The relationship between business and society: Towards a context- and culture-sensitive approach for the 21st century

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Der Dekan Prof. Dr. Walter Leimgruber

To Dad

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The following publications form the foundation of this dissertation:

(1) Bergman, M.M., Leisinger, K.M., Bergman, Z., & Berger, L. (2015). An analysis of the conceptual landscape of corporate responsibility in academia. *Business and Professional Ethics Journal 34*(2), 1-29, doi: https://doi.org/10.5840/bpej20157728.

(2) Bergman, M.M., Bergman, Z., & Berger, L. (2017). An empirical exploration, typology, and definition of corporate sustainability. *Sustainability, 9*(5), 753-765, doi: https://doi.org/10.3390/su9050753.

(3) Berger, L., Bergman, M.M., Bergman, Z., Leisinger, K.M., & Ojo, E. (2014). The influence of context and culture on corporate responsibility expectations in South Africa*. Journal of International Business Ethics, 7*(2), 3-21, available at: http://www.cibe.org.cn/uploadfile/otherfile/JIBE_vol7-n2-2014-final.pdf.

(4) Berger, L., Bergman, Z., Zhang, J., Liu, B., Leisinger, K.M., & Bergman, M.M. (2017). Corporate responsibility expectations by advanced business and economics students in Beijing. In L. Berger & M.M. Bergman (Eds.), F*rontiers in sustainability. Business management, and economics* (pp.17-39). Basel: MDPI, doi: https://doi.org/10.3390/books978-3-03842-334-8-2.

(5) Bergman, M.M., Berger, L., Leisinger, K.M., Zhang, J., Liu, B., & Bergman, Z. (2015). How well do Chinese corporate responsibility expectations map onto an international corporate responsibility scale? *UmweltWirtschaftsForum, 23*(4), 191-196, doi: https://doi.org/10.1007/s00550-015-0373-4.

(6) Berger, L., & Bergman, M.M. (working paper, to be submitted in 2018). *The relationship between socioeconomic developments and corporate responsibility expectations in Switzerland.*

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1 Introduction

> *Once upon a time, greedy bankers, mostly in the USA, made fortunes by selling mortgages to poor people who could not really afford them. They knew these loans were unsound, so they diced and sliced them and sold them in packages around the world to equally greedy bankers who did not know what they were buying. When the housing bubble burst, the borrowers defaulted, and bankers discovered that what they had bought was worthless. They went bust, business loans dried up, and the economy shuddered to a halt. The moral […] is that capitalism has failed, and we need tougher rules to curb bankers' greed and make sure all this never happens again. (Butler, 2009, p.51)*

> *Governments keen for endless amounts of cheap money to fund their mighty public sector programmes, homeowners keen for an extra bedroom even though their income didn't quite stretch, central banks who appeared to almost wilfully ignore what was going on under their very noses. And the waiters, of course, the bankers, running around the table filling everyone's glass to over-flowing, whipping everyone up into an ever-increasing frenzy and taking their very nice cut (and cut and cut), thank-you very much. (Ahmed, 2010)*

In 2007, when the US housing bubble burst and the financial crisis paralyzed economic action around the globe, business was the main suspect. The societal consensus was that business caused the crisis by acting in an unethical, profit-driven, and short-term-oriented manner, relying on mathematical models rather than good judgement, establishing inaccurate compensation systems, and issuing misleading ratings (Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission, 2011; Butler, 2009).[1] Business made profits and society paid the price—quite literally—through taxpayer funds being used to bail out banks, increasing unemployment, and the loss of housing, pension funds, and savings. The financial collapse was seen as a failure of capitalism and the economic models on which it rests (Gregg, 2009). Disillusioned citizens and disappointed public administrators started to look for solutions that promised more stability in the creation of wealth and welfare. In doing so, some turned to sociology, which as a discipline focuses on societal rather than business needs. Indeed, the old warnings of

[1] See also Leisinger (2010) for a discussion of these developments.

sociologists that neoliberal capitalism is dysfunctional and their call to put the power over economic decisions into the hands of the people seemed to fit the situation well (e.g., Jeffries, 2016).

In the eyes of economists, social ideals and the initiatives motivated by them were the problem rather than the solution. They argued that the economic collapse was the result of overambitious social goals in combination with political, legislative, and regulatory failure driven by a lack of understanding for the risks and interconnections involved. The Federal Reserve Bank made it attractive to banks to borrow money by keeping interest rates low (Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission, 2011; Butler, 2009). The US government set ambitious homeownership goals and, in an attempt to meet these goals, created policies to stimulate lending to people with poor credit ratings (Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission, 2011; Butler, 2009). Legislators developed and implemented an extensive regulatory framework that provided a false sense of security, and they made new rules that shifted the risks from the financial institutions to the taxpayers (Booth, 2009; Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission, 2011; Butler, 2009). In doing so, they created ideal conditions for and spurred excessive lending and borrowing.

A widening gap between business and society is the consequence of these diverging perspectives on the causes and effects of the financial crisis and the ensuing mutual assignment of blame (see also Leisinger, 2017a).[2] According to the Edelman Trust Barometer (Edelman, 2017), business is distrusted in 13 out of 28 countries, and only 37 percent of the public believe that CEOs are credible. The broader public is "hungry for increased regulation for business and largely supportive of a number of anti-business policies" (ibid, p.12). Business, however, has little faith in the governing capabilities of the public. Between 2012 and 2016, the amount spent by the 50 companies spending the most on European Union lobbying increased by 40 percent (Cann, 2016), and in the US, lobbying expenses have doubled since 2000, peaking in 2010 (calculations based on data of the Center for Responsive Politics, 2017).

This conflict between business and society comes at a particularly bad time. The challenges of the 21st century—which include, but are not limited to, extreme socioeconomic inequality, mass migration, the spread of non-communicable and communicable diseases, terrorism, food insecurity, water scarcity, climate-change-induced natural disasters, and environmental degradation—are unprecedented in human history in scope and scale. In its Agenda 2030, the United Nations outlined a set of common goals to overcome these challenges and ensure a sustainable future for society, business, and the planet (United Nations, 2015). These goals are ambitious and can only be achieved if business and

[2] The 2007–08 financial crisis is not the sole cause of the divide between business and society but is in many ways its most obvious and recent manifestation. We will return to this argument at a later stage.

society pull together and systematically implement "action for people, planet, and prosperity" (ibid, p.2). However, the current divide prevents this from happening.

This dissertation aims to help close the gap between business and society by providing another mode of thinking about their relationship, at the core of which is a context- and culture-sensitive approach to conceptualizing the interrelations between the two realms. To this end, the framework document and the six articles of this dissertation make complementary and interconnected contributions. The framework document explains why common perspectives on the relationship between business and society are problematic and introduces a conceptual alternative. At the heart of this alternative is the idea that the relationship between business and society can only be understood and redefined by considering the context and culture within which it exists. The main contribution provided by the six articles lies in facilitating this proposed context- and culture-sensitive approach. Each of the six articles thus provides a building block for such an approach.

Articles 1 and 2 provide the necessary conceptual groundwork. Article 1 (Appendix I.A), *An analysis of the conceptual landscape of corporate responsibility in academia*, explores the academic discourse on corporate responsibility (CR) with a focus on conceptual weaknesses and their consequences for business and society. Article 2 (Appendix I.B), *An empirical exploration, typology, and definition of corporate sustainability*, analyzes the literature on the evolving concept of corporate sustainability, and proposes a definition that accounts for different components of the interdependence between business and society.

Articles 3 to 6 report empirical studies on the relationships between context and culture and corporate responsibility expectations (CRE) in South Africa, China, and Switzerland. These articles illustrate the importance of context and culture in the relationship between business and society and delineate the potential of context- and culture-sensitive research. Article 3 (Appendix I.C), *The influence of context and culture on corporate responsibility expectations in South Africa*, investigates the CRE of advanced business and economics students in South Africa and their relation to the democratic transitions of the country and the culture of Ubuntu. Article 4 (Appendix I.D), *Corporate responsibility expectations in China: Advanced business and economics students from Beijing*, analyzes CRE among students in Beijing with a focus on the influence of collectivism as an important pillar of the Chinese culture and the role of the state. Article 5 (Appendix I.E), *How well do Chinese corporate responsibility expectations map onto an international corporate responsibility scale?*, elaborates the findings of article 4 by investigating the suitability of a Western-based model for CRE in China. Finally, article 6 (Appendix I.F), *The relationship between socioeconomic developments and corporate responsibility expectations in Switzerland,* provides findings on the CRE of advanced business and economics students in Switzerland with a focus on how the tensions between liberal ideals and corporate failure manifested themselves in the students' perspectives.

Together, the conceptual articles (articles 1 and 2) and the empirical studies (articles 3 to 6) provide the basis for a context- and culture-sensitive approach. The main findings of the six articles can be used to build a framework that can serve as a model of as well as an analytic tool for describing and researching the relationship between business and society in a context- and culture-sensitive manner. A preliminary version of this framework is introduced in this framework document.

The framework document is organized into five parts. The first part delineates the perspectives on the relationship between business and society in sociology and economics and illustrates why they are problematic in today's world. This is followed by an examination of the mechanisms that give rise to and exacerbate the widening gap between business and society. Third, on the basis of the previously identified shortcomings and problems, an alternative approach to conceptualizing the relationship between business and society is presented. The fourth and main part focuses on the role of context and culture in the relationship between business and society. This part gives an overview of the main contributions of the six articles of this dissertation and synthesizes their primary findings by proposing a context- and culture-sensitive model for describing and researching the relationship between business and society. The final part provides an overview of the main arguments and contributions.

2 Perspectives on the relationship between business and society

The academic literature has discussed the relationship between business and society from multiple perspectives and with varying emphases (e.g., Daft, 2012; McKelvey, 1982; Marx & Engels, 1848/1969; Weber 1956/1978; Boltanski & Chiapello, 1999, 2005; Mankiw, 2007/2009; Friedman & Friedman, 1962/1982; Keynes, 1936/1946; Hayek, 1944). In their overview of different Western-centered approaches, Carroll and Buchholtz (2008) differentiate between the conceptualizations of society as a macroeconomic environment of business, which can be further divided into social, economic, political, and technological environments; society as a pluralistic unit that consists of multiple subsystems and stakeholders relevant to business operations; and society and business as being in a critique–response relationship. Within these approaches, they examined the relationship between business and society using different lenses, including expectations, responsibilities, rights, power, influence, awareness, affluence, entitlement, and contractual agreements (ibid). As this taxonomy illustrates, there are numerous ways to understand and conceptualize the relationship between business and society. Each approach highlights specific characteristics of this relationship while disregarding others and, consequently, comes with specific strengths and limitations. Despite their abstraction and limitations, these academic conceptualizations are very useful from a practical standpoint as they inform the interventions undertaken by various stakeholders and, as such, decisively shape the roles of and the interplay between business and society.

In this chapter, we explore several Western-based, academic concepts of the relationship between business and society and their relation to present-day realities. More specifically, we trace the lines of argumentation evident in seminal works of sociology and economics. To this end, we have analyzed sample texts from both disciplines. The text selection was guided by two criteria: (1) relevance and (2) the diversity of the perspectives. On the basis of these criteria, we chose the writings of Marx and Engels (1848/1969), Weber (1956/1978), Parsons and Smelser (1956), Parsons (1991), and Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) for sociology; and the writings of Smith (1776/2005), Ricardo (1817/2001), Menger (1871), Friedman (1970), Friedman and Friedman (1962/1982), Keynes (1936/1946), and Mankiw (1991/2004; 2007/2009) for economics. From the respective texts, we extracted statements that concerned the relationship between business and society. These statements were analyzed along three dimensions: (1) their representation of society, (2) their representation of business, and (3) their perception of the relationship between business and society. We used a subset of statements to develop an initial taxonomy of different understandings of the relationship between business and society. This taxonomy was then used as an analytic framework to conduct a quasi-deductive analysis of additional statements. Our analysis ended with saturation, which is to say, the point when newly added statements did not significantly contribute to the refinement of the categories.

