# Corporate Social Reporting in Libya: A Research Note

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## Abstract

**Purpose** *Not enough is known about social accounting disclosure practices in developing countries. This research note adds strength and depth to the few other studies that take Libya as a point of departure to understanding the dynamic between disclosure practices and the context in which they are performed.*

**Design/methodology/approach** *A sample of 270 annual reports from 54 companies, both public and private across a range of sectors and covering a five year period (2001-2005) were analysed using content analysis to ascertain patterns and trends in corporate social reporting by Libyan companies.*

**Findings** *Libyan companies generally disclose some information related to social responsibility but at a low level compared with developed countries and only in certain areas. This situation changed little over the five year period under scrutiny.*

**Research limitations/implications** *During the five year period examined, CSR remained largely unresponsive to significant changes in the political scene that occurred over a much longer period of time. This suggests further research is needed to illuminate the role and influence of societal culture and to understand the impact of organisational subculture on disclosure and responsibility practices.*

**Originality/value** *Libya provides a point of departure for further research into other transitioning or developing economies, particularly those in the Arab world. It also offers unique insights and the possibility for comparative studies between them due to its particular character. This note augments and adds depth to other studies in the area.*

**Keywords** *Corporate social reporting, Libya, transition economy, annual reports, Content analysis, socio-political context.*

**Paper type** *Research note.*

## Introduction

Increasing attention has been paid to corporate social responsibility reporting (CSR) in recent years because it has the potential to make the social influence of business enterprises visible, which in turn offers the potential for society to hold those enterprises more accountable for their operations. However, most of the research done in this area has been in developed countries[1]. There is still a need for more attention to be paid to developing countries because the social and economic environments in those countries differ from those of liberal market economies and these differences are reflected in accounting disclosure practices. In particular there has been little research conducted in Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) countries. This note focuses primarily on the findings of a study conducted in Libya that augments and adds depth to this small body of research by considering the amount and type of corporate social responsibility disclosure by Libyan companies during 2001-2005, and the patterns and trends thereof.  It provides a useful bridge between an earlier study (Pratten and Mashat, 2009) and a later one (Ahmad and Mousa 2010) enabling a long term perspective on CSR practices in Libya and adds strength and depth to the few other studies that take Libya as a point of departure in understanding CSR practices.

## The Libyan context

Some of the factors identified in the literature as being of possible importance to CSR include company size (Belkaoui and Karpik, 1989; Cowen, Ferreri and Parker ,1987; Newson  and Deegan, 2002; Rahman et al., 2011; Trotman and Bradley, 1981); industry type (Gray et al.,

[1] We use the terms ‘developed’ and ‘developing’ (and in respect of the latter also ‘emerging’ and ‘transitioning’) for convenience as these terms are widely used and their meaning generally understood, but we do so self-consciously, recognising they are both complex and contested and constructed from a particular, northern/western perspective.

2001; Hackston and Milne, 1996; Patten, 1991); age of company (Roberts, 1992); and stages of organisational development, for example from SME to MNE (Rahman et al., 2011). That notwithstanding, corporate social disclosure practices are carried out by individuals in particular social, political and historical contexts and these contextual factors will influence those practices. For example, Pratten and Mashat (2009, pp. 314-315) point out that socio-economic, political and cultural factors may lead to under-representation of socially responsible activities or to their representation in ways that might be not be interpreted as such. Companies might not recognise the need to make this kind of information available to other stakeholders or to use representational forms that might be more easily understood than financial information. It may also be that some behaviours are so deeply embedded in national consciousness that it is not considered necessary to formally report on them. Or at the other extreme, it may also entail the reporting of what, in the west, might be considered 'bad news' ( Ahmad and Gao, 2005, p.13; Jaggi and Zhoa, 1996; Rahman et al 2011). Therefore understanding CSR in Libya first involves an appreciation of its contextual features rather than the application of measures developed external to them (Amran and Siti-nabiha, 2009; Baydoun and Willett, 1996, 2000; Riese, 2007).

