

How to contribute to the development of a global understanding of corporate governance? Reflections from submitted and published articles on CGIR.

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Bio

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How to contribute to the development of a global understanding of corporate governance? Reflections from submitted and published articles on CGIR.

Manuscript Type: 'Review'

Research Question/Issue: The article starts as a reflection on the criteria that articles submitted to CGIR should respect in order to pass the screening and referee procedures. Beyond that, the article explores the characteristics of all articles, and particularly of best paper and runner up articles, published recently in the journal. As such the article may be a guide for publishing in the journal and for contributing to the development of a global theory of corporate governance.

Research Findings/Insights: The article is based on both personal reflections of the two screening editors of the journal, and the analysis of all screening decisions taken in 2009, all articles published in the journal in 2008-2010, and best papers and runner up articles in 2007-2009. Results shows that (i) the most important reasons for desk rejection are the failure to build the paper on the extant literature addressing international corporate governance, a problematic structure of the paper together with substantial editing problems, and the quality of the data collection procedure; (ii) the majority of articles published in the journal uses both a legal, finance and economic theoretical framework, and a quantitative research method to analyze how governance mechanisms control value distribution at firm level; (iii) best papers and runner up articles have richer theoretical frameworks, more eclectic research methods and pay explicit attention to the relevance for theory and practice.

Theoretical/Academic Implications: The article emphasizes the importance to balance rigor and relevance to enhance the global understanding of corporate governance.

Practitioner/Policy Implications: The results of the study may be of practical importance for the scholars of various disciplines that want to submit articles to the journal. The ideas contained in this article can help them to refine their articles before the submission to increase the rate of acceptance in the review process and hopefully the publication in the journal. Moreover, we underline that moving forward a global theory of corporate governance could assist practitioners and/or policy makers in developing more efficient governance mechanisms.

Keywords: Corporate Governance, Screening review, Theory, Method.

**How to contribute to the development of a global theory of corporate governance?
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INTRODUCTION

Given the increasing competitive environment for academic publications, editorial teams devote considerable time and effort to develop the mission of the journal they manage. To be successful, the mission should emphasize a unique positioning of the journal in the academic arena and should be clear and simple for submitters.

The mission of *Corporate Governance: An International Review (CGIR)* is “to publish cutting-edge research on the phenomena of comparative corporate governance throughout the global economy. *CGIR* acts as a forum for the exchange of information, insights and knowledge based on both theoretical development and practical experience. It is committed to publishing rigorous and relevant research on corporate governance so that the practice of corporate governance can be influenced and improved throughout the world” (CGIR website). In extreme synthesis, the aim of the journal is challenging as CGIR aims at developing “a global theory of corporate governance that is parsimonious, accurate, and generalizable to any economy of the world” (Judge, 2010b: 85).

To address this ambitious mission, the journal encourages the submission of good quality articles exploring governance issues from an international perspective and from different academic disciplines (e.g. finance, accounting, management, law, sociology and economics). As CGIR is competing with both other generalist journals of different disciplines that also consider publishing articles on corporate governance and journals that cover specific corporate governance topics, in 2008 the editorial team decided to improve the value for submitters through a set of decisions. For example, the editorial team decided to provide authors with a quick (i.e. within three weeks) and good quality feedbacks from reviewers so

to stimulate an increasing number of submissions of scholarly works in the field. Moreover, in order to enhance both the review and eventual reading process of published manuscripts, CGIR asks submitters to provide a structured abstract (i.e. an abstract that highlights the key features of the manuscript: type, research question, research findings, theoretical implications, and practitioner implications) for each submission.

These decisions – together with other decisions taken by the editorial team – were very effective and led to a large increase of both the impact factor of CGIR and the number of articles submitted to the journal. In order to properly manage this flow of submissions, without increasing the time to return a feedback and/or reducing the quality of the review process, the editorial team decided to appoint two screening editors in September 2008. The decision to have two screening editors instead of one was taken in order to reduce both the workload needed to accomplish the task in a short time period (i.e. initially one week and recently only three days), and the variety of disciplines included in the journal's aims and scope. So one screening editor is devoted to screen manuscripts in the management and sociology tradition, and the other one to screen manuscripts in the finance and accounting tradition. The two screening editors work in close collaboration, and have continuous feedbacks and interactions with the editor-in-chief of the journal.

The screening process aims at determining the overall fit between the potential publication and the mission of the journal (Judge, 2008d). More specific, the screening procedure accomplishes the following tasks: (i) to make manageable the increasing number of submissions to the journal; (ii) to provide a quick and useful feedback to all submitters; (iii) to follow consistently criteria of desk rejection; (iv) to contribute to publishing rigorous and relevant international corporate governance research.

After more than one year of experience as screening editors (we started playing this role at the end of September 2008), we have been invited by the editor of the journal to present our

experience about the screening process and, more in general, the criteria we follow when we take decisions on manuscripts submitted to the journal. To reach this purpose, we decided both to explain in more detail the criteria used to screen submitted manuscripts, and to analyze all desk rejection's decisions related to regular submissions in 2009 (i.e. special issues are excluded as they are managed directly by guest editors). In addition, we analyzed all articles published under the new editorial board (2008-2010) and the CGIR best and runner up articles in the period 2007-2009 in order to highlight the journal's contribution to a global theory of corporate governance. We hope this article will provide potential submitters to CGIR useful information so that their manuscript can pass the screening process and (eventually) reach publication in the journal.

SCREENING CRITERIA

First of all we know how hard is to accept a desk rejection decision as we also receive desk rejections! It is not a nice feeling, and we are sorry to take this decision. We know how much work and care you devoted to your study, and we invite you not to take this decision personally. If you take the time to detach emotionally from the decision, you will see the pros of the screening procedure for your research and for the journal. A desk rejection procedure provides you with an immediate feedback on your research, and helps articles in review to receive more care and attention from associated editors and reviewers. Recently, the editorial team decided to pass from two to three reviewers per article and this decision has been possible only due to the existence of screening editors that pre-select incoming articles. Moreover, if you do not receive a "desk reject" decision a few days after your initial submission, your manuscript is probably already under review and the likelihood of publication will be higher. In any case, consider that CGIR's current acceptance rate is under 9 percent, and an eventual publication is by no means assured.