The resulting categories are analytical constructs in the sense of Weber's ideal type. Weber (1949) defined ideal types as follows:

> An ideal type is formed by the one-sided accentuation of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent concrete individual phenomena, which are arranged according to those one-sidedly emphasized viewpoints into a unified analytical construct. (p.90)

We would like to emphasize that the objective of our analysis was not comprehensiveness but rather to explore the central approaches and the logic behind them. In the text, we discuss the different categories using illustrative cases. In line with Weber's definition of ideal type, these cases might not include all the characteristics of the specific category and they might address additional characteristics. A more detailed cross-case overview of the constituencies relevant to the different types can be found in the graphs illustrating each type.[3]

2.1 Perspectives in sociology

In seminal texts of sociology, two approaches stand out, namely, domination approaches and functional approaches, with some concepts consisting of combinations of elements from the two.

Domination approaches describe the relationship between business and society as an unequal power relation wherein the actors of the superior system form the constituents and mechanisms of the inferior system according to their interests. There are two variants of this: business dominating society and society dominating business. In the former, business shapes social structures by means of economic forces including property, competition, and markets such that these serve economic interests, commonly at the expense of social interests (see Figure 1 for a schematic representation). A famous example of this idea is Marx and Engels' (1848/1969) description of the "class struggle"; a contemporary example is Boltanski and Chiapello's (2005) "new spirit of capitalism." According to Marx and Engels (1848/1969), the concentration of capital and other resources including machines, facilities, and natural resources in the hands of a small minority of economic actors creates a power structure wherein the have-nots, despite being in the majority, depend on the smaller numbers of haves to buy their labor (ibid). The economic elites use their superior position to exploit the have-nots and increase their wealth, thus reinforcing the power structures:

> In proportion as the bourgeoisie, i.e., capital, is developed, in the same proportion is the proletariat, the modern working class, developed—a class of labourers, who live only so long as

[3] The categories presented in chapter *4.1 Alternative conceptualizations of the relationship between business and society* were derived in the same way.

> they find work, and who find work only so long as their labour increases capital. (Marx & Engels, 1848/1969, p.18)

When describing the "new spirit of capitalism", Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) make a similar argument:

> Capitalism's renewed growth during the 1980s was largely due to its ability to overcome the constraints that were a part of the second spirit of capitalism, and render them obsolete. Changes in the nature of tests, and silence from disorientated critics, enabled capitalism to spread once again, freeing it from most of the constraints that it had previously had to face. One outcome of this process was that the wage/profit ratio again began to benefit capital. The cost was rising inequality, precarious working conditions, and the impoverishment of many wage earners. (p.178)

These mechanisms create a highly unequal society in which a privileged minority enjoys the pleasures of ever-increasing wealth while the suppressed majority faces increasing deprivation. Extreme inequality is the outcome of economic dominance and at the same time the prerequisite on which this dominance is based. According to Marx and Engels (1848/1969), structures of this kind are unstable, prone to social disorder, and destined to result in revolution:

> But with the development of industry, the proletariat not only increases in number; it becomes concentrated in greater masses, its strength grows, and it feels that strength more. The various interests and conditions of life within the ranks of the proletariat are more and more equalised, […] Thereupon, the workers begin to form combinations (Trades' Unions) against the bourgeois; they club together in order to keep up the rate of wages; they found permanent associations in order to make provision beforehand for these occasional revolts. Here and there, the contest breaks out into riots. (Marx & Engels, 1848/1969, p.19)

Not all theories that represent a business-dominating-society approach predict revolution as the necessary consequence, but there is common consensus that the associated power structures are dysfunctional, undesirable, and necessitate change.

The ostensibly desirable alternative to this is seen in a reversal of the power structures such that societal actors control the economic system. This second variant of the domination approach, society dominating business, is characterized by a strong society or government as representative of society managing the economy in the interest of all societal actors (see Figure 2 for a schematic representation). Communism as proposed by Marx and Engels (1848/1969) follows this ideal. Society plans economic activities based on mutual interests and decides on the use of resources and means of production (ibid). The economy does not exist as an independent system, rather production is integrated into society. The communally organized distribution of products ensures that all members of society can satisfy their needs and created wealth is shared fairly:

> The general co-operation of all members of society for the purpose of planned exploitation of the forces of production, the expansion of production to the point where it will satisfy the needs of all, the abolition of a situation in which the needs of some are satisfied at the expense of the needs of others, the complete liquidation of classes and their conflicts, the rounded development of the capacities of all members of society through the elimination of the present division of labor, through industrial education, through engaging in varying activities, through the participation by all in the enjoyments produced by all, through the combination of city and country—these are the main consequences of the abolition of private property. (Marx & Engels, 1848/1969, p.52)

The result is an egalitarian society in which people live in community and are able to develop according to their individual needs and desires (ibid). Accordingly, from this perspective, untamed economic forces lead to an economic elite enriching itself at the expense of society at large. To prevent exploitation, society needs to assume control over economic operations.

The second line of reasoning found in sociological theory, functional approaches, describes the relationship between business and society in terms of the division of labor. The economy is the functional subunit of society responsible for production. It transforms inputs provided by society such as capital, resources, and labor into outputs desired by society such as goods and services, income, and wealth. The economy is a discrete entity with autonomous decision-making power in its sphere of operation but directed by societal actors, especially governments, via inputs including monetary policy, laws, and demands (see Figure 3 for a schematic representation). An example of this is the concept developed by Parsons and Smelser (1956) and Parsons (1991). According to them, the economy is the societal subsystem responsible for the allocation of limited societal resources to the satisfaction of societal needs (ibid). In doing so, it contributes to achieving overarching societal goals including the maintenance of social structures and creation of wealth:

> [T]he outputs of the economic process (wealth and the concrete goods or services it commands) have a variety of symbolic meaning throughout the society. Distribution of wealth, for instance, raises many integrative problems. Furthermore, appropriate combination of goods and services are necessary to symbolize a style of life adequately. In these two respects and many others the economy has integrative significance for society. (Parsons & Smelser, 1956, p.66)

The economic subsystem is directed by the demands of social actors. Political institutions in particular play a central role as managing bodies, which foster the goal-oriented functioning of the economy, as well as regulatory bodies, which keep economic power in check (ibid). According to this point of view, society depends on economic outputs to achieve its goals and therefore needs to ensure the continued existence of a self-contained yet well-managed and -controlled economic subunit.

What domination approaches and functional approaches have in common is that they propose restricting the influence of business in the interest of society. Society depends on economic tasks for the satisfaction of its needs, yet concentrated economic power is a threat to the wellbeing of society. Government as representative of society resolves this tension by guiding and controlling economic action, thus ensuring that society can satisfy its needs and business remains in its allocated space. The role of business is narrowed to production according to the requirements of society.