There are a number of features of the Libyan context that are salient to its transition from a planned to a market economy prior to regime change in 2011 and hence to readings of its corporate social disclosure (CSR) practices. First, the discovery of oil in 1959 produced rapid transformation from an agrarian economy. Second, The Third Universal Theory set out by Colonel Gaddafi in his Green Book expounded a system that was politically neither wholly capitalist nor wholly communist. Third, the influence of Islam pervaded every aspect of secular life, including business and economic life (Aghila, 2000; Pratten and Mashat, 2009). Whilst the precepts of Islam and those of CSR are in some ways compatible and mutually reinforcing, such as making donations to charity, in others they are not. For example, Islam places trust at the heart of relationships and the requirement to report on activities may be taken for a sign that trust is absent. The study thus recognised both the particular context and factors that are widely held to be of significance to CSR.

**Method**

In order to give the study both reach and depth, some 270 annual reports were analysed, covering 54 companies over a period of five years from 2001 to 2005 inclusive. To obtain the sample, a list containing 187 companies from various sectors was obtained from the General Board of Ownership Transfer of Public Companies and Economical Units office. To overcome the barriers of secrecy and the regular political changes in Libya which might affect the response rate, an approach similar to that of snowball sampling was adopted. Personal relationships were used to find contacts who could obtain the required annual reports on the researchers' behalf. Thus the sample of 54 companies represents those companies that were willing to provide the researcher contacts with information. Nevertheless, the sample represents different sectors under both private and government control. Content analysis was used to analyse the reports. The size of the sample avoids the problem of inability to detect substantive patterns and the risk of the data being swamped by a single large reporting incident (Ahmad and Gao, 2005, p.31).

The reports were analysed using content analysis, with categories for analysis derived from the existing literature. This ensures findings can be readily connected to the field. Additionally content analysis of the reports was done using both words and sentences to ensure thoroughness.

**Findings**

Table 1 shows the results of analysis of the data in respect of the amount of reporting in all categories across all years. In terms of volume of reporting, little had changed. All the companies studied provided at least some information in the employee, community and environmental categories but none related any information about consumers. In keeping with the findings of other studies (Ahmad and Gao 2005, Ahmad and Mousa 2010; Pratten and Mashat 2009) overall the amount of financial disclosure has remained relatively stable. There has been an increase in non-financial disclosure over the period in question, although the picture is less straightforward for community involvement disclosure.

| **Employee disclosure** | **2001** | | **2002** | | **2003** | | **2004** | | **2005** | | ↑↓ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Number of companies disclosing | 54 | | 54 | | 54 | | 54 | | 54 | | |
| % of companies disclosing | 100 | | 100 | | 100 | | 100 | | 100 | | |
| Amount of disclosure[1] | **W** | **Se** | **W** | **Se** | **W** | **Se** | **W** | **Se** | **W** | **Se** | |
| *Financial disclosure* | 26 | 6 | 26 | 6 | 26 | 6 | 26 | 6 | 26 | 6 | - |
| *Non-financial disclosure* | 457 | 68 | 468 | 70 | 514 | 71 | 510 | 70 | 518 | 71 | ↑ |
| **Community Involvement Disclosure** | **2001** | | **2002** | | **2003** | | **2004** | | **2005** | | |
| Number of companies disclosing[2] | 38 | | 38 | | 38 | | 38 | | 38 | | |
| % of companies disclosing | 70 | | 70 | | 70 | | 70 | | 70 | | |
| Total amount of disclosure | **W** | **Se** | **W** | **Se** | **W** | **Se** | **W** | **Se** | **W** | **Se** | |
| *Financial disclosure* | 8 | 2 | 8 | 2 | 8 | 2 | 8 | 2 | 8 | 2 | - |
| *Non-financial disclosure* | 173 | 15 | 140 | 13 | 158 | 14 | 170 | 17 | 170 | 17 | ? |
| **Environmental disclosure** | **2001** | | **2002** | | **2003** | | **2004** | | **2005** | | |
| Number of companies disclosing[3] | 5 | | 5 | | 5 | | 5 | | 5 | | |
| % of companies disclosing | 9.2 | | 9.2 | | 9.2 | | 9.2 | | 9.2 | | |
| Total amount of disclosure | **W** | **Se** | **W** | **Se** | **W** | **Se** | **W** | **Se** | **W** | **Se** | |
| *Financial disclosure* | 13 | 3 | 13 | 3 | 13 | 3 | 13 | 3 | 13 | 3 | - |
| *Non-financial disclosure* | 53 | 5 | 53 | 5 | 58 | 6 | 80 | 9 | 84 | 11 | ↑ |
| **Consumer disclosure** | **2001** | | **2002** | | **2003** | | **2004** | | **2005** | | |
| Number of companies disclosing | 0 | | 0 | | 0 | | 0 | | 0 | | - |
| % of companies disclosing | 0 | | 0 | | 0 | | 0 | | 0 | | - |

*W: Words.*
*S: Sentences*
*[1] Average amount of disclosure of those that disclosed*
*[2] The same 38 companies disclosed each year*
*[3] The same 5 companies disclosed each year*

**Table 1 Amount of Corporate Social Disclosure by Libyan Companies**

Looking at each category in more detail highlighted also some variations across sub-categories.

