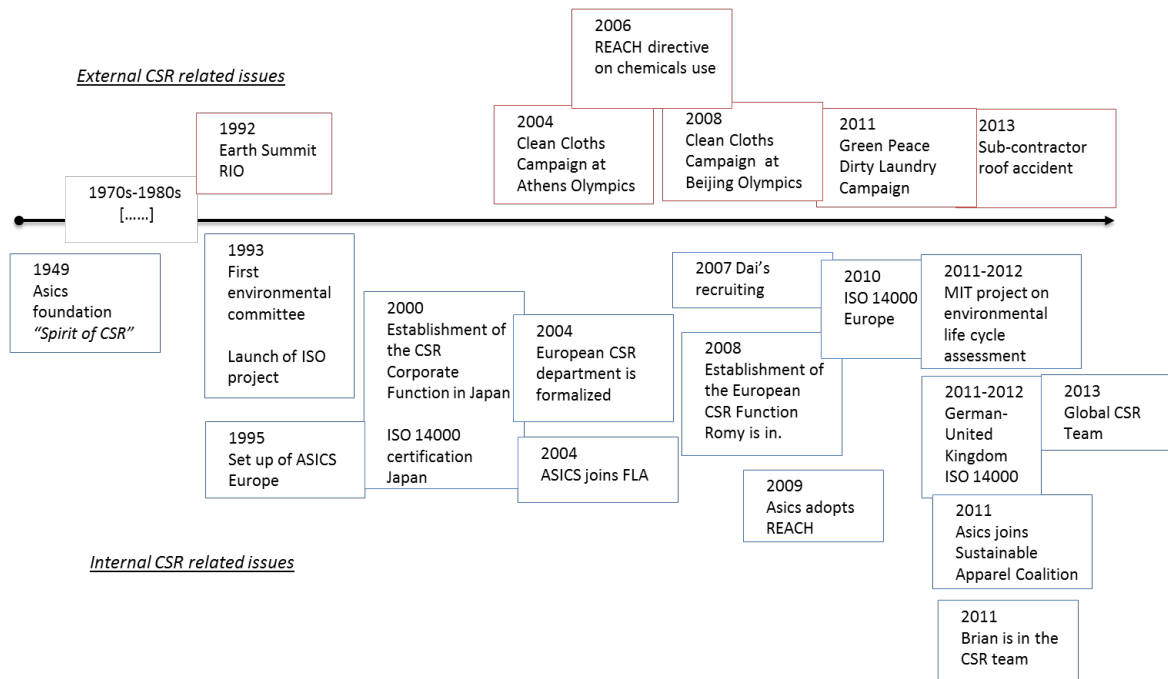
Table 1: list of interviews

Interview	Function	Interview length
1. Dai F.	Previous CSR manager ASICS / EMEA	2 h
2. Dai F.	Previous CSR manager ASICS / EMEA	2 h
3. Romy	Sustainability officer	3 h
4. Romy M. & Brian	Sustainability officer	1h
5. Melinda F.	HR director EurMiddEastAfrica	1h30
6. Jurian E.	Director Performance Footwear	1h30
7. Mike B.	Marketing team, brand communication	1h
8. Dai F.	Previous CSR manager ASICS / EMEA	1h30
9. Ron P.	Legal & financial and CSR senior executive manager global ASICS top decision maker	1h15
10. Mister Joji Y. & Miss Seik I.	CSR Asics Japan	1h
11. Romy M.	Sustainability officer	30 min
12. Brian		1h
13. Lawrence Norde and Ed Peters	Sourcing and Production Analyst and Sourcing Manager - Division Apparel and Accessories, ASICS EMEA	1h40
14. Romy M.	Sustainability officer	40 min

Archival data were also collected, as for example a corporate book called "The ASICS spirit in Europe" written by former CEO of Asics Europe, detailing Asics Europe history and corporate intended values.

4. PRELIMINARY RESULTS

We present preliminary results focused on CSR evolution at ASICS as perceived by internal stakeholders, and a first analysis of our findings, which uncover the dialectic work of CSR managers, balancing three types of practices: (a) anchoring CSR within organizational routines and culture, (b) disrupting existing managerial practices by promoting new vision, collaboration tools and innovation, (c) engaging internal and external stakeholders.