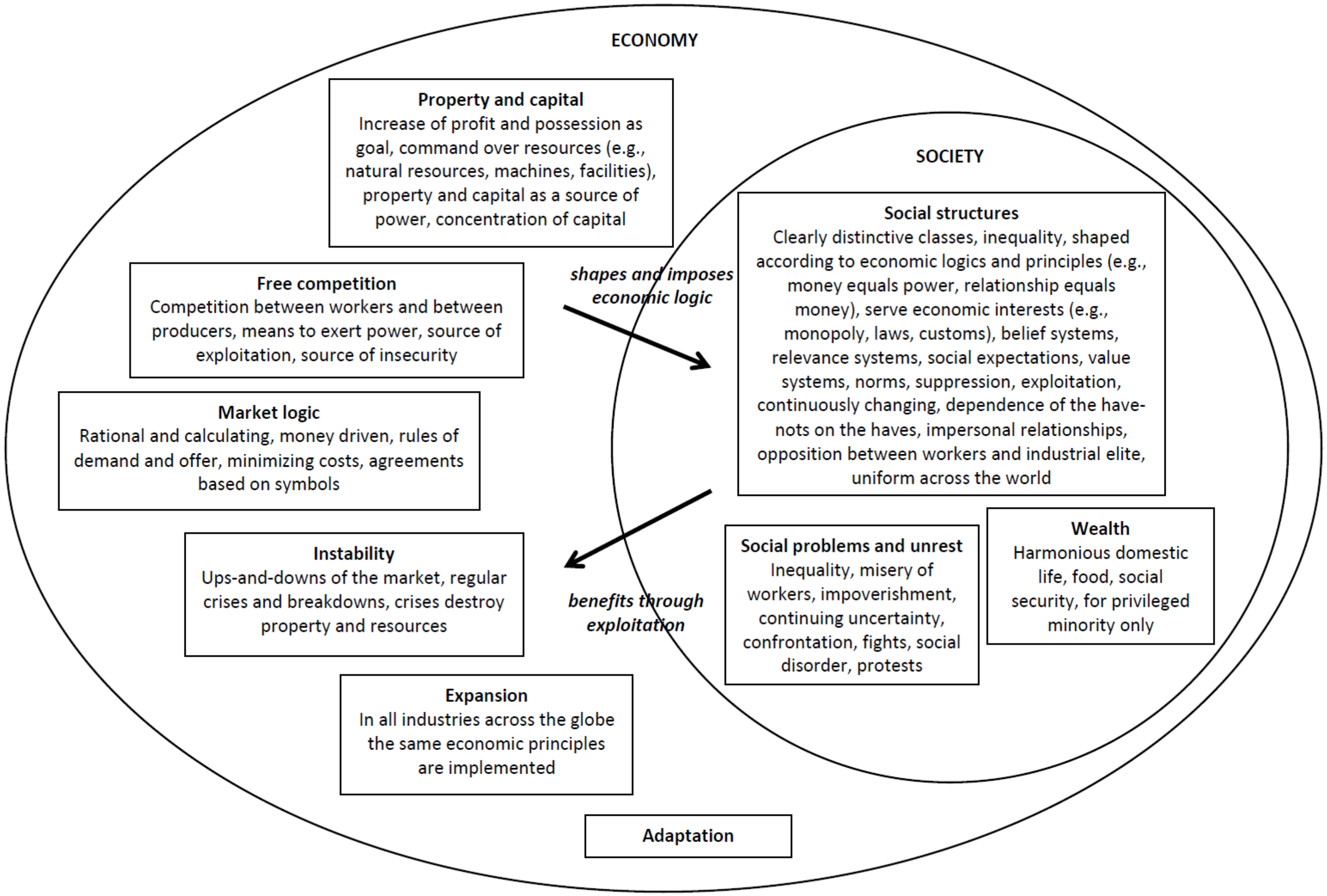

Figure 1. Business dominating society

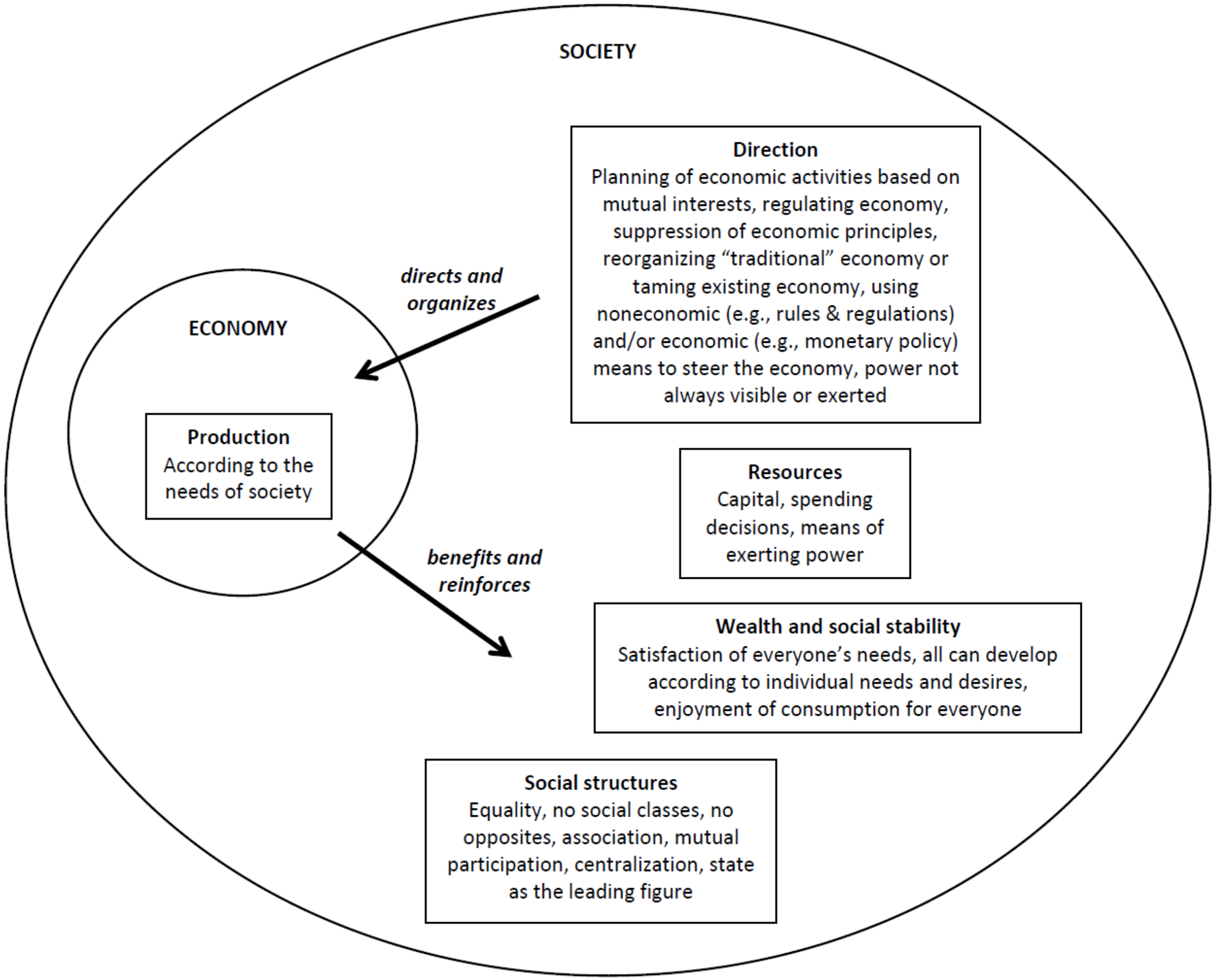

Figure 2. Society dominating business

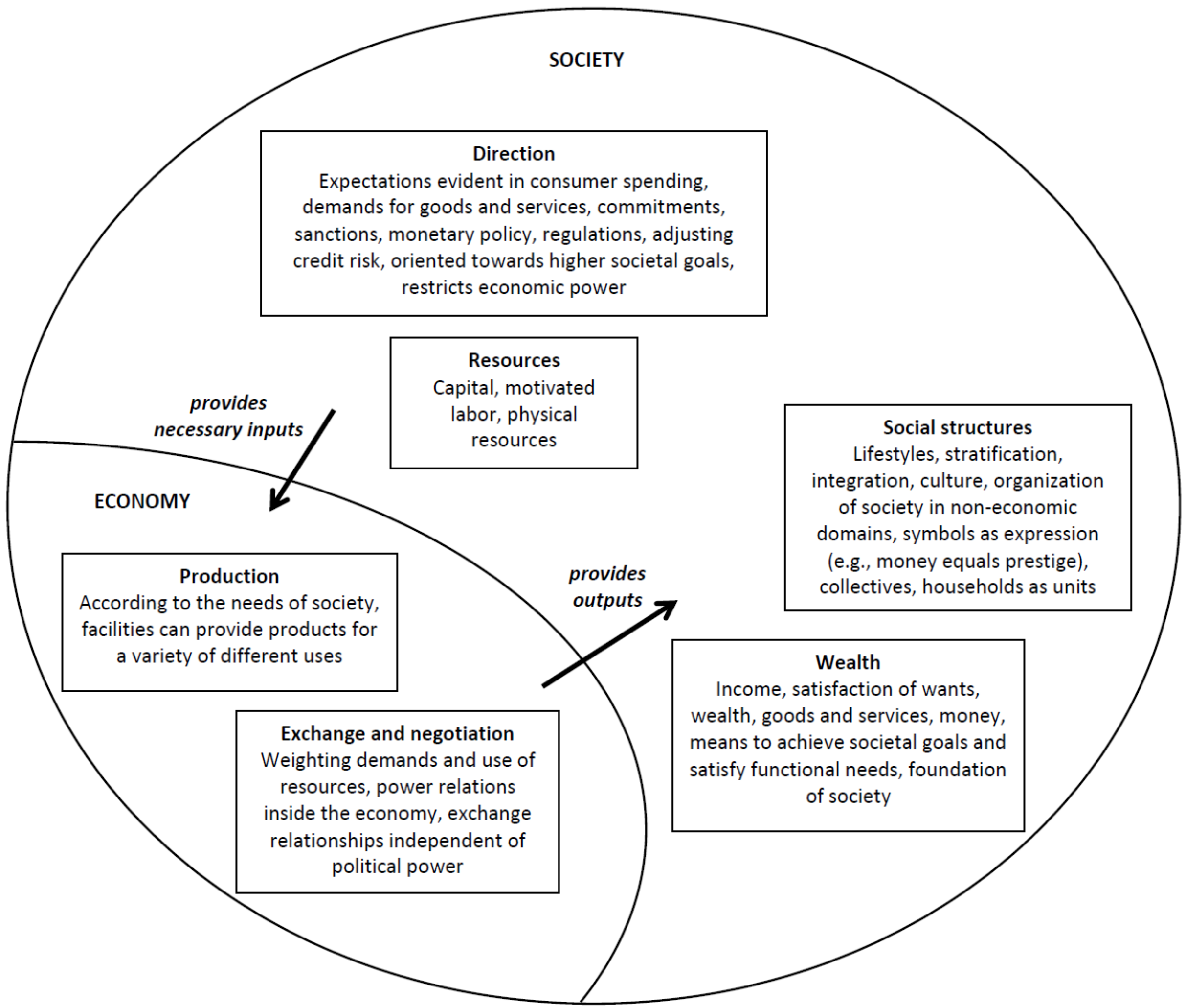

Figure 3. Business as a subunit of society

2.2 Perspectives in economics

Even though the relationship between business and society is not *per se* a prominent topic in economics, the works of many economic thinkers including Adam Smith, David Ricardo, Carl Menger, John Maynard Keynes, Friedrich August von Hayek, and Milton Friedman make reference to social structures and their meaning for economic action. In terms of their underlying assumptions and logics, we find two main stances, namely, freedom approaches and support approaches with some concepts combining ideas of both and thus lying somewhere in between.

Freedom approaches define the relationship between business and society on the basis of the regulatory mechanisms put in place by society to control economic action. A common distinction consists in regulated versus free markets. In regulated markets, societal actors undertake drastic regulatory interventions in an attempt to steer the economy. Due to a lack of economic experience, these interventions tend to create unhealthy economic structures and prevent economic prosperity (see Figure 4 for a schematic representation). Friedman and Friedman's (1962/1982) analysis provides an illustrative example of this understanding. They argued that regulated markets yield suboptimal results because they are interlinked with dysfunctional social systems (ibid). Interventions undertaken by incapable governments, regulatory decisions influenced by interest groups, and ineffective or biased legal systems prevent markets from functioning efficiently and yielding maximal benefits for all (ibid). By limiting economic freedom and intervening in the economy via monetary policy, licensing, tariffs, wage and price fixing, quotas, and excessive public spending, governments create monopolies, economic instability, and eventually severe economic crises such as the Great Depression:

> The fact is that the Great Depression, like most other periods of severe unemployment, was produced by government mismanagement rather than by any inherent instability of the private economy. A governmentally established agency—the Federal Reserve System—had been assigned responsibility for monetary policy. In 1930 and 1931, it exercised this responsibility so ineptly as to convert what otherwise would have been a moderate contraction into a major catastrophe […]. (Friedman & Friedman, 1962/1982, p.38)

Mankiw (1991/2004) provides another example of this understanding, as he likewise emphasized the negative consequences of extensive government interventions:

> […] When the government prevents prices from adjusting naturally to supply and demand, it impedes the invisible hand's ability to coordinate the decisions of the households and firms that make up the economy. This corollary explains why taxes adversely affect the allocation of resources, for they distort prices and thus the decisions of households and firms. It also explains the great harm caused by policies that directly control prices, such as rent control. And it

> explains the failure of communism. In communist countries, prices were not determined in the marketplace but were dictated by central planners. These planners lacked the necessary information about consumers' tastes and producers' costs, which in a market economy are reflected in prices. (p.10)

Because of these flaws, Friedman and Friedman (1962/1982), Mankiw (2007/2009), and their adherents argued that regulated markets are undesirable from both an economic and a societal perspective.

To overcome the imperfection of societal actors, they recommended establishing free markets. Free markets, unlike regulated markets, are characterized by the absence of government intervention. At their core is a legal framework that defines a realm of freedom wherein market forces can unfold and government power is minimized. The markets are self-organizing, and the role of government is limited to enforcing the basic rules of the game and minimal standards set out in the legal framework. Unimpeded market forces, so the argument runs, ensure the efficient use of resources to the benefit of all (see Figure 5 for a schematic representation). Friedman and Friedman's (1962/1982) recommendations follow this logic. Instead of steering the economy via public interventions, they suggested that the government establish a legal framework that guarantees economic freedom (ibid). Or rather:

> A government which maintained law and order, defined property rights, served as a means whereby we could modify property rights and other rules of the economic game, adjudicated disputes about the interpretation of the rules, enforced contracts, promoted competition, provided a monetary framework, engaged in activities to counter technical monopolies and to overcome neighborhood effects widely regarded as sufficiently important to justify government intervention, and which supplemented private charity and the private family in protecting the irresponsible, whether madman or child—such a government would clearly have important functions to perform. (Friedman & Friedman, 1962/1982, p.34)

In a similar vein, Mankiw (2007/2009) explained:

> One reason we need government is that the invisible hand can work its magic only if the government enforces the rules and maintains the institutions that are key to a market economy. Most important, market economies need institutions to enforce property rights so individuals can own and control scarce resources. […] Yet there is another reason we need government: The invisible hand is powerful, but it is not omnipotent. There are two broad reasons for a government to intervene in the economy and change the allocation of resources that people

would choose on their own: to promote efficiency or to promote equality. (pp.10-11)

In this view, government is responsible for maintaining an ideal playing field for economic action and for addressing social issues such as the care of children and the mentally ill. This system generates a stable economy in which the rules of supply and demand create maximum benefit for everyone (Friedman & Friedman, 1962/1982; Mankiw, 2007/2009). Without being designed to further societal goals, the mechanisms inherent in free markets naturally create social progress, a law often referred to as the "invisible hand."[4] Accordingly, freedom approaches tend to describe government as a meddling force that constantly interferes with business activity and disturbs the smooth flow of the economy. To ensure a well-functioning economic system and maximum benefit for all, the power and impact of government need to be restrained and channeled almost exclusively towards social issues.

Rather than looking at the freedom provided by society, support approaches focus on the contribution societal actors make to ensure the smooth functioning of the economy. The basic assumption is that markets are unstable and fluctuate between times of economic prosperity and economic stagnation. To correct for these instabilities, as these approaches maintain, government needs to implement countercyclical policies. More specifically, in times of economic prosperity, government must step back and give maximum freedom to the economy. Its task is limited to providing basic services such as education and welfare programs and collecting resources in preparation for economically difficult times. Once the economy swings towards stagnation, government must step in with public spending programs to stimulate the economy and lead it back to economic prosperity (see Figure 6 for a schematic representation). An example of this understanding is Keynes' (1936/1946) theory. He argued that the vicious cycle of recession, which is characterized by rising unemployment and declining spending, can be avoided or broken by public expenditures on anything ranging from building infrastructure to war (ibid). Public works provide employment and income to citizens, fostering consumption and stimulating the economy as a consequence (ibid). As Keynes explained:

> If the Treasury were to fill old bottles with banknotes, bury them at suitable depths in disused coalmines which are then filled up to the surface with town rubbish, and leave it to private enterprises on well-tried principles of laissez-faire to dig the notes up again […], there need be no more unemployment and, with the help of the repercussions, the real income of the community, and its capital wealth also, would probably become a good deal greater than it

[4] The term *invisible hand* was first used by Adam Smith in his works *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759/2010) and *The Wealth of Nations* (1776/2005) to refer to the unintended benefits of the self-interested actions of individuals. Ever since, the concept has been further elaborated and integrated into economic thinking and commonly refers to the benefits a free and competitive market order provides to economic and social actors (e.g., Mankiw, 1991/2004).