***Employee disclosure***

Table 2 reveals that over the years there has been a steady increase in reporting overall but that this is variable across sub-categories. The increase in reporting of 'basic data' has increased more sizeably, whereas there has been no disclosure whatsoever in the sub-categories 'consult employees', 'disabled' and 'value added'. It should also be noted that the trend as well as the pattern for employee disclosure is very close to that of corporate social reporting and disclosure as a whole (Table 1). This may be explained by the predominance of employee disclosure in corporate social reporting within the sample which may in turn reflect the fact that under the terms of the 'Third Universal Theory' workers were given the right to self-manage. Conversely it may also account for low levels of reporting in certain categories within this theme because it may be taken for granted that employees would be in possession of this knowledge without the need for formal reporting on it.

| Category | | 2001 | | | | 2002 | | | | 2003 | | | | 2004 | | | | 2005 | | | | Trend |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | N | % | A ** | | N | % | A ** | | N | % | A ** | | N | % | A ** | | N | % | A ** | | |
| | | | | W | Se | | | W | Se | | | W | Se | | | W | Se | | | W | Se | |
| Basic data | NF | 19 | 35 | 129 | 19.2 | 19 | 35 | 134 | 19.2 | 19 | 35 | 147.5 | 19.1 | 19 | 35 | 148.8 | 21.8 | 19 | 35 | 149 | 23.6 | ↑ |
| Pension commit | F | 54 | 100 | 4 | 1 | 54 | 100 | 4 | 1 | 54 | 100 | 4 | 1 | 54 | 100 | 4 | 1 | 54 | 100 | 4 | 1 | – |
| Consult employees | None | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | – |
| Disabled | None | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | – |
| Value added statement | None | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | – |
| Health and safety | F | 39 | 72 | 4.1 | 1 | 39 | 72 | 4.1 | 1 | 39 | 72 | 4.1 | 1 | 39 | 72 | 4.1 | 1 | 39 | 72 | 4.1 | 1 | – |
| | NF | 20 | 37 | 55.2 | 7.1 | 20 | 37 | 55.2 | 8.4 | 20 | 37 | 69 | 8.8 | 20 | 37 | 73.5 | 9.6 | 20 | 37 | 73.4 | 5.1 | ↑ |
| Employee Shares | NF | 2 | 3.7 | 30.5 | 3 | 2 | 3.7 | 30 | 3 | 2 | 3.7 | 31 | 3 | 2 | 3.7 | 28 | 3 | 2 | 3.7 | 32 | 3 | ↑? |
| Equal opportunities | NF | 17 | 31.5 | 32.7 | 3.2 | 17 | 31.5 | 33.5 | 4.1 | 17 | 31.5 | 37 | 4.8 | 17 | 31.5 | 39 | 4.8 | 17 | 31.5 | 41.4 | 5 | ↑ |
| Training | F | 46 | 85 | 4.5 | 1 | 46 | 85 | 4.5 | 1 | 46 | 85 | 4.5 | 1 | 46 | 85 | 4.5 | 1 | 46 | 85 | 4.5 | 1 | – |
| | NF | 17 | 31.5 | 146 | 14.7 | 17 | 31.5 | 135.7 | 15 | 17 | 31.5 | 151 | 15 | 17 | 31.5 | 147.6 | 15.6 | 17 | 31.5 | 146 | 16 | – ? |
| Benefits in kind | F | 53 | 98 | 13.4 | 2.5 | 53 | 98 | 13.4 | 2.5 | 53 | 98 | 13.4 | 2.5 | 53 | 98 | 13.4 | 2.5 | 53 | 98 | 13.4 | 2.5 | – |
| | NF | 53 | 98 | 81.1 | 20.7 | 53 | 98 | 80 | 20.1 | 53 | 98 | 78.4 | 19.6 | 53 | 98 | 73 | 16.8 | 53 | 98 | 75.6 | 17.4 | ↓ |