4.1. CSR evolution at asics

External CSR related issues

2006
REACH directive on chemicals use

1992
Earth Summit
RIO

2004
Clean Cloths Campaign at Athens Olympics

2008
Clean Cloths Campaign at Beijing Olympics

2011
Green Peace Dirty Laundry Campaign

2013
Sub-contractor roof accident

1970s-1980s
[......]

1949
Asics foundation
"Spirit of CSR"

1993
First environmental committee

Launch of ISO project

2000
Establishment of the CSR Corporate Function in Japan

2004
European CSR department is formalized

2007 Dai's recruiting

2010
ISO 14000
Europe

2011-2012
MIT project on environmental life cycle assessment

1995
Set up of ASICS Europe

ISO 14000 certification Japan

2004
ASICS joins FLA

2008
Establishment of the European CSR Function
Romy is in.

2011-2012
German-United Kingdom
ISO 14000

2013
Global CSR Team

2009
Asics adopts REACH

2011
Asics joins Sustainable Apparel Coalition

2011
Brian is in the CSR team

Internal CSR related issues

	1949-1960s	1970s-1980s	1990-2000	2000-2004	2004-2013	Next
CSR phases at ASICS	Unconscious CSR: Spirit of Asics	Accidental CSR: the years of growth	Environmental compliant CSR	Broadening the scope of CSR	Institutionalizing CSR at Asics	Going global with CSR
Main field	Mainly societal values, implicit in the mission of the company	Societal and environmental issues are put aside	Environmental	Social, working conditions, gender, diversity	Multiplication of projects and initiatives	Environmental and social involving suppliers
Geographical scope	Japan after-war period		Japan	Europe	Europe, Japan, US on common projects	Global
Triggers	Founder leadership and vision		RIO Earth Summit	NGOs and public scrutiny on the Industry	Internal leaders and projects led by Europe Ongoing NGOs scrutiny	•Accident at a supplier site • Global Headquarter will to take the lead
CSR projects and deliverables			ISO 14000 Certification in Japan	ISO 14000 project is started in Europe	•MIT Project : environmental life cycle assessment • ISO 14000 certification Europe BU, Germany, UK	Expected: •Harmonizing practices; •Integrating subcontractors and other supply chain partners in the CSR approach •Dow Jones Index •Higg Index
Achievements beyond CSR	Strong Organizational Identity: (list the values...)			Using ISO project as a change management and involvement tool	•CSR teams in japan and Europe communicate and work together •CSR is integrated in functional decisions and routines	•Going global with and through CSR • A more balanced corporate governance

4.2. **Anchoring CSR within organizational routines and identity**

The first pressures for engaging with CSR emerged in Europe, in a context that may appear as alien for Japanese headquarters. What is more, the classic European way of handling CSR

through reporting, external communication, and a transparency purpose, stands at odds with the Japanese culture. To counter this difficulty, European CSR professionals adopted various strategies consisting in anchoring CSR within organizational routines and identity.

A first type of work was to reconnect sustainability and social responsibility to the founding values of the company. Through a revival of ASICS founder's values, CSR became part of the DNA of the company. For example, several interviewees argued that sustainability principles were within the company since the foundation of the company after the world-war II in Kobe, Japan, and referred to the social mission of the company, as stated by the founder, "A sound mind in a healthy body".

"It's something we communicate internally particularly with new starters. The year zero on CSR is really when the company was founded, around the founding principles of supporting and educating youth in Japanese society after the war." Brian, sustainability officer.

In this perspective, different interviewees presented CSR as a way to reconnect with pioneering organizational values, which were marginalized during the 60s, 70s and 80s, when the company experienced strong international growth and lost its initial social mission from sight to become a worldwide sport company. This reconnection with original values is also described in the book *ASICS culture and spirit in Europe*, written by the former CEO of ASICS Europe, Ron P., for internal use. The book is itself an initiative meant to connect Europe and Japan as a single company, sharing common values. Similarly, one of the interviewees, declared:

"At a certain point in Europe Ron being the leader of CSR here, wanted to recreate a higher order purpose for the organization that was more than just being a commercial entity in order to make profit."