> actually is. It would, indeed, be more sensible to build houses and the like; but if there are political and practical difficulties in the way of this, the above would be better than nothing. (Keynes, 1936/1946, p.129)

From this perspective, business depends on government to provide basic services and resolve economic turmoil. In other words, government needs to put social programs in place and provide backup mechanisms according to clearly defined economic principles.

When comparing the line of argumentation evident in seminal works of economics to that evident in works of sociology, we find that the overall structure of the dilemma that characterizes the relation between business and society is similar: There is a conflict between dependence and influence. Business depends on society for certain services, but extensive societal involvement is a threat to economic structures. As in sociological theories, government plays a mediating role in overcoming this conflict. However, in contrast to sociological theories, government is conceptualized as an independent actor rather than an integral part of society. Autonomous regulatory bodies fulfill the roles of facilitating and protecting free markets on the one hand and absorbing the manifestations of economic failure in economic crises and negative business externalities on the other. Society plays a peripheral role, and one that is only really relevant to markets as a source of resources, a cause of problems, or a remote beneficiary of economic action.

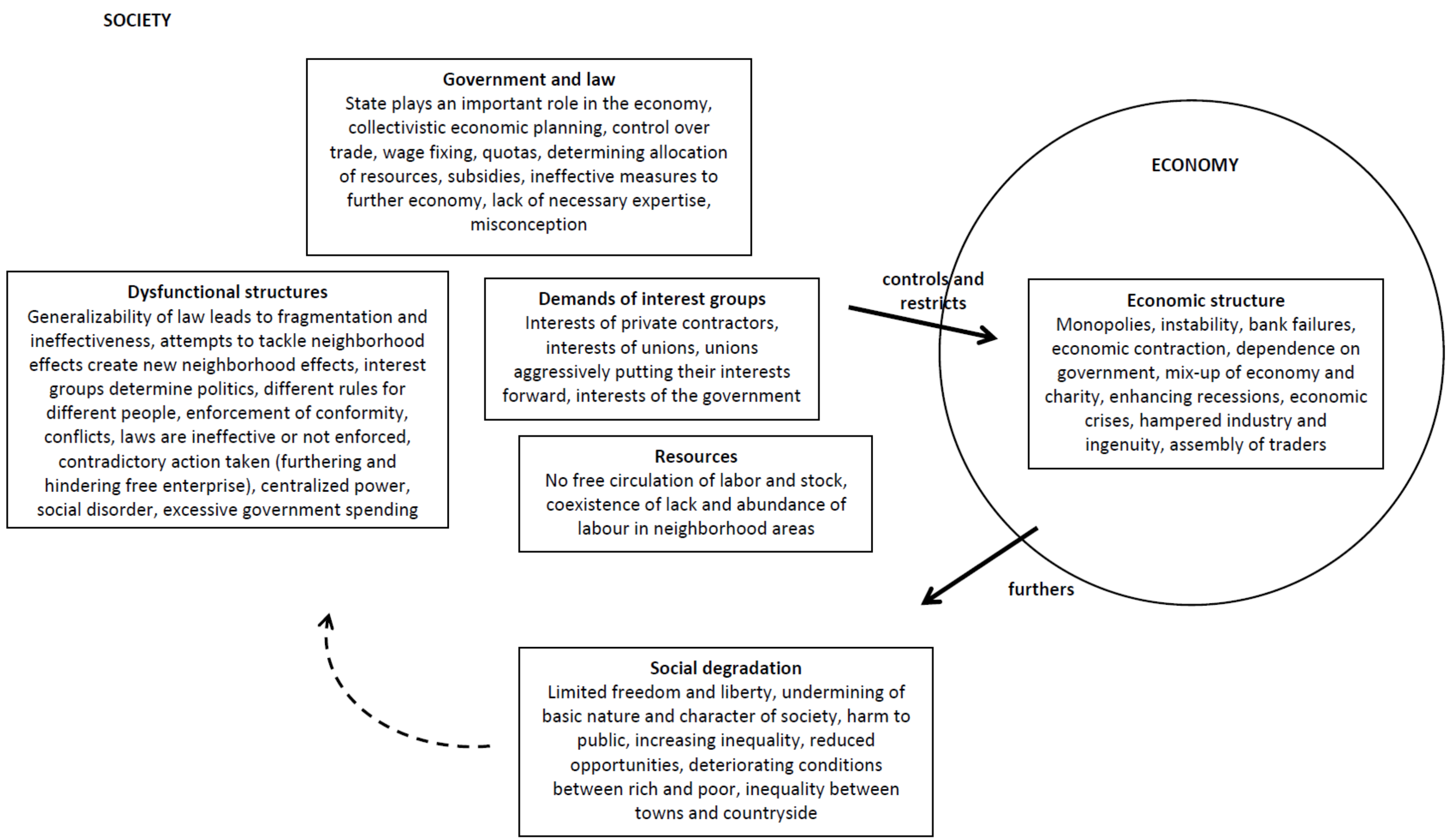

Figure 4. Regulated market model

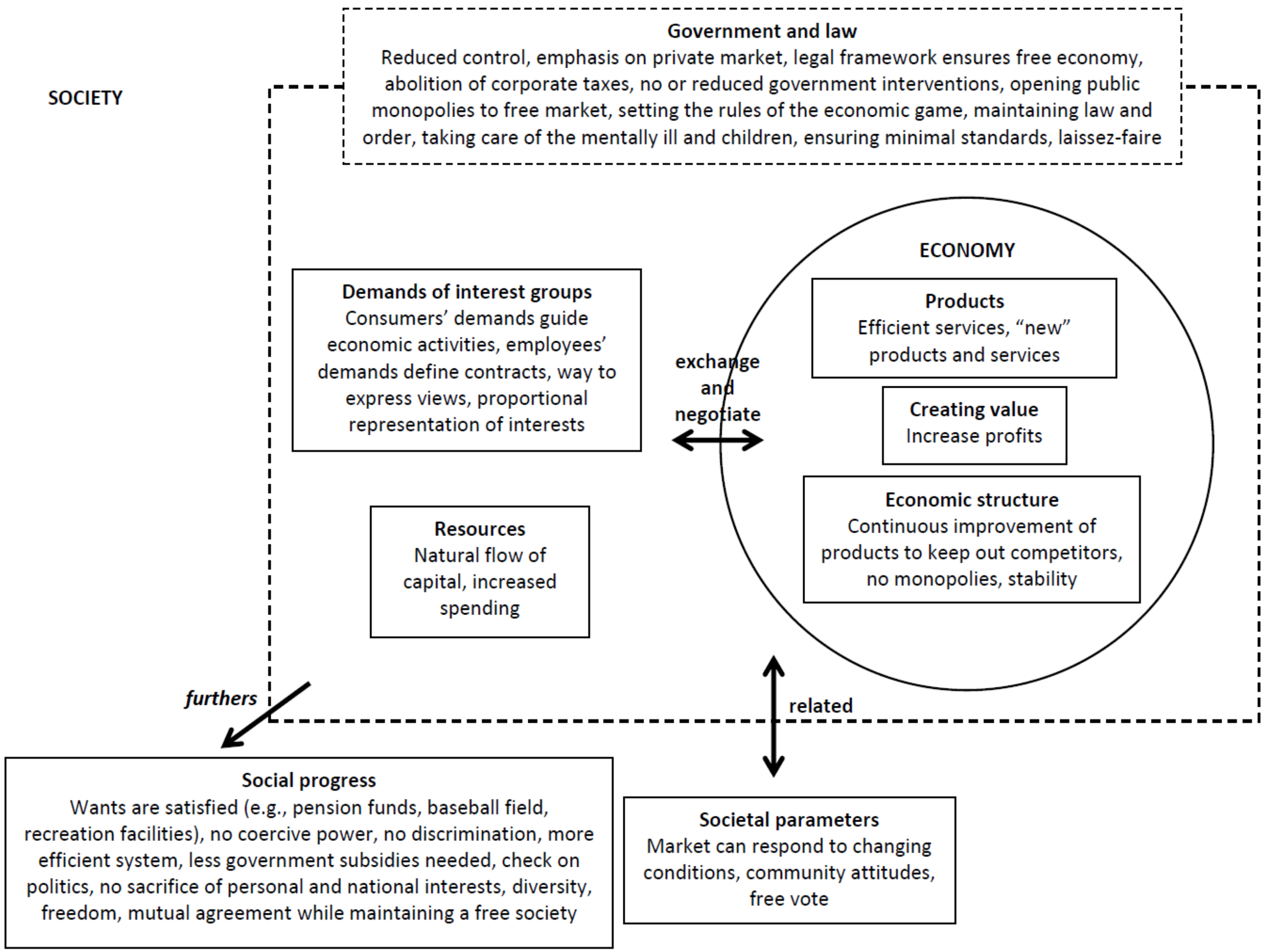

Figure 5. Free market model

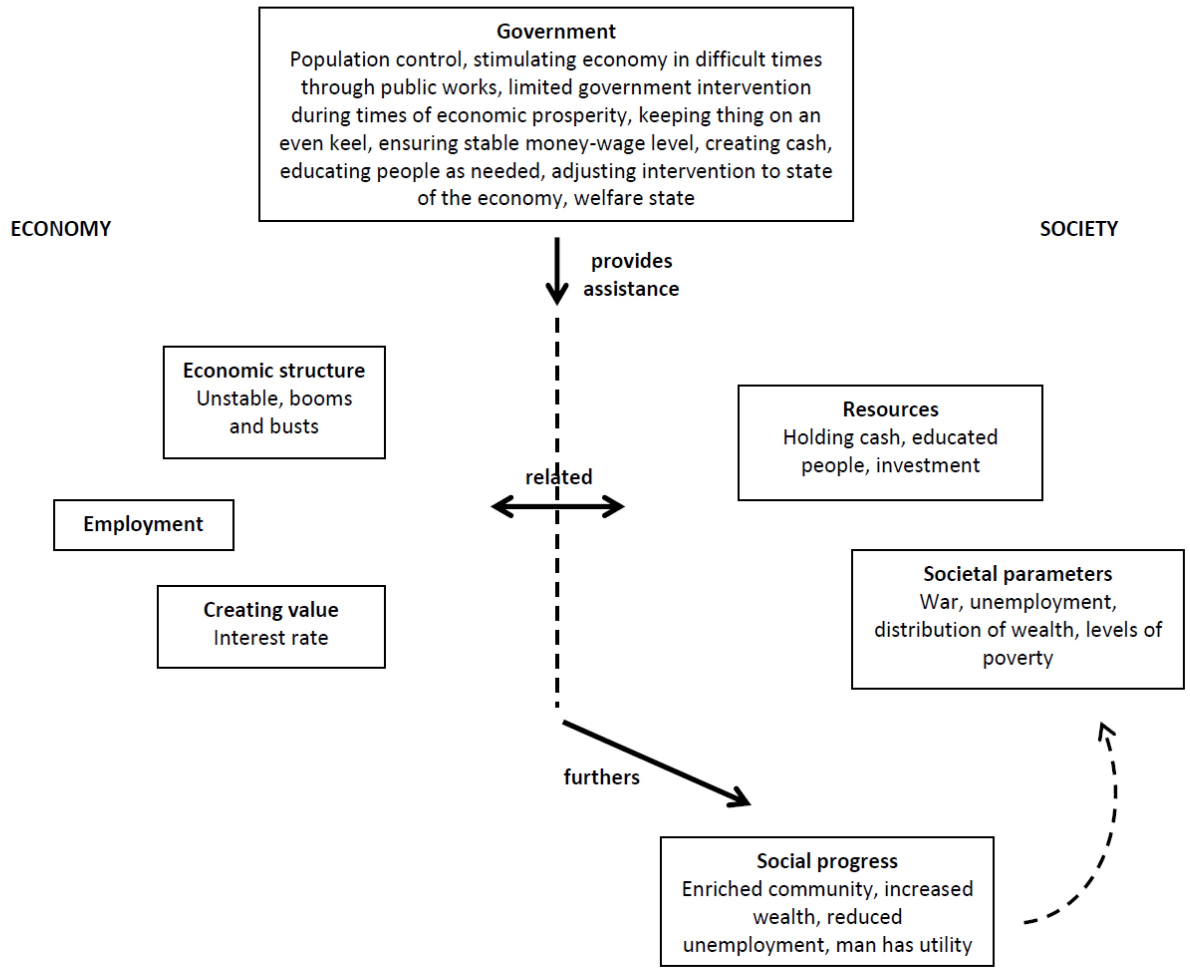

Figure 6. Government supporting business

2.3 Problems

In the 21st century, the perspectives outlined above have come into question because they fail to account for three major problems.