The editor and the two screening editors agreed to base the screening procedure on three criteria (Judge, 2008d). These are: (1) fit with the journal's mission and scope; (2) quality of execution of the research; and (3) contribution to the international corporate governance debate. The three criteria are divided in ten reasons to desk-reject that we want to illustrate in detail (see table 1).

Insert Table 1 about here

1. Fit. The criterion of fit is about (i) the focus of the article, (ii) the use of extant literature, and (iii) the relevance of the study. This criterion measures the article's fit with the journal's aims and scope. As argued before, CGIR is a multidisciplinary and international journal with a focus on corporate governance. The criterion of fit may be better explained by considering its three elements, i.e. focus, use of literature, and relevance.

The focus of the article is crucial as the journal's mission is to contribute to the development of a global theory of corporate governance. This implies that articles submitted to the journal should have a clear focus on corporate governance, and should contribute substantially to the current debate. Moreover, contributing to a global theory implies that the theoretical relevance of the paper should extend beyond the narrowly-defined research context the paper addresses. At CGIR, we define corporate governance broadly as "the exercise of power over corporate entities so as to increase the value provided to the organization's various stakeholders, as well as making those stakeholders accountable for acting responsibly with regard to the protection, generation, and distribution of wealth invested in the firm" (CGIR website). Even if there is some confusion about what is the dependent variable in corporate governance studies (Judge, 2008c), financial efficiency and social legitimacy are two performance variables at the core of corporate governance research (Judge, 2010a). In sum,

articles fitting with the journal's mission should address an important aspect of corporate governance in a substantive way.

Second, articles submitted should build on, refine and extend scholarly literature addressing international corporate governance. In other words, authors should position their works in the current theoretical debate, cite appropriately relevant literature on the topic, and extend the results of previous studies. Despite the strong dominance of agency theory in corporate governance studies, particularly in the economics and finance literature, the journal welcomes the use of complementary or alternative theories. At the same time, CGIR invites scholars to use theories appropriately in order to interpret and explain global governance practices.

Third, the paper should explore a research question or an issue that practitioners care about. One of the aims of the journal is to help practitioners to understand corporate governance issues around the world, and to contribute to the development and diffusion of governance best practices. A study that is relevant provides decision-makers (e.g. investors, directors, consultants, policy makers) with a rationale for making appropriate decisions (Shrivastava, 1987). CGIR has an ambivalent nature as it seeks to be “the publication outlet for all scholars interested in reading about and publishing scientific research on international aspects of corporate governance, as well as the knowledge centre for consultants, practitioners and public policy makers engaged with corporate governance throughout the world” (CGIR website). In sum, articles published in the journal should both explore a research question or an issue that practitioners care about, and should explicitly discuss the practical implications of the findings of the study.

2. *Quality.* The criterion of quality concerns both writing standards, and the proper use of theory. For empirical manuscripts, we consider also the rigor of the research methods employed in relation to data collection and data analysis. The quality of studies published in

the journal is important as CGIR aims at publishing cutting-edge research and being a reference outlet for the publication of rigorous and relevant corporate governance research.

Writing seems to be a trivial issue, but it is not. Articles may fail to address this issue due to a number of reasons. Articles may, for example, not follow the guidelines of the journal. At CGIR, we do not reject rigorous and relevant articles because they do not follow author guidelines! At the same time, the lack of respect of journal's guidelines is often a proxy for other more relevant problems, such as the weak or absent contribution to the current debate in the journal or even worse the weak or absent contribution to corporate governance research and practice, in general. Finally, a confusing writing style and an atypical structure should also be avoided as clear sentences and a standard format help readers to follow the author's thesis. The structure and the writing of an article may be considered as minor aspects of our research, but they are not. The poor organization of an article (i.e. its macro and micro structure) is a symptom of the weak discipline the scholar puts in its research, and the style and the tone can signal that the authors are amateurs (Daft, 1995). In sum, a clear structure of the paper, a writing that does flow well, and the absence of editing problems make the articles easy to read and invite screening editors to pass through.

The proper use of theory is more important than the pure writing. This criterion emphasizes that articles should have a clear logic, and that for empirical papers hypotheses should be derived from theory. The theory should also explain the meaning of the variables and the relationships between them: without a theory there is nothing to pull the study together and to justify why the variables should be investigated (Daft, 1995). The most common theoretical framework in corporate governance studies is agency theory, but other alternative theories (i.e. institutional theory, transaction cost theory, resource dependence theory, behavioral theory, and many other theories) can also be applied. The integration of agency with institutional theory seems to be particularly promising for the development of a rigorous and

relevant theory of international corporate governance as these two theoretical perspectives seem to contain important insights for future research (Judge, 2008a). In sum, articles accepted for publication should develop logical or coherent theoretical arguments, i.e. they should “tell a story”.

There are differences in the use of theories between sociology and management scholars on the one hand, and finance, accounting and economics scholars, on the other. The former emphasize more the process of developing the theoretical arguments and creating new theories, whereas the latter tend to extend theory through modeling and enter directly into identifying new empirical evidence. At CGIR, we give different considerations in theoretical rigor between the two approaches in order to be coherent with the respective traditions. At the same time, we check that all submitted papers develop a sound and coherent theoretical framework.