The willingness to anchor sustainability within organizational identity is also observed through early choices connecting sustainability with protocols and organizational routines that are familiar to Japanese managers, such as the use of quality management frameworks (ISO), a focus on environmental issues before moving to the social dimensions, and a low communication profile, as evidence in the below verbatim:

"Maybe it is a little bit of a Japanese thing, because the Japanese do not have a tendency on really publish a lot about sustainability. In Japan, sustainability is ... they keep their feet very clean, but it doesn't mean that you have to talk about it."

All these elements show a clear willingness to fit with the DNA of the company, and to anchor CSR emerging issues within the core routines of the company and its organizational identity. Later, when the diffusion of CSR initiatives and projects within the European division increased, similar tools were used differently to adapt to local attitudes, managerial practices and expectations. The differentiated appropriation of the ISO project in Japan and Europe illustrates the effort deployed by CSR change agents to locally frame CSR initiatives into organizational routines:

"ISO14000 I think in Japan, they see it more as a management system, as a way to … As a management system for managing the environmental. We came in through the compliance. […]. ISO in Japan: they pass the targets down, measure and show you they achieve. For them it's an implementation tool."

"So ISO in Europe worked as an internal dissemination tool, involvement, the idea of embedding what's worth. That approach works. The Japanese approach here just won't work."

4.3. Engaging internal and external stakeholders

In parallel with the first described type of practices, CSR professionals gradually introduced new stakeholders, both internal to the company and from the broader institutional field, to enrich the scope of CSR and increase the ambition of the related initiatives. From the creation of CSR department in Japan in 2003, ASICS has joined major CSR associations related to sport and apparel industry, with an increasing involvement and leadership from the European CSR team. As such, ASICS was the first Japanese company to join Fair Labor Association (FLA) in 2003; in 2004, it was a founding member of WFSGI (World Federation Sporting Good Industry) CSR committee and became a member of the environmental committee FESI (Federation of the European Sporting goods Industry) in 2006. In 2011, it was among the founding members of SAC (Sustainable Apparel Coalition) and it also reports to GRI (Global Reporting Initiatives).

The CEO of Asics Europe recruited Dai (head of Europe sustainability team until 2012) in 2007. Dai had a background in diplomacy, and had a previous experience in the coffee industry. He was the first full time job dedicated to CSR inside the structure. Before, the role was held by the legal team. Dai is depicted by the interviewees as a typical "boundary spanner", a professional able to develop and maintain valuable outside connections. He is actively involved in different industry associations, such as the Sustainable Apparel Coalition.

In 2011, he developed a joint project on an environmental life cycle assessment of a line of shoes between ASICS and MIT. He is currently engaging ASICS CSR professionals in a prospective project led by the Cambridge Institute for Manufacturing on the future of sustainable manufacturing.

"Dai had so many contacts and he knew so much about it [CSR], and he was absolutely the right choice and in such a way that … he moved now to Australia so he couldn't continue to work for us but we still have him on a consultancy based." Ron.

Part of the appeal for the MIT project was linked with the CSR professional ability to connect the initiative to a prestigious educational institution.

"I didn't have any contact outside. I have no clue but he knows all of these people from the universities would come in and free of charge and they tell you what should be done and yeah, that has happened. Some things start happening." Ron.

When interacting with other organizational members, the CSR professional could benefit from the implicit association with the authority and legitimacy of such external stakeholder. Accordingly, also the legitimacy and the ability to trigger internal change attributed to the CSR professional was enhanced by being associated with such prestigious educational institution, highly competent in the specific field of the joint project (environmental product lifecycle assessment). The perimeter of the involved employees was also reshaped: from a fragmented and local approach to CSR to a global approach and vision, which need now to be pushed forward.

The boundary spanning work was in action also internally as a clear change occurred during the years 2000s: from a purely CSR team mission, sustainability issues were more and more everybody's concern.