Problem 1: Business and society are not separate

The perspectives conceptualize society and business in general, and government and business in particular, as separate entities. They regard business and society as clearly distinguishable actors with disparate interests. Governments as independent bodies mediate between these interests by implementing and enforcing legal frameworks. This understanding is in conflict with the actual political conditions of most contemporary countries. In today's world, business and government are highly interrelated with influence flowing in both directions.

Corporations use a variety of channels to directly and indirectly influence public policy. As donors to political campaigns, they co-determine the outcomes of elections and votes. Winning parties and candidates tend to return the favor of support with preferential policies. Ferguson (1995) identified a strong connection between the policies of political candidates and the interests of the private-sector donors to their election campaigns. Lobbying is another way of exerting direct influence. Lobbyists engaged by large corporations shape political decisions and legislation according to their sponsors' interests (Fuentes-Nieva & Galasso, 2014; Hardoon, Ayele, & Fuentes-Nieva, 2016). In 2016, for example, businesses in the United States spent around 3.15 billion USD on hiring at least 11,170 lobbyists (Center for Responsive Politics, 2017). In a similar vein, revolving-door appointments establish networks that ensure the flow of information between the public and the private sectors and are used to exert influence (Blanes i Vidal, Draca, & Fons-Rosen, 2011; David-Barrett, 2014). In 2013–14, representatives from the private sector held 30% of the senior civil service positions in the United Kingdom, leading some authors to conclude that "business values, business models and business influence are now at the heart of the civil service" (Wilks, not specified).

In a more oblique fashion, business directs public policy by influencing public opinion via the media, the Web, and think tanks (Greenpeace, 2010; McChesney & Nichols, 2004). One example is the involvement of the oil giant Koch Industries in climate research. In 2009, foundations linked to Koch Industries donated over 6.4 million USD to around 40 think tank front groups that produced and spread research denying climate change (Greenpeace, 2011). In doing so, they succeeded in establishing an opposing position on the existence of human-induced climate change that challenged the consensus of the international scientific community and impacted climate action on the national and international levels (Greenpeace, 2010; Greenpeace, 2011).

However, business shaping public policy is only one side of the coin. Often it is governments that take action towards business. To remain in power and stand a chance of reelection, governments need to fulfill their election promises, which commonly revolve around employment and public services. To this end, they implement policies that are favorable to business such as tax reductions, subsidies, and lax regulations to attract and retain corporate investment, which is a major source of employment as well as tax revenue (Leaver & Cavanagh, 1996; Hardoon, Ayele, & Fuentes-Nieva, 2016). Switzerland is an exemplary case in this regard. It is one of the top corporate tax havens in the world (Hardoon, Ayele, & Fuentes-Nieva, 2016), and the Swiss government has repeatedly allowed for legal exceptions and used pubic money to support corporations that are too big to be allowed to fail such as UBS and Swissair (Zumstein, 2008; 2009; 2011). The competition between countries for corporate investment often creates a race characterized by one-upmanship in business-friendly policies and standards (Leaver & Cavanagh, 1996). Tax havens such as Switzerland thus create a need for other governments to lower their own taxes in order to remain competitive (Hardoon, Ayele, & Fuentes-Nieva, 2016).

In some cases, the lines between public and private interests are blurred as governments and businesses cooperate to their mutual benefit. An example is China's economic ambitions in Africa. The Chinese government supports and fosters the operations of Chinese corporations on the African continent by establishing partnerships with African countries and providing financing (Alden & Davies, 2006). Such government support is a major reason why Chinese corporations have grown rapidly in Africa and are very successful in outperforming their Western counterparts (ibid). Chinese corporations benefit from access to large reservoirs of resources, especially young workers and natural resources, as well as underserved markets (Hanauer & Morris, 2014). The employment opportunities and services they provide to African countries strengthen their bond with China, which in turn is conducive to the government's aim of reinforcing China's position as a global superpower (ibid).

As these examples illustrate, the assumption of clearly demarcated lines between governments and business is inappropriate. Rather than being independent and impartial regulatory bodies, government actions are often guided by business interests.

Problem 2: Business impact is not restricted to the economic sphere

The sociological and economic theories locate the focus of business actions and the impact of business operations predominantly—or even exclusively—in the economic sphere. The major task of business is production and, as economic theories hold, to generate profits. In today's world, the actions and impact of business on the economy are only a portion of its overall actions and impact. Corporations have become powerful global players with influence that goes well beyond the economic sphere.

Large corporations' wage and price strategies are at the heart of rising inequalities in and between countries. Global corporations outsource production to low-wage economies and use their dominant position and competition among suppliers to keep wages low (Hardoon, Ayele, & Fuentes-Nieva, 2016). This enables them to maximize profits through cheap production and by offering affordable goods to customers in wealthy countries. In the US, for example, retail product prices across all domains including soft goods, durable goods, and miscellaneous declined between 1993 and 2005 as a result of low-cost offshore production (Schor, 2005). The result is extreme inequality on a global scale because the increasing standards of living of wealthy people in developed economies rest on decreasing standards of living of people in low-paid manufacturing jobs in developing economies. These patterns are repeated on the national level, where a difference can be found between people in well-paid, high-skilled jobs and people in poorly paid, low-skilled jobs (Florida & McLean, 2017).

In wealthy countries, low product prices in combination with rapid product updates and obsolescence, short product lifecycles, intense advertising, and near-instant delivery have created a lifestyle characterized by a high rate of consumption (Robins, 1999; Schor, 2005).[5] Robins (1999) estimates that global consumption quadrupled between 1960 and 1998. The major drivers of this development were changes in consumption patterns. People began to travel and commute more, spend more on recreation and entertainment, prefer luxurious variants of products (e.g., exotic fruits, tropical wood), favor products of larger sizes (e.g., cars, houses), and tended to buy new products (e.g., Jacuzzis, snowbladers) and multiple versions of the same or similar products (e.g., technical devices, refrigerators; Schor, 2005). The level of comfort and abundance of life choices that people in wealthy countries have come to expect exceed the boundaries of what our planet can sustain (Rockström et al., 2009). In terms of social problems, the environmental effects and waste that result from overconsumption are distributed unequally among the world's populations and it is the poorest who suffer most from environmental degradation (WWF, 2012).

The effects of rising inequality and environmental degradation are aggravated by the attempts of corporations to increase profits via tax avoidance. According to Hardoon, Ayele, and Fuentes-Nieva (2016), nine out of ten large corporations have a presence in at least one tax haven, which suggests that they are transferring the profits made in one country to another country with more favorable tax rules. While tax havens flourish, governments confronted with a shortfall in tax revenue face a difficult

[5] An interesting characteristic of this life-style is the so-called attitude-behavior gap (Boulstridge & Carrigan, 2000; Papaoikonomou, Ryan, & Ginieis, 2011; Carrigan & Attalla, 2001). This gap refers to inconsistencies between people's reported importance of sustainability for consumption decisions and actual consumption behavior. In questionnaires, a vast majority of consumers report the intention to support sustainable production and consumption through their purchasing decisions (Carrigan & Attalla, 2001). However, this attitude is not reflected in actual purchasing decisions (Carrigan & Attalla, 2001; Papaoikonomou, Ryan, & Ginieis, 2011; Manaktola & Jauhari, 2007). We will return to this point later.

choice. They need to either cut public services or collect the taxes elsewhere, usually from middle-class citizens and small businesses (ibid). In both cases, large corporations enjoy large cash profits while others bear the costs, and this is even more acute when corporate operations go hand in hand with social or environmental externalities (ibid).

In sum, the assumption that business' activities and impacts are limited to the economic sphere and that business endeavor is restricted to production is incorrect. Rather than being "purely" economic institutions, corporations are powerful global players that co-determine the wellbeing and future of those around them.

Problem 3: Government cannot regulate business and address social issues

The third problem relates to the central role assigned to government as a controlling entity and social service provider. In all perspectives, government is the entity responsible for regulating business and dealing with social issues and business externalities. This is in sharp contrast to the capacities and capabilities of most contemporary governments. Locally and globally, governments face increasing difficulties in regulating corporations and addressing corporate externalities.

On the national level, regulatory difficulties arise from rapidly changing circumstances and the complexity of the issues to be regulated. Technological innovations offer new ways of doing business that are often not covered by existing law. The collection and use of big data, the employment status of Uber drivers, laws for driverless cars and commercial drones, genetically modified food, stem cell research, and the rise of cryptocurrency are just a few recent examples. Regulatory bodies often lack the expert knowledge required to fully assess the risks and opportunities of cutting-edge research and technological innovations. As a consequence, regulatory processes are slow and often outpaced by the establishment of revolutionary business models and services.

Internationally speaking, the status of corporations as global actors causes regulatory problems. Corporate operations and capital flows extend beyond national borders, thereby putting corporate players in an ideal position to avoid national regulations and making it difficult for any one state to regulate their operations (Backer, 2015; Leaver & Cavanagh, 1996). One way to address this issue consists in setting international standards. Doing so requires consent on the international level and transposition to and enforcement on the national level (Backer, 2015). This, however, is a challenge because different regulatory approaches between countries, diverging interests between states, and differences in interpretation make it difficult to agree on rules and implement these consistently across countries (ibid). Success can be limited owing to slow or blocked negotiations and an incoherent legal approach (ibid). An alternative is extraterritorial application of national laws, which involves corporations being sentenced in one country for wrongdoings committed in another (ibid). Western countries in particular regard this as a promising approach to ensure good governance; the US Foreign Corrupt Practices Act and the British Bribery and Corruption Act are examples of implementing such policies. The problem is that verdicts of this kind are often interpreted as neocolonialist and hegemonic and are therefore prone to cause international conflict (ibid).

However, even elaborate regulatory frameworks on the national and international levels are no guarantee of lawful behavior. Different factors such as a lack of resources, limited or no access to necessary information, or uneducated workers may prevent governments from enforcing laws. The unorganized sector in India, for example, employs approximately 86 percent of the total Indian workforce (reference year: 2004/5; National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganized Sector, 2007). It is characterized by the exploitation of women and children, absence of formal working contracts, job insecurity, low wages, long working hours, occupational hazards, and little or no social security (Gupta, 2009; Balamurugan, 2015). Despite existing regulations, the government has a hard time improving the situation of the workers because a lack of capacity and sensitivity of the responsible regulatory bodies, fragmented responsibilities, a large and dispersed workforce, and inadequate infrastructure make it difficult to enforce laws (National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganized Sector, 2007; Balamurugan, 2015).

The second task assigned to governments, that is, addressing social issues and corporate externalities, is increasingly turning into a burden. In recent decades, many governments have overstretched their budgets to provide social and economic services. The result has been immense budget deficits. The national debt of France currently stands at 100 percent of the country's GDP, that of the US at 106 percent, that of Italy at 138 percent, and that of Japan at 221 percent, to mention just a few (National Debt Clocks, 2015). In the years to come, governments across the globe will face unprecedented challenges including aging populations, increasing health costs, aging infrastructures, extreme inequality, mass migration, health epidemics, and climate-change-induced extreme weather events. Europe, for example, is currently struggling to cope with an influx of refugees that exceeds anything experienced in the history of the European Union. However, research indicates that this is only a foretaste of the climate-change-induced migration that is to be expected (Docherty & Giannini, 2009; "Extremes Wetter vertreibt", 2017). Put simply, governments are having a hard time addressing current issues, and unprecedented challenges are yet to come.

We can conclude that governments are not in a position to thoroughly regulate markets, pay the costs of corporate externalities, and address all possible social issues. Instead of being the guardian of markets and the caretaker of society, they are drowning in a vast number of complex tasks that need to be addressed with very limited resources.