For articles based on an empirical research, we screen the rigor of the data collection and the data analysis procedures. CGIR does not endorse any specific type of methodology to advance the state of the art of governance research, and is open to accept articles using a variety of research methods (Judge, 2008b). At the same time, the journal emphasizes the rigor of the research method as studies following fundamentally flawed procedures do not lead to rigorous and relevant results. Articles submitted to the journal should describe with care the method of collection and analysis of data in order to let the reader have the information necessary to understand the study. A lack of proper information on the research method may lead to desk rejection as it is a proxy of authors’ ability to conduct rigorous research. Authors should carefully pay attention to the design of their study as serious problems may easily lead to a desk rejection. Design cannot be, in fact, corrected because the research has been already executed in an invalid matter (Daft, 1995).

3. *Contribution.* The third criterion (i.e. contribution) is about the authenticity of the insights generated, the scope of international insights, and their usefulness in interpreting the observed phenomena. Articles submitted to the journal should strive to produce original, insightful, and interesting theory and research by developing previous corporate governance research or redirecting research into entirely new areas (CGIR website). The ultimate goal of the journal is to move closer to a parsimonious and accurate global theory of corporate governance.

One important factor that affects an article's contribution is the level of maturity of the topic matter. When the topic is new, a lot of research is developed and most projects contribute to new knowledge leading to publication. When the topic has been, instead, extensively investigated and many studies have been published, it becomes more difficult to conduct a study that produces genuinely new insights (Daft, 1995). This is the case, for example, of a study investigating the relationship between board demographics and firm performance, as a number of studies have already explored this topic (Dalton et al 2003). Nevertheless, even in that particular field the resulting ambiguity of empirical evidence does provide scope for new and insightful research. However, such research should address the resulting ambiguity directly rather than adding one more piece of evidence to an already enormous pile of similar research results.

Therefore, articles should not be mere replications of existing contributions; they should instead offer novel insights. It is very important that authors underline in the abstract and the introduction what is the core theoretical and practical contribution of their article. Articles that replicate a previous study – typically in a different national setting or with a different sample of firms – do not provide an original and interesting contribution to the current corporate governance debate. In sum, the contribution of articles that overlap very much with articles

already published for what concern the theoretical development or the method (e.g. data or variables) is questioned.

Second, CGIR encourages the submission of rigorous and relevant articles on the phenomena of comparative corporate governance throughout the global economy (CGIR website). CGIR is an international and interdisciplinary scholarly business journal with a unique focus on corporate governance (Judge, 2009). Articles submitted should preferably cover more than one country. Studies in one country should contextualize the research question in the specific national setting and explain how the study contributes substantively to a global understanding of corporate governance. At a minimum, such contributions include a discussion of the relevance of the findings of the study for other types of context. A simple suggestion of further research along these lines is not enough!

Third, articles should not be of a purely descriptive nature. Articles describing the diffusion of governance practices without trying to analyze some antecedents and consequences fail to pass the screening procedure. Articles accepted for publication at CGIR analyze and explain the observed phenomena with appropriate theoretical lenses and rigorous research methods. At the end, the findings should be of any relevance to practitioners and/or policy-makers.

We typically do not desk reject articles for the poor discussion section if we see a potential value to develop. However, we want to emphasize how important is to have a strong discussion section that tells the main implications of the findings and how they adds to the developing of the knowledge base within the field (Daft, 1995). Typical weaknesses are to write few paragraphs summarizing the results and nothing more, to over generalize the implications far beyond the results, to avoid mentioning the limitations of the study.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE SCREENING DECISIONS IN 2009

In order to discuss the screening process in more detail we start with an overview of the screening decisions made by the two CGIR screening editors in 2009. Out of all submissions in 2009, we analyzed our screening decisions with respect to 264 general issue submissions as the 89 special issue submissions were handled by the guest editors that year. Of these 264 general issue papers submitted to CGIR, 80 papers (30.3 percent) were processed further after a first screening by the screening editors and 184 submitted papers were desk rejected (69.7 percent). The two screening editors provided in total 517 reasons for their desk rejection of the submitted papers, which come down to almost 3 reasons per rejected paper. In figure 1, a frequency distribution of the number of reasons per rejected paper illustrates that the vast majority of the desk rejected papers is rejected for more than one reason. The average number of reasons in the figure is largely consistent with the editorial policy of CGIR in this respect. As explained before the screening procedure typically applies the three criteria of, respectively, fit, quality and contribution. About 91 percent of the papers that are desk rejected fail to pass the screening procedure on at least two out of the three criteria.

Insert Figure 1 about here

In table 2 our objective is to provide a more detailed overview of the reasons that we, as screening editors, use for desk rejection. In table 1, we highlighted the ten reasons for desk rejection. In table 2, we report on the frequency distribution of these ten reasons. However, when discussing table 2, we like to emphasize again that a desk rejection is usually based on at least two arguments.

Insert Table 2 about here

Table 2 shows in the first place that the failure to build the paper on the extant literature addressing international corporate governance is used as the most important argument for desk rejection by the screening editors. For scholarly articles, the extension of the extant literature addressing international corporate governance is considered to be a condition *sine qua non* for publication. Despite this, our experience as screening editors reveals that a relatively large number of papers submitted to CGIR lacks an adequate positioning in the extant literature and fails to clearly and explicitly identify the gap in the literature that is the topic of the underlying research.

In the second place, a problematic structure of the paper together with substantial editing problems represents another important argument for desk rejection. As argued, a confusing and unbalanced structure of a paper, a writing that does not flow well, and the existence of editing problems make it more difficult for the reader to capture the purpose and contribution of the underlying research. In addition, the organization of the paper signals the degree of expertise and professionalism incorporated in the research. A well-organized paper can be considered as an invitation to read and maybe even as a token of respect to the audience the paper is aiming for. And finally, many journals, and CGIR is no exception, offer detailed suggestions in their style guide on how to improve the accessibility and readability of papers. Similarly in the academic profession, it is generally emphasized, for example, that intro sections serve to explicitly introduce scope, purpose and contribution of the paper, theory sections are there to develop hypotheses, method sections are to explain research choices in a consistent way, and so on. Therefore, a paper that does not fulfill such basic requirements can be considered as incomplete and basically not yet ready for the referee procedure.