Dai was convincing or motivating CFO to support this kind of more ambitious agenda.

Originally, we had one big ISO team ... Now, there is the product development and sourcing people. So there is a representative from the apparel team from the apparel sourcing team, from footwear, from lifestyle footwear and they sit together in quarterly meetings on what will be our targets. Everybody feels involved and part of the game.

Overall, CSR professional managed to reshape the organization towards a deeper concern for CSR issues through a growing engagement of external and internal stakeholders.

4.4. **Disrupting existing managerial practices by promoting new vision, collaboration tools and innovation**

Starting from the CSR institutionalization phase at Asics (2004 onward), CSR professionals gradually introduced new visions and collaboration tools to disrupt and innovate existing practices within the firm. Disrupting organizational routines and values is not an easy task. The ability to fit with ASICS founding values and organizational routines, and to engage internal and external stakeholders proved an important aspect to develop such new projects.

The MIT project was mentioned as important by most interviewees, because it contributed to reframe existing approaches to CSR. It was focused on technical dimension of product innovation, fundamental to ASICS corporate values. It brought both a holistic view on the environmental impact of products, and established a link with performance (one of the core values of the company).

What we did then was sort of the kickstart to implement changes into production, in our development and production process, so we did the life cycle assessment as a group between my responsibility, product marketing, and the global development team and then with CSR, so it was a bigger group of people. The results were implemented into production and development.

"We had to prove to the Japanese that we wanted to work together with them and MIT to get to the end result of building the same high performance shoe in a more sustainable way."

The project also involved for the first time manufacturing and product development together. Such innovative focus for ASICS favors the reframing of CSR organizational character around the « shoe », a strong identity anchor at Asics.

"Alistair [CEO Asics Europe] definitely actively supported the research of any environmentally sustainable Kayano shoe which is one of our main shoes. That took our product director off doing a number of other things with product."

As per the integration of CSR in daily activities, the project helped to shift from a situation where CSR was said to be « the CSR department responsibility » to a situation where everyone felt more accountable for CSR impacts. The MIT project also brought organizational changes, bridging and connecting distant organization members around a common and core project. All interviewees mentioned organizational transformations towards

increased collaboration between Japanese and European teams beyond the CSR perimeter, and a reframing of CSR initiatives towards a more integrated and diffused perspective.

Some of them highlighted how, thanks to the various initiatives undertaken by the CSR team, the way of doing things at the Headquarter had been reshaped.

"What we learned from dealing with the Japanese is that they have a tendency to do things the same way. Once you start doing stuff and they see how you actually can track it or how you can improve something, it's much easier for them to see it alive and then adopt it than to be challenged to change their own idea."

It's like sushi chefs, right? Sushi chefs will teach other sushi chefs how things were done in 1900, and you become a better sushi chef the longer you are a sushi chef. It doesn't mean necessarily that you have to change your ways, it's just that you've done it so many times, so you must be an expert in it. Until there was Japanese people going to the U.S., to California, and then the Americans were like: "Oh, give me something. Mix it up a little bit with this." After that, those Japanese come back to Japan and they say, "Well, I'm a sushi chef and I was in California. Actually they do sushi differently... they want something else." Now there is a sushi chef coming with, "Look at this," and it's already there, which is much easier for the old school sushi chef to sort of look at it and say, "If I like it, I'll give it a try," and will be like, "Oh, hey, it's not that bad." To tell that sushi chef that you've been to the U.S. and you've seen something different and that he should try, is not going to happen. This is our experience with how sometimes you have to influence them.