In short, these three problems indicate that there is a mismatch between the worldview that informs sociological and economic theories on the one hand and the actual state of contemporary political, economic, and social conditions on the other. The premises on which the sociological and economic models are based (i.e., a separation of business and government, a restriction of business action and impact to the economic sphere, and government's capability of addressing business externalities and social issues) are in sharp conflict with current realities. As a consequence, the solutions suggested are not suited to addressing contemporary problems in general and the divide between business and society in particular. Rather than resolving the conflict between the two sides, they run the risk of increasing divisions further by relying on measures that are likely to fail or be dysfunctional.

3 A system that underpins these problems: Unhealthy interdependencies

If the problems outlined above are evidence of how the world works today, then a study of their characteristics can help us reveal the conditions in which the divide between business and society has developed and persists. When looking at the problems in more detail, we find that they are related to a system of unhealthy interdependencies between business, society, and government. The core of this system is two principles of behavior that guide the actions in all three domains. The first of these principles is shortsightedness. Actors in all three domains act as self-contained entities that pursue their own interests irrespective of the consequences this has on others. Corporations lobbying to shape legislation that will serve their interest at the expense of societal interests, consumers maintaining a lifestyle that severely damages societies and the planet, and government officials exchanging favorable policies for campaign support are all examples of this. The actors focus on their own benefit and ignore the costs to others that this entails.

In the pursuit of satisfying their needs, the actors aim to benefit without incurring the costs and tend to place demands without considering the capacities and capabilities of others. Consumers want sustainable business practices without paying higher prices (e.g., Carrigan & Attalla, 2001; Manaktola & Jauhari, 2007); employees—especially the younger generation of so-called millennials—want an interesting job with high wages, ideal career options, and flexible working hours without compromising (e.g., Mair, 2016; TINYpluse, 2014; Thomsen, 2016); corporations expect outstanding infrastructure and social services without paying their fair share of taxes (e.g., Hardoon, Ayele, & Fuentes-Nieva, 2016); and governments spend money they do not have (e.g., Ding & Prasad, 2010). Each actor asks the others to provide services without being ready to contribute or compromise. Consequently, the relationships between the actors are characterized by incommensurable, contradictory, and unrealistic expectations.

The second principle is a lack of accountability. Each actor attempts to relinquish liability by shifting responsibilities to other actors. To do this, they have developed arsenals of arguments explaining why others are in a better position to address the problems caused by their shortsighted pursuit of interests. Let us look to the example of rising inequality: Societies argue that they cannot limit inequality because they are either powerless to do so or do not sufficiently understand the mechanisms that lead to their purchasing behavior causing inequality on the other side of the globe (e.g., Boonstoppel & Carabain, 2013; James & Montgomery, 2017). Businesses point to the limitations set by the rules of the economic game (e.g., Donlon, 2017; Che, 2015). Governments question the feasibility of available measures (e.g., United Nations Development Programme, 2013). Similar arguments can be made with regard to sustainable production and consumption, rising public debt, tax avoidance, tax havens, and so on. The result is an absence of responsibility because the buck is constantly being passed.

This unaccountability often goes hand in hand with a misconception of competence. Actors strive to participate in areas that are not related to their core competences but strategically meaningful to their interests. For instance, many large corporations avoid paying taxes and, as a consequence, hamper governments' ability to provide social services. The same corporations, however, launch CR programs that provide social benefits to consumers, employees, and citizens. These are convenient strategies because they distract from abandoned responsibilities, give the impression of responsiveness, and create a safe space in that the actors are in an ideal position to internalize success (from doing someone else's job) and externalize failure (from trying to help but failing at someone else's task).

Over the past few decades, these two principles, shortsighted behavior and unaccountability, have created a highly unsustainable situation in which the demands of the more powerful actors are met but the less powerful actors have to do without and simultaneously bear the costs. The consequences have been widespread skepticism, dissatisfaction, frustration, and insecurity (for a detailed discussion, see Leisinger, 2017a; 2017b). The sharp decline in trust towards governments and business (see e.g., Mulcahy, 2015; Transparency International, 2017; Harrington, 2017); the rise of protectionism (see e.g., Tocci, 2017); the spread of anti-globalization, anti-capitalism, and anti-democratic attitudes (see e.g., Ghemawat, 2017; Lloyd, 2001; "Randalierer verletzen Polizisten", 2012; Lau, 2012; Elliott, 2016; Saval, 2017); and increasing social unrest such as the Occupy Wall Street movement and the G20 protests, Brexit, and Trump's "America first" approach are manifestations of this. Even though most of these reactions target a particular actor group, it is important to understand that no single actor is to blame. Rather the root cause is a system of unhealthy interdependencies to which every actor contributes through the actions they take, those that they do not, the expectations they hold, and the responsibilities that they neglect.

4 Tackling the divide

If we are to put the relationship between business and society on more solid footing again, we need to rethink the system of interdependencies. A preliminary step in doing this is to identify a conceptualization of the relationship between business and society that accounts for the problems outlined above and allows us to understand the interests of the actors in a less conflictual and more sustainable manner. In revisiting sociological and economic theories, we indeed find approaches that fulfill these requirements.

4.1 Alternative conceptualizations of the relationship between business and society

In certain economic theories, the interlinkages between business and society play a central role. The economy occupies its own space within the broader socioeconomic system, but the boundaries between the economy and society are blurred. Societal parameters such as preferences, public opinion, and legislation influence economic action and vice versa. The economy contributes to social progress or degradation, which in turn affects societal parameters (see Figure 7 for a schematic representation). Representations of these ideas can be found in the writings of Ricardo (1817/2001) and Smith (1776/2005). These authors explained how, for example, war and peace create economic structures, population growth relates to prosperity, customs shape working behavior, popularity of professions impacts wages, incomes set limits to family size, and the state of the economy is linked to happiness in society. Instead of conceptualizing business and society as clear-cut entities, this perspective regards them as interlinked.

In sociological theory, we find an approach that takes this idea one step further by conceptualizing business and society as inextricable. Economic parameters such as property, exchange of goods and services, market logics, and economic interests and societal parameters such as social structures, wealth, social stability, and policy are mutually intertwined and reinforcing such that they cannot be meaningfully separated (see Figure 8 for a schematic representation). These ideas are particularly prevalent in Weber's (1956/1978) understanding.[6] He argued that economic actions are a central constituent of cohesive societies (ibid). Economic interests establish a system wherein people professionally ensure the continued existence of social groups and thus contribute to the creation and maintenance of communities:

> If a group pays somebody to act as a continuous and deliberate "organ" of their common interests, or if such interest representation pays in other respects, an association comes into

[6] Even though Weber is one of the classics of sociology, this part of his work tends to be underrepresented in current sociology in favor of the more conflict-centered and critical approaches discussed earlier. Similarly, the discussions of the theories of Ricardo and Smith tend to focus on their liberal characteristics.

> being that provides a strong guarantee for the continuance of concerted action under all circumstances. (Weber, 1956/1978, p.345)[7]

In this way, economic structures and social structures co-determine each other. Economic exchange, for example, furthers pacification because it offers an alternative to enforced appropriation, and society ensures peaceful exchange by implementing respective market laws:

> But the intensive expansion of exchange relations has always gone together with a process of relative pacification. All of the “public peace” arrangements of the Middle Ages were meant to serve the interests of exchange. The appropriation of goods through free, purely economically rational exchange, as Oppenheimer has said time and again, is the conceptual opposite of appropriation of goods by coercion of any kind, […]. (Weber, 1956/1978, p.640)

According to this view, business and society are inseparable.

To summarize, both approaches understand business and society as interwoven entities. There are no clear boundaries and business and society are not antagonistic players. Instead, economic and societal actions and structures are in a constant interplay and mutually form and reinforce each other. As in the approaches discussed earlier, government is conceptualized as an important regulatory body but does not bear the burden of addressing social and economic issues on its own.

[7] Apart from Weber’s seminal work *Economy and Society* (1956/1978), his book *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1920/1976) provides insightful analyses of the interrelations between business and the characteristics of society, or religion, in this particular case.