In the third place, the quality of the data collection procedure stands out as a frequently used reason. In our screening experience, we have observed that data collection and sampling procedures are not always extensively discussed and motivated. Data collection and analysis

procedures need to be rigorous. Furthermore, authors need to explicitly consider to what extent the collected data make it possible to answer the research questions in the paper. In this respect, information regarding data needs to be complete in order to be able to understand the study. A lack of proper information on the research design may lead to desk rejection.

In the fourth place, it can be observed from table 2 that a relative large number of papers (44) are purely descriptive and lack analysis of the observed phenomena. Note that CGIR seeks to improve understanding of global corporate governance. To accomplish this, a mere description of the observed corporate governance practice is not enough. The relevance of the findings to practitioners and/or policy-makers should be explained, preferably in an extensive discussion section. In this respect, we have observed from the sample of submissions that there exists substantial potential to develop.

In the fifth place and finally, a similar observation applies to papers (29) that to a large extent replicate already existing studies in the field in, for instance, another country context, or papers (32) that do not explicitly address the relevance of the findings for practitioners. Such papers only limitedly contribute to the global understanding of corporate governance. Single country studies can be interesting as an application, or replication, of existing theory and are relevant to the country under study. However, in order to be relevant for the global investor community, the importance of the context and a comparison of the country findings with the results of earlier studies have to be included. Likewise, in order to be relevant for practitioners, the implications of the findings in relation to the relevant institutional context will have to be discussed as well.

When aggregating over the three criteria for desk rejection, it can be observed from table 2 that the fit criterion is applied in 165 cases, the quality criterion in 254 cases and the contribution criterion in 98 cases. Consequently, the screening process in 2009 revealed a relatively large emphasis on reasons that are related to the quality of the submitted papers.

This observation should not come as a surprise. Remember that screening editors are to some extent gate keepers, a first screening of the papers should primarily focus on those threshold standards that need to be met before a submitted paper can be passed on to a more detailed referee process. Quality standards, particularly standards that apply to the structure of the paper, the quality of writing, the use of theory to consistently develop hypotheses, the application of appropriate sampling procedures and research methods stand in out in this respect as basic requirements of the academic profession. As argued before, in the screening process, we have experienced that the extent to which quality standards are met, usually signals the maturity, completeness and rigor of the underlying research project.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE ARTICLES PUBLISHED IN 2008-2010

The aim of screening process is to monitor the threshold standards that are relevant for CGIR. As such, the focus of the screening process is more on the left tail of quality distribution of submitted papers so as to make sure that particular minimum standards are met before the paper proceeds into the referee process. In order to provide an overview on how the journal contributes to the development of a global theory of corporate governance, we analyzed the articles published in the journal under the new editorial team. In particular, we analyzed 110 articles out of 118 published in 2008-2010. Eight articles were excluded as they are reviews of the literature published in a special review issue (vol. 17, issue 3, 2009).

In line with the mission and scope of the journal (i.e. fit), the quality of the research and the contribution to the international corporate governance debate, we developed a list of characteristics to analyze the articles published in the journal. In particular, these characteristics concern the corporate issue explored in the article, the theoretical framework, the method, and the discussion. Subsequently, we used these characteristics to analyze the articles published in 2008-2010 (see table 3).

Insert Table 3 about here

Published articles fit with the journals' mission and scope in that they have a clear corporate governance focus and use the extant governance literature. Table 3 shows that the majority of the articles published in the journal explore research questions related to control, rent extraction, and value distribution (78 articles). Studies focused on value creation and incentives (19), or articles combining the two approaches (8) are much more uncommon. This finding reflects the emphasis on control that characterizes both the academic publications (e.g. Daily, Dalton and Cannella, 2003) and the practitioners' view (Higgs, 2003) on corporate governance, but also identifies value-creation as a relatively under-researched area in governance studies. A second finding is that the large majority of articles (77) contribute to the literature by using a single theoretical framework. Relatively few articles combine two (29) or three (4) different theoretical perspectives. Multidisciplinary articles typically aim at exploring determinants and/or consequences of all or some tasks of the board of directors, e.g. the control task based on agency theory, the service task based on strategic-decision making literature, and the networking task based on resource dependence theory (e.g. Zahra and Pearce, 1989; Zona and Zattoni, 2007). Most articles contribute to the literature on agency theory or other related perspectives (57). These theories are used largely by legal, economics, finance or accounting scholars and tend to dominate governance studies (e.g. Daily, Dalton, and Cannella, 2003). Despite recent criticism to this approach for its simplifying assumptions that provide an under-socialized view of human beings and reduce the complexity of corporate governance phenomena (Lubatkin et al., 2007), only a relatively low number of published articles in CGIR departs from this tradition and follows a sociological theoretical framework (17). These results underline that the search for alternative theoretical paradigms or the combination of two or more theoretical frameworks seem to be promising avenues for future governance research (e.g. Daily et al, 2003; Huse, Hoskisson, Zattoni, Viganò, 2011).

Regarding the quality of research methods, our analysis reveals the typical patterns of academic journals. First, articles published in CGIR largely adopt a rigorous explanatory approach characterized by theory testing (85), while it is less common to find articles with an exploratory approach aimed at developing theories (23). Moreover, almost half of articles following this second approach have been published in 2008 and some of them lack of a clear theory-informed perspective. This finding illustrates the evolution of the editorial policy of the journal from publishing articles aimed at mainly describing governance issues and mechanisms to articles aimed at developing rigorous theoretical frameworks and consistent theory testing. In this evolution, we see the risk to unintentionally overemphasize ‘more standardized’ theory testing articles at the expense of ‘more eclectic’ theory developing articles.