*N: Number of companies disclosing*
*% Percentage of companies disclosing*
*** Average amount of disclosure of those that disclose*
*F: Financial* *NF: Non Financial*
*W: words* *Se: sentences* **Benefits in kind** *includes: thanks to employees; staff turnover; employee's trends/statics.*

**Table 2: Total 'Employee Disclosure' for all Companies across all Years**

### *Disclosure about community involvement*

Community involvement was the second most active area of social disclosure by Libyan companies with disclosure of both financial and non-financial information. During the period under study, there was no change in the disclosure of financial information in the charity and political and community categories whereas there were changes in non-financial disclosure of the same (see Table 3). This may be attributable to the fact that some companies either stopped or started giving to charity or that those responsible for the preparation of these reports made changes to the kind of language used to represent these disclosures.

Libyan companies decreased their disclosure in the 'charity and political' category but this is due to the fact that only the industrial sector discloses non-financial type information in this category and therefore this decrease is attributable to a decrease in reporting in this sector alone.

| Category | | 2001 | | | | 2002 | | | | 2003 | | | | 2004 | | | | 2005 | | | | Trend |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | N | % | A ** w | Se | N | % | A ** W | Se | N | % | A ** W | Se | N | % | A ** W | Se | N | % | A ** W | Se | |
| Charity and Political | F | 38 | 70 | 4.6 | 1.02 | 38 | 70 | 4.6 | 1.02 | 38 | 70 | 4.6 | 1.02 | 38 | 70 | 4.6 | 1.02 | 38 | 70 | 4.6 | 1.02 | – |
| | NF | 14 | 25 | 92.8 | 7.1 | 14 | 25 | 71 | 6.3 | 14 | 25 | 78.5 | 6.5 | 14 | 25 | 78.5 | 6.5 | 14 | 25 | 78.5 | 6.8 | ↓ |
| Community | F | 14 | 26 | 3.2 | 1 | 14 | 26 | 3.2 | 1 | 14 | 26 | 3.2 | 1 | 14 | 26 | 3.2 | 1 | 14 | 26 | 3.2 | 1 | – |
| | NF | 4 | 7 | 80 | 7.7 | 3 | 5 | 69 | 7.3 | 3 | 5 | 79 | 8 | 5 | 9 | 92.4 | 9 | 5 | 9 | 91.6 | 9 | ↑ |

*N: Number of companies disclosing*
*% Percentage of companies disclosing*
*** Average amount of disclosure of those that disclose*
*F: Financial NF: Non Financial W: words Se: sentence*

**Table 3: Total 'Community Involvement' Disclosure for all Companies**

### *Disclosure about environmental issues*

The environmental disclosure category is composed of seven sub-categories (Table 4). In spite of the increasing importance and recognition of environmental issues, it is evident that companies in Libya are at a very early stage in their consideration of this topic. Only a few companies disclose some environmental information, covering only three out of seven sub-categories. Moreover, it is largely the same companies that disclose this kind of information each year, with a few newcomers in some of the sub-categories. The other studies on CSR in Libya that were quoted earlier also reported that environmental disclosure has been given only modest attention. The type of disclosure is also interesting, with only one category (waste, pack. pollution, recycle, product, land) being reported in both financial and non-financial terms. In other words none of the companies in the research sample, whether privately owned or in sectors under government control, had a policy of disclosing what activities they were undertaking in this category, whether or not they were actually doing anything.

| Category | | 2001 | | | | 2002 | | | | 2003 | | | | 2004 | | | | 2005 | | | | Trend |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | N | % | A ** W | A ** Se | N | % | A ** W | A ** Se | N | % | A ** W | A ** Se | N | % | A ** W | A ** Se | N | % | A ** W | A ** Se | |
| Environmental Policy | NF | 1 | 1.8 | 43 | 4 | 1 | 1.8 | 41 | 4 | 1 | 1.8 | 46 | 4 | 1 | 1.8 | 65 | 8 | 1 | 1.8 | 69 | 11 | ↑ |
| Environmental audit | None | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | – |
| Waste, Pack, Pollution, Recycle, Product, Land | F | 2 | 3.7 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 3.7 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 3.7 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 3.7 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 3.7 | 4 | 1 | – |
| | NF | 5 | 9.2 | 10 | 1 | 5 | 9.2 | 12 | 1 | 5 | 9.2 | 13.5 | 1.25 | 5 | 9.2 | 14.5 | 1.25 | 5 | 9.2 | 14.5 | 1.25 | ↑ |
| Financial data | None | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | – |
| Sustainability | None | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | – |
| Energy | None | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | – |
| Environment other | F | 1 | 1.8 | 9 | 2 | 1 | 1.8 | 9 | 2 | 1 | 1.8 | 9 | 2 | 1 | 1.8 | 9 | 2 | 1 | 1.8 | 9 | 2 | – |