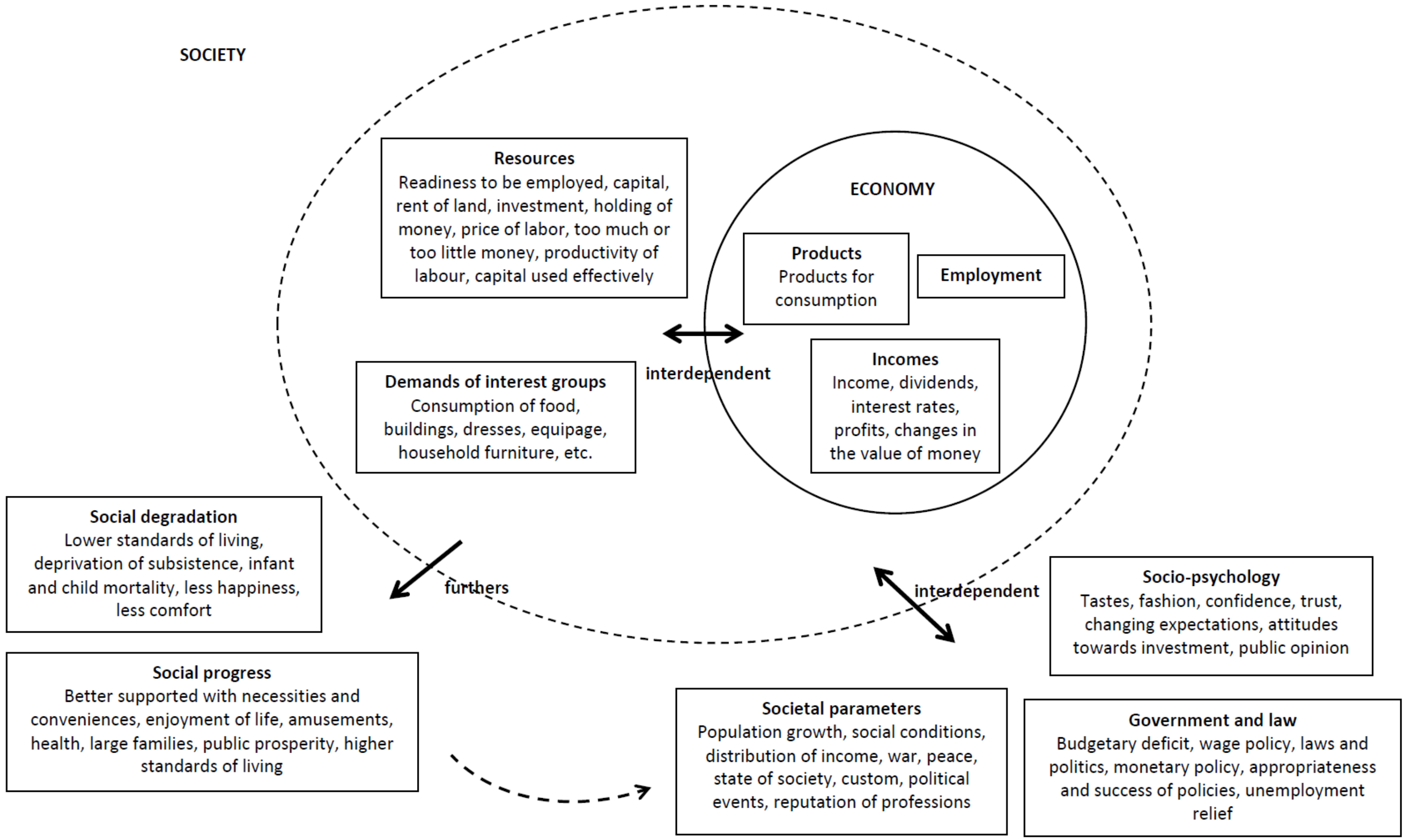

Figure 7. Business and society as interlinked systems

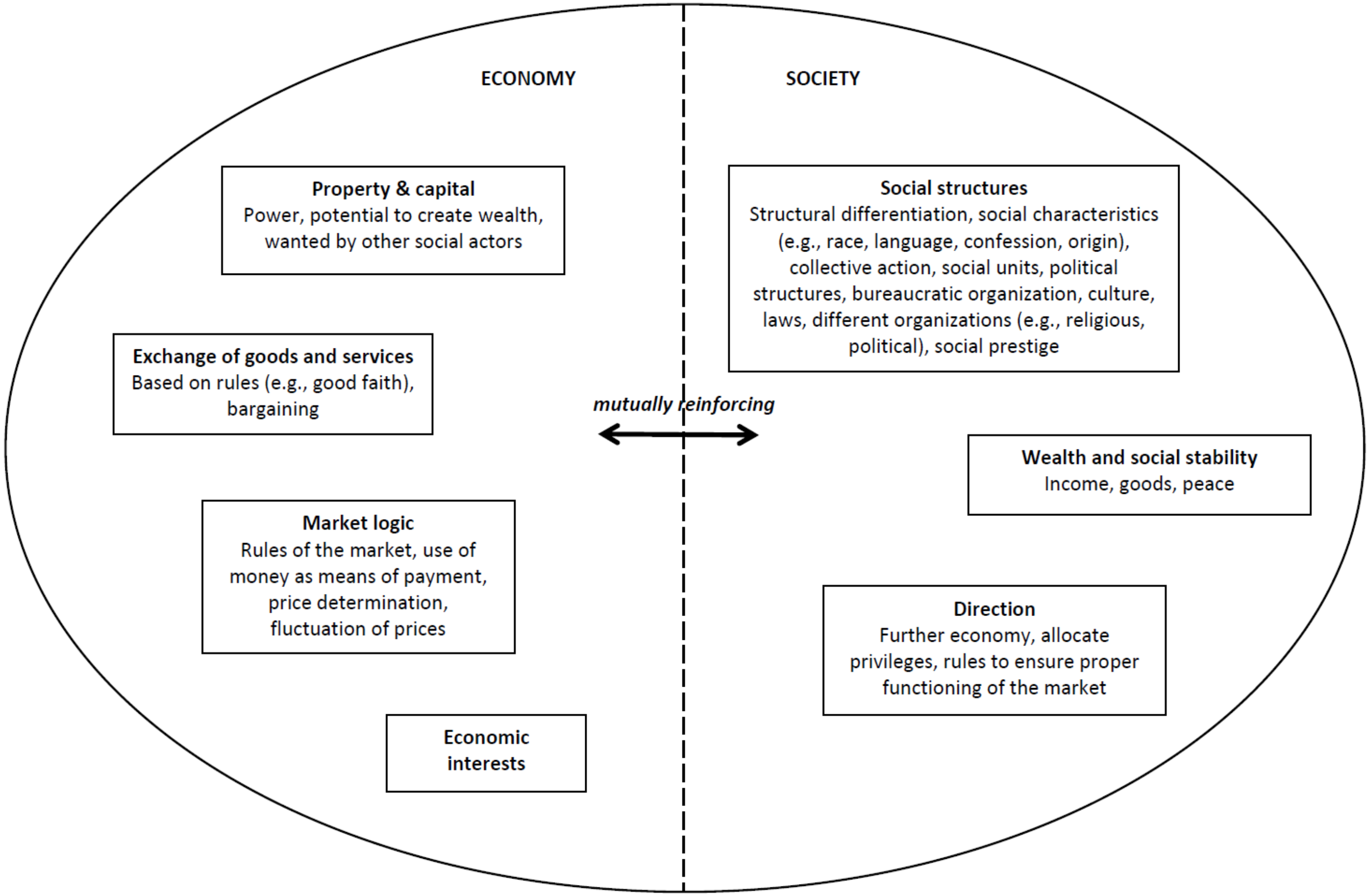

Figure 8. Business and society as inextricable

4.2 Rethinking the underlying system: Healthy interdependencies

If business and society are inextricably interlinked, the logical conclusion is that the shortsighted and unaccountable behavior of one actor does not just come at a disadvantage to the others but eventually creates a disadvantage for the initiator. If government pursues its own interests rather than those of society, it risks being replaced. If business excessively outsources production to low-cost locations, government may try to repatriate jobs via protectionist measures. If society is not willing to pay more for sustainable products, those products will diminish in quality or they will stop being produced altogether. To ensure continued satisfaction of their own interests, the actors need to ensure the satisfaction of the interests of others. Put simply, it is in the long-term self-interest of the actors in every single domain to ensure the wellbeing of the other two.

When applied to business, this means that instead of decoupling business from a dysfunctional social system, business needs to focus on how it can contribute to ensuring a functioning social system in its own long-term interest. More specifically, corporations must use the way they do business, their products, and their philanthropic engagement[8] to enhance profits and contribute to society.[9] This can be done in many different ways. An example is Microsoft. As part of a philanthropic project, the software giant entered a partnership with the American Association of Community Colleges wherein Microsoft supplies colleges with equipment and skills (Porter & Kramer, 2006). The resulting improved IT training to the students benefits the company in terms of enhanced interest in IT jobs, which, owing to a predicted lack of skilled programmers in the future, will be vital to the company's continued existence (Porter & Kramer, 2006). Another example is the philanthropic initiative undertaken by Lee Kum Kee. As part of the project "hope as chef", the producer of Asian sauces sponsors young people from underprivileged areas of mainland China to learn Chinese cooking skills (Mo, 2015).[10] What these businesses have in common is that they look at the interrelations between business and society

[8] For a good overview of relevant business factors, see Leisinger (2015b).
[9] Concepts related to this idea can be found in Porter and Kramer's approach to strategic philanthropy (1999; 2002) and their notion of shared value (2006; 2011), as well as in Prahalad and Hammond's (2002) idea of doing business at the bottom of the pyramid. While concepts such as these contribute significantly to the process of rethinking the business-society relationship, they need to be extended. Existing concepts tend to focus on short- to mid-term and traceable benefits. According to the logic of inextricably interdependent systems, many benefits are not likely to be short- to mid-term or traceable.
[10] Leisinger (2018) drew my attention to another recent example of self-interest-driven support, namely, Larry Fink's (CEO and chairman of Black Rock) 2017 annual letter to CEOs entitled *A sense of purpose*. In his letter, Fink wrote: "We also see many governments failing to prepare for the future, on issues ranging from retirement and infrastructure to automation and worker retraining. As a result, society increasingly is turning to the private sector and asking that companies respond to broader societal challenges. Indeed, the public expectations of your company have never been greater. Society is demanding that companies, both public and private, serve a social purpose. To prosper over time, every company must not only deliver financial performance, but also show how it makes a positive contribution to society. Companies must benefit all of their stakeholders, including shareholders, employees, customers, and the communities in which they operate" (Fink, 2017). For a detailed discussion, see Leisinger (2018). For more examples, see Sachs (2015) and Porter and Kramer (2006; 2011).

through a social lens. They understand how they benefit from society's wellbeing and what they need to provide to society to prosper in order to secure that benefit in the long term. As Leisinger (2010; 2017a) has emphasized time and again, corporate leaders play a decisive role in this regard, as they define the purpose, mission, culture, and strategy of a corporation, and act as important role models.

Applied to society, the logic of inextricability means that instead of dismantling a corrupt economic system and integrating economic tasks into society, society needs to understand what it can (and cannot) expect from business and what it needs to provide in order for business to produce the expected benefits. Socially and environmentally sustainable production is a legitimate expectation but needs societal support in terms of incentives, purchasing decisions, and legislation. Corporations paying their fair share of taxes is a duty society must insist on to ensure a healthy social system that operates in its own interest as well as that of business. Similar to business, society needs to be able to view the interrelations between business and society through a business lens in order to know not only what it can contribute to make business flourish but also what it can and must claim from a flourishing business.

Finally, instead of forming strategic alliances in an attempt to satisfy its own shortsighted interests, government should act as an arbitrator between business and society. This includes two major tasks. First, as commonly agreed upon by both sociological and economic theories, government plays a central role as a regulatory entity. It sets basic rules and ensures that these are respected. In doing so, it manages mutual expectations and guides negotiations related to standards of behavior. Second, it manages social and economic issues on behalf of business and society. Rather than being the entity responsible for solving social problems and business externalities, it monitors social and economic developments and coordinates social services and the implementation of measures to address social and economic problems in consultation with society and business.

If business, society, and government understand that they form a triangle wherein the wellbeing of one depends on the wellbeing of the other two, the logical consequence is to do what is best for them and the system. Accordingly, shortsightedness and unaccountability are undesirable modes of action because they harm the system and the individual actors in turn. Instead of a system of unhealthy interdependencies, actors who follow the logic of inextricable interlinkage strive for a system of healthy interdependencies because this is the only way they can sustain the satisfaction of their long-term interests.

4.3 The central role of context and culture

This model of healthy interdependencies provides a general roadmap but does not determine the exact roles of business, society, and the government and therefore does not define the precise path to be taken. This can only be done in relation to the particular context and culture[11] of application. Different political systems, economic conditions, cultural values, religious beliefs, ethical norms, historical backgrounds, and social problems lead to different expectations and needs and favor different ways of negotiating the roles of different actors.

This is not to say that there are no universal rules but rather that they are few and far between. Leisinger's (2015a) concept of the "corridor of transculturally legitimate actions and responsible modes of behavior" captures this well. The foundation of this corridor is defined by "values and normative imperatives that are respected in all cultures, recognized by all religions, and appreciated over time all over the world" (Leisinger, 2015a, p.19). There are practices such as slavery, child exploitation, and tax avoidance that are not acceptable under any circumstances and in any context, and there are practices such as respecting the law, employee safety, and anti-discrimination policies that must be followed under all circumstances and in all contexts. These norms are non-negotiable and form the floorboards of the corridor. A vast majority of actions, however, do not fall into these mutually agreed categories of "must" and "must not" but rather lie in a gray area; this space is the corridor of legitimate actions. It is within this corridor that business, society, and government negotiate their expectations and agree on initiatives. These negotiations are tied to context and culture in different ways.

The benefits society expects differ across contexts and cultures. In collectivistic societies, businesses are expected to share created wealth with those who helped create it. Illustrative examples are the South African culture of Ubuntu (for a detailed discussion, see, e.g., Nussbaum, 2003; Murithi, 2006) and Chinese Confucianism (for a detailed discussion, see, e.g., Bergman, Bergman, Liu, & Zhang, 2015).

[11] Context, as we understand it here, refers to the social, political, historical, economic, religious, and other conditions characteristic of a particular place. As an academic construct, culture has been defined in numerous ways (see, e.g., Bhagat, Triandis, & McDevitt, 2012). Major differences between definitions are seen in the combination of, and emphasis put on, internal vs. external and immaterial vs. material elements (Bhagat, Triandis, & McDevitt, 2012). Redfield (1941, p.1) defined culture as "shared understandings made manifest in act and artifact." This definition emphasizes the external character of culture. Hofstede (1984, p.21) defined culture as "the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another." This definition emphasizes the immaterial nature of culture. Finally, Triandis (1972) distinguished between subjective and objective culture. The former refers to subjective elements, such as norms, attitudes, behavioral intentions, and values, while the latter relates to characteristics of physical surroundings, such as buildings, tools, and art (Bhagat, Triandis, & McDevitt, 2012). This definition combines internal and external, as well as immaterial and material elements. The understanding of culture used here and in the following focuses on the immaterial aspects and, consequently, corresponds with Hofstede's (1984) concept of collective programming and Triandis' (1972) concept of subjective culture. As far as the relationship between culture and contextual elements is concerned, concepts—despite differences in definitions—tend to agree on two main points. First, culture and context are interdependent. Context shapes culture—for example, struggles for freedom shape the value of authority—and culture shapes context—for example, religiosity shapes working habits (examples based on Bhagat, Triandis, & McDevitt, 2012; see also Hofstede, 1984). Second, compared to context, culture represents a higher-level construct, in that it describes and systematizes characteristics and patterns across contexts (e.g., Bhagat, Triandis, & McDevitt, 2012; Hofstede, 1984). When exploring and contrasting manifestations of the relationship between business and society, the distinction between context and culture allows us to include different analytic levels and capture different aspects.

In contrast, in individualistic societies such as most Western countries, created wealth is regarded as the private property of businesses and its owners (Letza, Sun, & Kirkbride, 2004; Friedman, 1970).[12] Similarly, the support that social systems need depends on the prevailing economic, social, and environmental problems and priorities. To give one example, the needs of a society like South Africa, which suffers from a high degree of poverty, widespread unemployment, extreme inequalities, and lack of skills (World Bank, 2017; Millennium Development Goals Country Report, 2013), is different from those of a country like Switzerland, where highly developed social services ensure basic needs and education but citizens are concerned about the involvement of firms in environmental degradation and human rights violations (Konzernverantwortungsinitiative, 2016; Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, 2015; Müller & Biedermann, 2012).