A second pattern concerns the large majority of single country studies (69) and the relatively small number of multi-countries studies (32). This result may be explained considering the strong impact of legal and cultural institutions on governance phenomena and mechanisms (e.g. Aguilera and Jackson, 2003; Hall and Soskice, 2001). On the other hand, we think that an increase in the number of studies doing comparative analyses of governance practices would significantly contribute to the development of a global theory of corporate governance. Not surprisingly, liberal market economies (32) – usually the US, the UK, Canada and Australia – are the most common empirical setting of published articles, followed by coordinated market economies (22) – i.e. several continental European countries (e.g. Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Sweden) and Japan. More interestingly, our results illustrate that articles published in the journal cover all geographic empirical settings, including emergent economies (19) – e.g. China, India, and Taiwan – and transition economies (8) – e.g. Russia, and Baltic countries. Finally, 22 articles cover countries samples characterized by more than one institutional or cultural setting.

Other interesting features of methods regard data, unit of analysis and type of analyses. The majority of articles (63) published in the journal use cross-sectional data that involved observations at a specific moment in time. On the other hand, a nontrivial number of studies (38) collects longitudinal data and has repeated observations over time. As corporate governance issues and mechanisms are in continuous evolution – e.g. due to the evolution of legal, cultural and social institutions – we think the analysis of longitudinal data samples can help scholars to understand the interplay and dynamics of governance mechanisms (e.g. Ward, Brown, and Rodriguez, 2009). In almost all articles, the unit of analysis is the firm or the individual actor, and only rarely it is the group/network (3), or the national level (9). This is coherent with the dominant use of agency theory that does not devote enough attention to group or national contexts (Judge, 2011; Lubatkin et al., 2007). As governance mechanisms are embedded in the national institutional environment (Aguilera and Jackson, 2003), we encourage governance scholars to bridge the gap between firm level and national level. Studies combining micro and macro level will help us to understand the interplay of governance mechanisms at both firm and national level (e.g. Minichilli, Zattoni, Nielsen, and Huse, forthcoming). Finally almost all empirical studies collect quantitative data and apply rigorous statistical techniques to find significant relationships among variables, while only few studies collect and analyze qualitative data (9) or combine both qualitative and quantitative data analysis (4). The dominant use of quantitative research methods is a common characteristic of several academic journals. To contrast this hegemony, editorial boards are inviting scholars to submit more qualitative studies and are organizing call for papers on qualitative research methods.

Finally, we explored to what extent articles published in the journal provide an adequate discussion of their theoretical and practical contributions. Despite that the new abstract asks contributors to synthesize both types of contributions, we found out that a relatively large

number of articles published in the journal does not devote explicit attention to these crucial aspects in the discussion section. This issue is particularly relevant for the contribution to practice (44 articles without explicit discussion) and less for theoretical contributions (14 without explicit discussion). At the same time, the large majority of articles without theoretical implications (9) has been published in 2008, which supports the perspective that the current editorial team moved the journal toward articles with stronger theoretical frameworks. In line with mission and scope of CGIR, we encourage governance scholars to develop articles providing emphasis on both contributions.

AN OVERVIEW OF BEST AND RUNNER UP ARTICLES IN 2007-2009

As explained, the ambition of CGIR is publishing cutting edge research and high quality contributions to the literature. Top quality papers are almost by definition located in the right tail of the quality distribution and it may be interesting to analyze in more detail the characteristics of those papers.

At the end of 2007, the editorial team of CGIR decided to create an annual best paper and runner up prize for articles published in the journal. The selection process of the winning article is divided in two steps. First, the editorial advisory board nominates potential best papers published in the last volume of the journal; second, an ad hoc committee of distinguished scholars determines the best paper and the runner up article among the ones selected in the first phase. Since the decision to create the prize, the journal selected three best papers and three runner up articles. Subsequent to our analysis of all articles published in 2008-2010, we provide an overview of best and runner up articles in order to discuss how papers submitted to CGIR can contribute to the development of a global theory of corporate governance.

The six winning articles fit perfectly with the mission of CGIR to be a multidisciplinary and international journal. Authors come, in fact, from different disciplines, such as strategic management (i.e. Brown, Cuomo, Kiel, Kumar, Nicholson, Pedersen, Surroca, Ward, and Zattoni), accounting (i.e. Ding and Prior), finance (e.g. Rodriguez and Tribo'), and economics (i.e. Zhang and Zhang). Moreover, the geographic variety of authors covers countries located in all continents if we consider their nationality, the institutions where they took their PhD, and the institutions where they currently work.

The best and runner up articles are perfectly coherent with the criterion of fit and its three elements (i) the focus of the article, (ii) the use of extant literature, and (iii) the relevance of the study (see table 4 for more details). All articles focus on a core corporate governance issue. Independent variables investigated in these studies are both measured at country-level (i.e. legal origin and institutional environment), and at firm-level (i.e. ownership structure, board of directors, firm performance, earnings management). Dependent variables considered in these works are related to some measures of firm performance (e.g. earnings management, accounting performance, corporate social responsibility), but also to some governance mechanisms aimed at avoiding rent extraction such as the proliferation and the characteristics of good governance codes or the governance mechanisms of monitoring and incentive alignment. For what concerns the theoretical framework, all papers are grounded in solid theory. The theoretical arguments are logical, coherent and "tell a story". It is interesting to note that all articles exploring corporate governance issues at firm level adopt an agency perspective, sometimes complemented by other theoretical perspectives (such as stewardship or resource dependence theory). Articles exploring corporate governance at country-level adopt an institutional perspective together with an alternative or a complementary theory (i.e. efficiency and transaction cost theory). Finally, all articles – except the best paper published in 2007 under the previous editorial team – strive to provide practical contributions to both

relevant actors of the firm (i.e. shareholders, directors, managers) and policy makers. The exposure of some authors to both academic research and corporate governance practices – underlined in the CVs where they, besides their academic and research experience, emphasize their consulting activities – can contribute to explain their ability to provide both theoretical and practical implications in line with the mission of CGIR.