Disrupting routines and practices through CSR diffusion within a company stands as one of the most prominent "by-products" obtained by CSR change agents. Increased collaboration, harmonized practices, joint vision towards a global approach, both to business development and CSR projects deployment were often mentioned as the unintentional beneficial outcomes of such long lasting institutionalization process of CSR and sustainable principles at ASICS.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

As previously described, ASICS European CSR professionals have been key change agents in reshaping CSR practices as well as CSR organizational identity while being distant both geographically and culturally from the company headquarter in Japan. They achieved so through iterative institutional work aiming at reconnecting CSR practices to the company founding values and identity, leveraging internal and external stakeholders' influence and disrupting existing routines and practices. Figure 2 below summarizes these iterations which reshape CSR identity, practices and strategy. As shown, CSR character is influenced and shaped by the company core values and organizational identity but is also feeding the evolution of organizational identity through a recursive process, led by CSR professionals

acting here as key change agents. CSR professionals are also key go-betweens who make the company sensitive to external and internal stakeholders' influences.
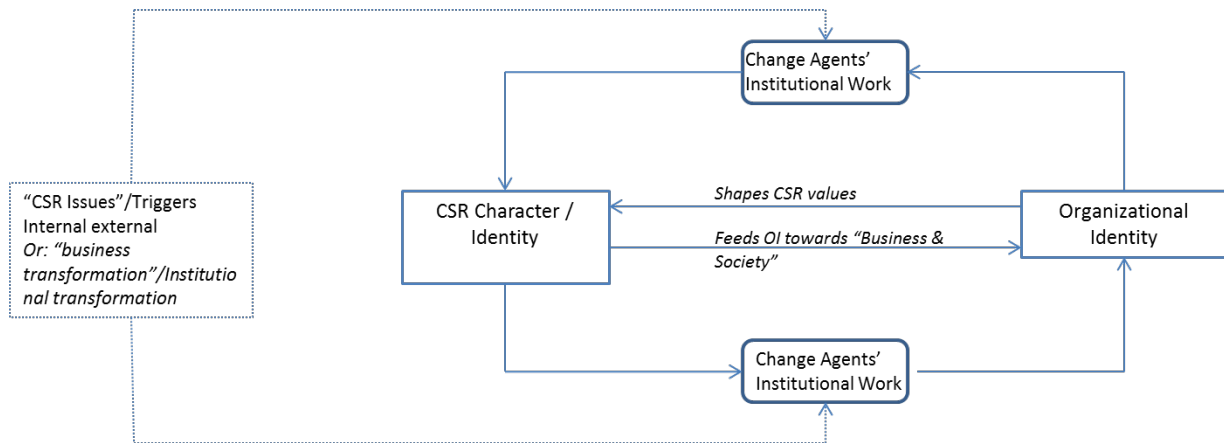
While our current research is still a work in progress, we believe it contributes to existing work through different dimensions. First, we show how change can result from the work of CSR professionals far away from decision centers. In this perspective, our approach differs from most perspectives where change is supposed to rest mainly on the engagement of top managers. We show how the presence of local hierarchical supporters within divisions helps to institutionalize such a process. Second, we underline the importance of institutional work performed by CSR professionals to embed CSR and sustainability within the firm. More specifically, we show how actors achieve a delicate balance of continuity and change to reframe CSR identity in multicultural setting. In this case, they have built from the Japanese culture of "sushi chef" to anchor new recipe of CSR identity. This can be considered an interesting case showing the recursive and dialectical interaction between the institutional work of change agents (ie their projective agency) and the institutional setting in which they are embedded (the strong organizational identity from the headquarter). What is determinant in the CSR professionals' attitude is their capacity to reflect on this embeddedness and develop at the same time a conscious and strategically intentional activity towards their own objectives (Lawrence et al. 2011). Finally, we contribute to the understanding of CSR change management and organizational evolution towards sustainability. In particular, the paper shed new lights on the practices required from bottom up organizational change, in a large multinational.

Our research framework also has practical implications. From a managerial perspective, our model allows to identify levers for change management. From a top management perspective, it will help directing and orientating CSR initiatives by taking into account the role of CSR professionals in shaping CSR organizational identity. For CSR managers, our research produces meaningful and actionable knowledge (Starkey & Madan, 2001a, b) by revealing processes towards shaping CSR organizational identity.

Beyond these contributions, we acknowledge our work has some limitations. Inherent to our methodology, the case is specific and cannot be generalized per se, as cultural values from Japan and Netherlands are specific. However, we believe the patterns at play in this specific transformation process can be generalized to other cases.

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