** Number of companies disclosing*
*% Percentage of companies disclosing*
*** Average amount of disclosure of those that disclose*
*F: Financial NF: Non Financial*
*W: words Se: sentences*

**Table 4: Total 'Environmental' Disclosure for all Companies**

## Discussion

The findings of this research are consistent with those of other studies and with those in other developing countries generally and Libya in particular (Ahmad and Gao, 2005; Ahmad and Mousa 2010; Pratten and Mashat 2009), namely that there are generally low levels of disclosure.  There has been some increase in the amount of disclosure over the years, but this has not been great. They are also consistent with other research in developing countries in terms of the importance of particular disclosure themes. The predominance of disclosure of information classified under the employee theme has been reported and corroborated in various studies conducted in the area of corporate social reporting (e.g. Belal, 2001; Imam, 2000; Thompson & Zakaria, 2004). Similarly the low level of disclosure on environmental issues seem to be consistent with the findings of many studies and particularly those conducted in developing countries (e.g. Andrew et al., 1989; Imam, 2000; Belal, 2001; Rizk, Dixon & Woodhead 2008).

What might explain the low level of social disclosure by Libyan companies other than the recursive reason that most companies attach low priority to it? Because of the consistency of findings, inferences may be drawn from studies in other developing countries and applied to the Libyan context. For example Ahmad & Nicholls (1994) in their study of mandatory disclosure in Bangladesh argue that an inadequate regulatory framework and enforcement mechanism, the lack of an accounting profession and the absence of an effective capital market are some of the reasons for low levels of accounting disclosure and accounting standards. In other words, developing countries tend to lack a rich legal and professional infrastructure. These conditions also exist in the case of Libya alongside specific market conditions and the weakness of the Libyan stock market.

One of the major reasons for low social disclosure in developing countries, including those whose economies are in transition, may therefore be the lack of mandatory (i.e. statutory) disclosure requirements. Unerman (2000) thus supports the idea of increasing disclosure about corporate social activities by mandatory regulation, as he believes that voluntary initiatives are considerably less effective. Haniffa & Cooke (2002, pp. 237-238) agree that, if there is no public pressure function (which is the case in Libya) or laws and regulations governing the companies, companies are unlikely to provide high quality information without this mandatory requirement.

However, although the increases were not great, our findings showed (an albeit patchy) increase in the reporting of non-financial reporting even though Libyan companies are not required to do so, which undermines the argument that only mandatory regulation will lead to increased disclosure. This situation is further complicated by the fact that Libyan companies generally do not provide information to the general public. The information provided is on a restricted need-to-know rather than the right-to-know basis, and it is only disclosed to those parties to whom the companies are legally accountable (e.g. the Tax Office), hence the challenge of collecting a large sample for this research. The absence of stakeholder pressure may also be salient here. Arpan & Radebaugh (1985) confirm that in countries where state ownership dominates, such as Libya, only a few users other than the government are expected to be provided with accounting information. Therefore companies in Libya, which are (or were until recently) predominantly state owned, pay more attention to commercial information (i.e. selling prices) rather than financial information. For a long time before the market opened to the private sector in the middle of the 1990s, avoiding losses and maximising production levels rather than maximising their profit and market value were the main concerns of Libyan companies; it seems it will take some time to change concerns and objectives, particularly as new companies including the companies in the private sector, tend to take their lead from more established companies in their sector in preparing and providing the information included in annual reports

Lack of awareness of the importance and perceived benefits of CSR among professional accountants might also affect the type, level and volume of social reporting. Researching in Bangladesh, Ahmad & Nicholls (1994), found that accountants receive more rigorous professional training and exposure if they study outside Bangladesh, and have more expertise in understanding important subjects related to accounting, compared to locally trained accountants who might be expected to know less about these subjects. This may well be the case in Libya too, although it must be said that accounting practices in Libya were adopted from those in Western countries, especially the UK and USA, and might not be affected much by Libyan culture and religion. Nevertheless, because laws are Tax and State oriented and most business activities are controlled by the State the role of the accounting profession is weakened and the focus has been on preparing financial information for government authorities.