The best and runner up articles are also coherent with the second criterion (i.e. quality) and its elements (i) writing standards, (ii) the proper use of theory, and – for empirical manuscripts – also (iii) the rigor of the research methods employed in relation to both data collection and data analysis. All articles are easy to read and follow the standard structure in international research (e.g. introduction, theory, method, results, discussion). Moreover, all articles use theories appropriately, and develop hypotheses or propositions based upon a sound and consistent theoretical framework. For what concerns the empirical manuscripts, most papers collect archival data and apply quantitative statistical techniques, but among them there is also a pure qualitative study (i.e. a case study) and a mixed study (i.e. a study combining a qualitative and a quantitative method). It is interesting to note that with the exception of one paper, all other empirical studies tend to explore corporate governance phenomena over time through the use of longitudinal data.

Finally, the best and runner up articles are also coherent with the third criterion (i.e. contribution) and its elements (i) the newness of the insights generated, (ii) the scope of international insights, and (iii) their usefulness in interpreting the observed phenomenon. All articles provide new insights on corporate governance phenomena. In particular, they extend the results of previous studies about the role played by the ownership structure in earnings management outside the empirical settings of the Anglo-Saxon public companies (Ding, Zhang Zhang, 2007), explore the much researched area of the relationship between boards of directors and firm performance employing a pattern matching analysis of seven cases

(Nicholson and Kiel, 2007), investigate the role of efficiency and legitimacy reasons behind the diffusion of codes of good governance (Zattoni and Cuomo, 2008), analyze the relationship between earnings management and social corporate responsibility, and their impact on corporate financial performance (Priori, Surroca, Tribò, 2008), detail the role of firm performance as a key determinant of how the governance mechanisms of monitoring and incentive alignment serve as complements or substitutes in addressing agency issues (Ward, Brown and Rodriguez, 2009), and explore the impact of institutional transitions on group affiliated firms performance (Zattoni, Pedersen and Kumar, 2009). These articles contributed to the development of a global theory of corporate governance as they investigate the above mentioned corporate governance phenomena using a global sample, or both considering the local specificities of the national corporate governance in the theoretical development and addressing the generalizability of findings in the discussion section. Finally, winning articles address in the discussion section, both the theoretical and practitioner implications of their results. Their implications are insightful for academics, policy makers and practitioners as articles explore an interesting governance phenomenon (including its determinants or its consequences), the theoretical framework is well developed, the method is rigorous and appropriate, the results section provides robust analyses, and the discussion section tells how the main implications of the findings add to the developing of the knowledge within the academic field and the practice (specifying also its limitations and making suggestions for future research).

Insert Table 4 about here

DISCUSSION

As stated in the introduction, CGIR is committed to publishing rigorous and relevant research on corporate governance so that the practice of corporate governance can be influenced and

improved throughout the world. From this statement it can be immediately derived that papers submitted to CGIR should have the two important characteristics of rigor and relevance. Rigor stands for quality in research, and relevance is captured by the contribution to theory and practice. Both characteristics should be present if the article wants to fit with the mission and scope of CGIR. In the preceding sections, we have illustrated that articles published in CGIR, and particularly best papers, have all these characteristics.

The primary focus of this contribution is the evaluation of the determinants of the screening process at CGIR. In line with the mission and scope of the journal, the introduction of the screening process in September 2008 aims (i) to make manageable the increasing number of submissions to the journal; (ii) to provide a quick and useful feedback to all submitters; (iii) to follow consistently criteria of desk rejection; (iv) to contribute to publishing rigorous and relevant international corporate governance research. In this paper, we, the screening editors of CGIR, have attempted to provide an overview of the screening decisions with respect to submitted papers to CGIR in the year 2009. The overall purpose of this evaluation is to increase the transparency and accountability of the overall screening process. Our analysis of 264 general issue papers submitted to CGIR in 2009 revealed that 69.7 percent of these submissions were desk-rejected by us. More than 90 percent of these papers were rejected because they did not pass the screening procedure on at least two out of the three criteria of fit, quality and contribution. Furthermore, our experience as screening editors revealed that many of these papers lacked an adequate positioning in the extant literature, failed to clearly and explicitly identify the gap in the literature that is the topic of the underlying research, and were problematic in structuring their content and the writing style used. This leads us to conclude that a substantial number of papers may be submitted to a journal, such as CGIR, in a too early stage of completion and basically not yet ready for the referee procedure. This implies that the overall quality of papers submitted to CGIR can be substantially improved in

case more time is devoted to the organization of the paper, the structuring of the core-arguments, the explicit focus on the topic of research and the relationship to the gaps that are identified in the literature.

In addition, while corporate governance represents a broad and expanding area of research, not every topic or theme does equally contribute to an increase of our understanding of international corporate governance. A relative large number of papers are purely descriptive and lack analysis of the observed phenomena. We frequently screened papers that to a large extent replicate already existing studies in the field. By contrast, cutting edge research will be focused on problems and issues that have not yet been extensively addressed. On the one hand, such issues may develop from reality, such as the academic and practical implications of emergent shareholder activism or the causes and consequences for corporate governance of the recent financial and economic crisis, subjects addressed in two recent CGIR special issues. On the other hand, cutting edges research may emerge from important gaps in the literature, such as the fundamental interdependence of the composition, actions and performance of boards, which calls for new theorizing and methods in that line of research. In addition, cutting edge research may take place by crossing the borders of academic disciplines, for instance, by combining insights from economics and social psychology, e.g. in the field of incentive compensation, or law, economics and sociology, e.g. when it concerns the analysis of the regulatory and institutional context. Finally, the use of both multiple theoretical lenses and levels of analysis may allow governance scholars to explore the interaction among bundles of governance mechanisms. From this point of view, the use of agency and institutional theory applied to firm and national level seem to be promising.