Furthermore Radebaugh (1975) maintains that cultural attitudes can be seen as a factor influencing a country’s development of accounting objectives, standards, and practices. In this respect Libya is similar to other Arab countries in that the extended family, clan, tribe and village play an important role in community life and in people’s relationships with each other (Agnaia, 1997). Thus family contacts and personal relationships may play a greater part in gaining business and career promotion than practical experience or academic qualifications. Indeed, loyalty to the family, clan, and tribe along with the emphasis placed on regionalism and sectarianism, occasionally outweigh loyalty to a profession and sometimes the law (Agnaia, 1997).

Another reason for the low levels of CSR in Libya is connected to the levels of demand for corporate social information and how far this is a function of the company environment. Although a stakeholder perspective has framed the interpretation of the findings of this research, insights from a political economy perspective are useful here. For example, pressure groups and stakeholders in developed countries, where the economy is well established, can afford to be more aware of, and receptive to, social and environmental issues, whereas pressure groups in developing countries worry more about meeting basic material needs. The exhaustion of natural resources associated with rises in the standard of living do not merit the same level of attention and the main focus in developing countries is current productivity rather than any long-term social and economic consequences. In similar circumstances, it would be unrealistic to expect the developing countries to have the same level of corporate social responsibility and disclosure. Thus different national concerns and priorities can be said to be reflected in public and institutional pressures for corporate social activities and disclosure (Gray & Kouhy, 1993; Xiao, Gao, Heravi and Cheung, 2005). Nevertheless our example of trends indicates that commitment to CSR in general remains low.

**Limitations**

The data generated and the consistency of the findings of this study with those of other studies of the Libyan context (and with those reported in respect of other emerging economies) contribute to the limited body of research of CSR in Libya. However, the study also contains most of the limitations pointed out by Belal and Momin (2009) in their review of reports of CSR research in emerging economies in English language journals between 1983 and 2008, namely that such research was methodologically restricted with most research on CSR in emerging economies using content analysis and questionnaire surveys; that content analysis tends to use established categories rather than contextually sensitive ones; and that the data generated is largely descriptive and under-theorised. This is still the case, with the most common explanation for low levels of reporting in emerging economies in general and Libya in particular being that it is 'lagging behind' that in developed countries (Ahmad and Gao, 2005, p.11). However, as there was a need first to augment and enrich the amount and the extent of available data, some consistency with established approaches was also necessary. A further limitation is that the reports cover a period of five years from 2001 to 2005 inclusive and hence may be considered dated. However, the reports must be read as the contribution to a timeline of CSR data (Ahmad 2001, based on data from 1998-2001;

Pratten and Mashat 2009 based on data 1999-2002; Elmogla 2009, based on data 2001-2005 and Ahmad and Mousa based on data 2001-2007). Taken together these studies provide a rich resource for comparative studies post regime change.

**Conclusions and suggestions for future directions of research**

Our findings indicate accordance with those of Freedman & Stagliano (1992) who argue that motivation for disclosing information about corporate social activities is a complex phenomenon consisting of a range of inter-connected logics. Further research is needed to illuminate the role and influence of societal culture and to understand the impact of organisational subculture on disclosure and responsibility practices. Moreover, as Libya develops, companies are increasingly likely to use other channels to disclose social information. When this happens, future studies should investigate these in addition to corporate annual reports. It will be interesting to see whether Libyan companies in due course adopt a more 'Western' approach or instead seek to ground their disclosure in a more culturally relevant way, perhaps reflecting the Islamic traditions of Libya and the priorities of the country as it seeks a peaceful way forward after the turmoil of recent years. However, it should be acknowledged that, until a reasonable measure of peace is restored, it is unlikely that corporate social disclosure will be at or near the top of the political or corporate agenda.

Having now established a stock of data that also, in conjunction with other studies on Libya, provide the possibility for longitudinal studies, the foundations are laid for theoretical, methodological and analytical developments in social disclosure research in Libya and other developing countries. It would be particularly interesting to discover why and how some companies disclose more social information than the majority of other companies and these former might be taken as examples of good practice. Perhaps most importantly our study provides data for a comparative study of CSR in Libya after regime change.

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