In order to contribute to a global understanding of corporate governance, CGIR emphasizes the relevance of the papers it seeks to publish. In particular, the editorial policy is to make sure that articles explicitly deal with the relevance of the problem or the research findings for

practitioners. In order to increase the relevance for the global investor community, the importance of the context as well as an explicit comparison of the country findings with the results of earlier studies can be very informative. Similarly, for practitioners it is very useful to learn more about the implications of the research findings in relation to the relevant institutional context. Obviously, the screening procedure is not the place to evaluate the relevance of the research and the findings for practitioners. However, a quick scan of the paper should at least reveal that the implications for practitioners are explicitly considered, preferably in the discussion section of the paper. There are powerful arguments for being cautious about offering implications for practitioners (Bartunek and Rynes, 2010). Particularly, it is important to explicitly consider the extent to which research findings are generalizable to other contexts. Research findings may not be of direct instrumental use to practitioners. However, besides instrumental, the awareness of practitioners of particular corporate governance problems and characteristics can be a major contribution. The field of corporate governance stands out as largely practice-based and could benefit from a more tight connection of theory and practice. In this respect, explaining how the results of research are related to the world of practice can be considered as an important step in improving both rigor and relevance (Duncan et al., 2009). Similarly, providing more information about the context in which a study was conducted is equally important, because “properly conveying context contributes to telling a story” and makes research more interesting (Bartunek, Rynes, & Ireland, 2006). In addition, the world is not flat. A global understanding of corporate governance can only emerge if appropriate attention is paid to the institutional and socio-demographical diversity of regions and countries across the globe. Consequently, there are good reasons for paying explicit attention to the implications of research findings for practice, particularly in corporate governance.

CONCLUSION

This article is aimed at helping governance scholars submitting papers to CGIR to increase the fit with the journal's mission and scope, the quality of their theoretical development and method, and their contribution to corporate governance literature and practice. The analysis of screening editors' decisions, articles published in 2008-2010, and the best and runner up papers published in 2007-2009 can help submitters to increase their probability of successful publishing in the journal.

At the same time, this article is aimed at encouraging governance scholars to contribute to the development of a global theory of comparative corporate governance, i.e. a theory able to rigorously explain global corporate governance phenomena and to provide effective solutions for practitioners. This is a very ambitious objective the current editorial team of CGIR intends to pursue in the coming years. To reach this objective governance scholars are invited to broaden the focus of their studies. Most corporate governance studies typically test agency-theory based hypotheses on the relationship between one governance mechanism and a measure of firm performance in a specific time frame and in geographically limited empirical settings. While agency theory has produced many interesting results, we argue that the approach may need to be extended to provide a contribution to the development of a global theory of corporate governance. First, the use of complementary and alternative theories will allow governance scholars to produce new and innovative interpretations of corporate governance phenomena. Second, it is difficult to isolate and to explore the effects of one governance mechanism, and for this reason we may direct attention to the effects and consequences of sets of complementary governance mechanisms. Third, governance problems and practices evolve over time reflecting patterns in legislation, culture, and implicit norms regarding relationships among stakeholders, and for this reason it may be difficult to compare studies developed in different time periods. Fourth, governance mechanisms and the

institutional environment in which they are embedded are strongly influenced by forces developed at national-level, and for this reason it is difficult to extend the result of one country study to other national settings. In sum, governance scholars are invited to broaden the theoretical and methodological scope of their research projects so as to strengthen their contribution to the development of a global theory of comparative corporate governance.

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Table 1. CGIR desk rejection guidelines for screening editors (September 1, 2008)

Criteria	Meaning	Reasons
I. FIT	Fit with the journal's mission and scope	1. FOCUS: The paper does not address an aspect of corporate governance in a substantive way (FIT 1)
		2. LITERATURE: The paper does not build on, refine or extend the extant literature addressing international corporate governance (FIT 2)
		3. RELEVANCE: The paper does not explore a research question/issue that practitioners care about, and/or the paper does not discuss the practical implications of the study (FIT 3)
II. QUALITY	Quality of the execution of the research (All Manuscripts)	1. WRITING: The structure of the paper is particularly poor, the writing does not flow well, and there are numerous editing problems (QUALITY 1)
		2. THEORY: The theoretical arguments are not logical or coherent; they fail to "tell a story" (QUALITY 2)
	Quality of the execution of the research (Empirical Manuscripts)	3. COLLECTION: The data collection procedure is fundamentally flawed (QUALITY 3)
		4. ANALYSIS: The data analysis procedure is fundamentally flawed (QUALITY 4)
III. CONTRIBUTION	1. Contribution to the governance debate.	1. REPLICATION. The paper consists of a mere replication of existing contributions to the field (CONTRIBUTION 1)
		2. INTERNATIONAL: The paper does not contribute to a global understanding of corporate governance in a substantive way (special hurdle for single country studies) (CONTRIBUTION 2);
		3. DESCRIPTIVE. The paper is of a purely descriptive nature and lacks analysis or explanation of the observed phenomena (CONTRIBUTION 3)

Figure 1 number of reasons per rejected paper

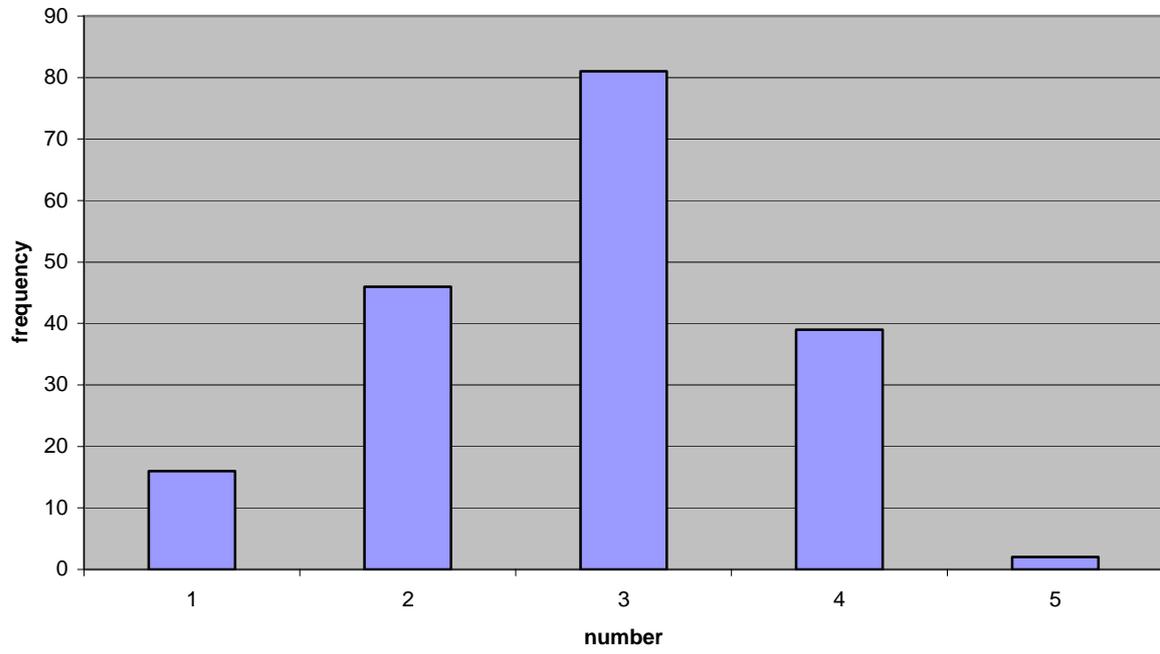


Table 2. Frequency or reasons used for desk rejection

Criteria	Meaning	Reasons	frequency	Percentage
I. Fit	Fit with the journal's mission and scope	1. Focus	17	3.3
		2. Literature	116	22.4
		3. Relevance	32	6.2
II. Quality	Quality of the execution of the research (All Manuscripts)	1. Writing	113	21.9
		2. Theory	37	7.2
	Quality of the execution of the research (Empirical Manuscripts)	3. Data	79	15.3
		4. Analysis	25	4.8
III. Contribution	Contribution to the governance debate.	1. Replication	29	5.6
		2. International	25	4.8
		3. Descriptive	44	8.5

Table 3. Criteria used to analyze articles published on CGIR

Criteria	Meaning	Variables	Results
I. Corporate governance issue	Relationship with CGIR's definition of corporate governance	0 value creation, 1 value distribution, 2 both	19 value creation, 78 value distribution, 8 both, 5 not classifiable
II. Theoretical framework	Number of theoretical lenses	Count	77 one theory, 29 two theories, 4 three theories
	Type of theories employed	1= Law, economics, accounting and finance, 2= sociology, 3= social psychology, 4= contingency	57 law, economics, accounting and finance, 17 sociology, 1 social physiology – plus combination of the previous ones
III. Method	Theory development or testing	0=exploratory, 1= explanatory, 2=both	23 exploratory, 85 explanatory, 1 both
	Countries covered in the sample	0= single, 1=comparative	69 single country, 32 comparative study
	Institutional and cultural setting	1=liberal market economies, 2=coordinated market economies, 3=emergent economies, 4=transition economies, 5=more than one economy	32 liberal market economies, 22 coordinated market economies, 19 emergent economies, 8 transition economies, 22 multi countries
	Data analyses	0=longitudinal, 1=cross-sectional	38 longitudinal, 63 cross sectional
	Unit of analysis	1=firm or individual, 2= group/network level, 3=national level, 4=supranational	91 firm or individual, 3 group/network, 9 national level
	Data analysis	1=qualitative, 2=quantitative, 3=mixed method, 4=experiment	9 qualitative, 85 quantitative, 4 mixed, 1 experiment
IV. Discussion	Theoretical implications explicitly addressed	0=no, 1=yes	96 explicitly addressed theoretical implications
	Practical relevance explicitly addressed	0=no, 1=yes	66 explicitly addressed practical implications

Table 4: A summary of best and runner up articles of CGIR 2007-2009

	2007		2008		2009	
	Best paper	Runner up	Best paper	Runner Up	Best paper	Runner up
Authors	Ding, Zhang, Zhang	Nicholson, Kiel	Zattoni, Cuomo	Prior, Surroca, Tribo'	Ward, Brown, Rodriguez	Zattoni, Pedersen, Kumar
RQ	The role of ownership structure in earnings management	The link between the board of directors and firm performance	The main reason behind the proliferation of codes of good governance: efficiency vs. legitimation	The relationship between earnings management and corporate social responsibility	The role of firm performance as a determinant of how governance mechanisms serve as complements or substitutes	The link between firm performance and the evolution of the institutional environment
Theory	Agency theory	Agency theory, stewardship theory, resource dependence theory	Efficiency theory and Institutional theory	Agency theory	Agency theory, stewardship theory	Institutional theory and transaction cost theory
Sample	273 Chinese listed companies in 2002	Seven cases	Corporate governance codes developed worldwide	593 industrial firms from 26 countries in 2002-2004	Theoretical	547 Indian firms over a 17 year period (1990 to 2006)
Main results	(i) The relationship between earnings management and ownership concentration shows a non-linear, inverted U-shape; (ii) the entrenchment effect is weaker in privately-owned than in state-owned listed firms.	While each theory can explain a particular case, no single theory explains the general pattern of results.	Both legitimation and efficiency reasons explain the diffusion of good governance codes. The issuance of codes in civil law countries is prompted more by legitimation reasons than by the determination to improve the governance practices of national companies.	(i) There is a positive impact of earnings management practices on CSR; (ii) the combination of earnings management and CSR has a negative impact on financial performance.	In firms with good performance, governance mechanisms of monitoring and incentive act as substitutes. The lower the performance, the greater the proportion of monitoring. In firms with poor performance, they act as complements. In firms heading towards bankruptcy, governance effectiveness is likely to decline.	The performance benefits of group affiliation are evident in the early phase of institutional transition, but level out in the late phase. Older and service group-affiliated firms are better able to cope with institutional transition than younger and manufacturing group-affiliated firms.