The same applies to business. The expectations of business towards society and the support economic systems need differ between contexts and cultures. In most African countries, economic development and business operations are hampered by a lack of adequate infrastructure, social conflicts, weak institutions, crime, poor access to financial services, demographic pressures, and health issues related to HIV/AIDS and malaria (Ndulu, Chakraborti, Lijane, Ramachandra, & Wolgin, 2007; Hamann, Agbazue, Kapelus, & Hein, 2005; Sachs & Warner, 1997). In contrast, in the United States, a current challenge for corporations is the so-called "millennial question," namely, the problem of how to deal with new work attitudes and expectations towards employers that have resulted from changes in the way young people are raised and educated and that are in conflict with traditional organizational goals, structures, and management practices (Sinek, 2017; Gosse, 2017).

In addition to the content of negotiations, contextual and cultural characteristics also determine how negotiations are structured and solutions are implemented. Different cultures tend to involve different parties in negotiations and follow different rules during the negotiation process (Leisinger, 2015a). In Asian countries, for instance, the relationship aspect of negotiations is often more important than the deal or contract itself, and accordingly negotiation processes take time (Salacuse, 2004). Yet the opposite is true in North American countries, where the focus lies on the deal and there is a preference for quick negotiations (ibid). In consensual-egalitarian contexts such as Denmark, the Netherlands, and Norway, decisions tend to be made collectively, whereas in top-down hierarchical contexts such as China, India, and Brazil, the responsibility of decision-making rests with the leaders of a group (Meyer, 2017). The resulting outcomes are likewise implemented in different ways. Rule-based societies prefer extended legalistic frameworks and rules that set clear standards and cover any eventuality, whereas

[12] Different expectations across contexts can lead to dilemmas for globally operating corporations, i.e., what is expected and valued in one culture may be disdained and disapproved of in another. See Leisinger (2015a; 2017c) for a detailed discussion of this topic.

relationship-based societies favor common-sense approaches and flexible renegotiations (Hooker, 2003; 2009).

Accordingly, the expectations towards, roles of, and interplay between business, society, and government are largely determined by contextual and cultural factors. To understand how business, society, and government can support each other and establish healthy interdependencies, it is indispensable to first understand the foundational role of context and culture.

5 Systematizing the role of context and culture

The importance of context in the mutual expectations of and the interplay between business and society stands in stark contrast to the attention it has received in the literature, particularly in the business and management literature, where it tends to be treated as an obstacle that needs to be controlled and managed (e.g., Brett, Behfar, & Kern, 2006; Molinsky & Gundling, 2016; Meyer, 2014), described in terms of super-national cultural differences (e.g., Chamorro-Permuzic & Sanger, 2016; Meyer, 2017), or ignored altogether. This is not to minimize the significant contributions the literature has made in identifying, systematizing, and contrasting cultural patterns between nations (e.g., Hofstede, 1984; 1991; Triandis, 1995; 1996); on the contrary, it is meant to emphasize that current approaches need to be extended. The minor problem with the current literature is that context tends to be narrowed to culture, which leads to neglecting a broad array of contextual factors including historical background, political system, economic system, and social problems. More importantly, the insight the literature provides into culture is not transferred to the conceptualization of the relationship between business and society, which tends to be described in universalistic terms.[13]

The main contribution of the six articles that constitute this dissertation is a better understanding of the link between context and culture and the relationship between business and society in today's cross-national and cross-cultural global environment. These six articles combine a systematic exploration of the conceptual landscape of CR and corporate sustainability with empirical investigations on the CRE in particular contexts in order to delineate the foundational role of context and culture. This is to provide a better understanding of the relationship between business and society as well as an initial model that is suitable for capturing contextual and cultural differences. The following provides an overview and synthesis of the main findings. Importantly, only the main arguments and the most important findings for our discussion are presented here. For detailed descriptions of the research undertaken as part of this dissertation, please refer to Appendix I.A–F.

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[13] Exemplary of this is the literature on CR. Previous research in the field has explored the characteristics of CR in particular contexts (e.g., Idemudia, 2007; Mhamood & Humphrey, 2013; Furrer, Weiss Sampietro, & Seidler, 2006; Furrer & Weiss Sampietro, 2007; Woodward, Edwards, & Birkin, 2001; Podnar & Golob, 2007), as well as variations in CR across contexts (e.g., Factor, Oliver, & Montgomery, 2013; Hou & Li, 2014; Maignan, 2001; Orpen, 1987; Kim & Choi, 2013; Chen & Bouvain, 2009; Wong, Long, & Elankumaran, 2010). As explained in article 3 (Appendix I.C), the findings of these studies have not been integrated into CR theory. There are two interrelated reasons for this. First, the concrete role of context and culture has not yet been systematically explored. Context and culture tend to be limited to statistical differences of cross-national survey responses. The extent to which questionnaire items appropriately reflect context and culture is underexplored. Second, the diverse and extensive nature of the object of study makes it difficult to identify general patterns across contexts and cultures.

5.1 Corporate responsibility and sustainability in theory

In contemporary business studies, the role of business in society is described in terms of the responsibilities businesses have towards societal stakeholders.[14] Among these descriptions, we can broadly distinguish two branches, namely, the traditional CR approach, including its derivatives corporate social responsibility, corporate responsiveness, corporate performance, corporate citizenship, corporate governance, and stakeholder management; and the rapidly evolving approach of corporate sustainability. The first two articles (articles 1 and 2) explore the academic discourse and the literature on these approaches.

Corporate responsibility (article 1, Appendix I.A)

The traditional CR discourse is rooted in the field of business ethics and focuses on moral values and norms as guiding principles of corporate action. Non-economic concerns, especially ethical principles, are understood as existing in opposition to or independent from economic goals. The intensive pursuit of economic goals, especially the generation of shareholder value, so the argument runs, is either indifferent to ethical values or threatens a morally sound position and therefore needs to be counterbalanced by the internalization of a set of moral core values such as fairness, justice, caring, honesty, transparency, and integrity. These core values are derived from Western philosophy, Enlightenment thinking, and Christian theology and are regarded as universal principles. As our research shows, there are many problems with this understanding of the role of corporations including conceptual disunion, Eurocentrism, lack of specificity with regard to domains, stakeholder bias, separation between theory and application, and normativity. With regard to the relationship between business and society, two problems stand out. First, the conceptualization of business interests as independent from non-business interests is in accord with the mindset characteristic of unhealthy interdependencies and thus perpetuates the divide between business and society. Second, the assumption of a globally uniform relationship between business and society based on Western models and ideologies is highly Eurocentric and does not account for contextual and cultural differences. Overall, our research indicates that the traditional CR approach may be of limited relevance when describing the roles of business and society in today's globalized, cross-cultural environment.

[14] In contemporary sociology, the role of business in society is predominantly discussed in terms of critiques of economic actors and systems, especially capitalism, rather than a systematization of the relationship between business and society. For this reason, this dissertation relies on the business literature approaches as an initial step. However, the models included in our articles were chosen because of their relevance to the business–society relationship. Developing a systematization of the relationship between business and society from a sociological perspective with a strong focus on outcomes, policy relevance, and context and culture is precisely the goal of the SCORE (Sustainable Corporate Responsibility) project of which this dissertation is part.

Corporate sustainability (article 2, Appendix I.B)

The evolving concept of corporate sustainability forms many links to the well-established discourse on CR while at the same time drawing from the global discourse on sustainable development, particularly the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs). In doing so, it has the potential to provide a future-oriented approach that systematically inherits the elements of the CR literature that are both relevant and beneficial to sustainable development without reintroducing the shortcomings that burden and limit the CR discourse such as Eurocentrism and the separation of business and non-business interests. While there are many definitions of corporate sustainability, the definition favored here describes corporate sustainability as a systematic business approach and strategy that takes into consideration the long-term social and environmental impact of all economically motivated behaviors of a firm in the interest of consumers, employees, and owners or shareholders. By conceptualizing business action in relation to the mutually intertwined and reinforcing dimensions of the economy, society, and the environment as well as the respective actors, this approach has two major advantages. First, it is able to capture the multifaceted interdependences between business and society. Second, the focus on practical application and outcomes rather than ethical principles and motives creates a conceptual space that is open and flexible enough to accommodate different contextual and cultural requirements and positions. Overall, our research indicates that the evolving concept of corporate sustainability is a promising candidate for conceptualizing the roles of, and the interplay between, business and society in a context- and culture-sensitive manner.

In summary, whereas the traditional CR approach does not account for context and culture and is therefore not suitable as a theoretical foundation, corporate sustainability represents a promising framework to conceptualize the relationship between business and society in a context- and culture-sensitive manner.

5.2 Corporate responsibility expectations in South Africa, China, and Switzerland

To systematize the role of context and culture, we analyzed the CRE in different countries. More specifically, we explored the CRE of advanced business and economics students in South Africa, China, and Switzerland with a focus on how their expectations relate to contextual and cultural characteristics. This is detailed in articles 3 to 6. Before we summarize the major findings of the studies on the three countries, we will briefly introduce the research approach used.

Methods

The empirical studies explored the CRE of advanced business and economics (i.e., post-BA) students in South Africa, China, and Switzerland. In all studies, essay writing was used as the main method of data collection. This method allowed participants to express their expectations along their own sociocultural lines of thought and was therefore ideal for exploring the role of context and culture in CRE (see Appendix I.C for a detailed discussion). In each country, between 37 and 80 written responses were collected. The data was analyzed using Hermeneutic Content Analysis (HCA; Bergman, 2010a). HCA is a three-step mixed-method approach[15], which, in the form applied in the articles, combines Content Configuration Analysis[16] (CCA; Bergman, 2011a; Bergman, Bergman, & Gravett, 2011) with Multidimensional Scaling (MDS)[17]. The application of this method, in particular the second step of HCA, was facilitated by a set of computational tools called *Tools for Hermeneutic Content Analysis in R* (*thectar*; see Appendix II). The combination of qualitative and quantitative techniques that is characteristic of HCA allowed us to go beyond conventional approaches in that it enabled us to identify collective mental structures in the understanding of the roles of business and to understand these structures in relation to the context of production.

For China, in addition to the essay, survey responses to a well-established scale on CR developed by Quazi and O'Brien (2000) were collected. In an extension of the HCA framework, this data was analyzed in combination with the essays by using a combination of CCA, cluster analysis, and MDS. This approach allowed us to refine our findings for the Chinese context.

South Africa (article 3, Appendix I.C)

In the South African context, corporations are expected to contribute to addressing the social and economic inequalities that resulted from apartheid. To do so, they need to play a central role in fostering social development by fulfilling a variety of social functions such as skills development and community development. Social development is understood to be separate from and antagonistic to economic development in that there is a clear distinction between economic and social responsibilities with the social responsibilities often being seen as a form of compensation to society for economic

[15] HCA represents a complementary mixed methods approach (Bergman, 2010a). For a detailed discussion of different types of mixed methods approaches, see Creswell (2010) and Creswell, Clark, Guttmann, and Hanson (2003). A detailed discussion of the epistemological and ontological underpinnings, as well as the justifications of mixed methods research, is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Interested readers are referred to Bergman (2008; 2010b; 2011b; 2011c).

[16] CCA is a qualitative technique of data analysis related to thematic and content analysis. CCA, as described by Bergman (2011a) and Bergman, Bergman, and Gravett (2011), is well suited for context- and culture-sensitive research and is ideal as the qualitative component within an HCA framework for four reasons. First, it can accommodate different epistemological and ontological positions depending on the research focus (ibid). Second, CCA is a flexible approach. CCA is not programmatic; it allows for different analytic strategies and different degrees of complexity depending on the research focus (ibid). Third, despite this flexibility, CCA is systematic. Finally, it relates to context, including inter-textual context, i.e., the interconnectedness of elements within a dataset, as well as the context of data production, i.e., the historical, political, economic, and cultural conditions of data production (ibid).

[17] MDS is a quantitative technique to visualize the relationships between objects based on their co-occurrence within units of analysis. For non-technical introductions to MDS, see Stalans (1995) and Coxon (1982). For detailed and more technical introductions, we recommend Borg and Groenen (2005), Kruskal (1964), and Kruskal and Wish (1978).

privileges. Expectations towards the state are mostly absent, and corporations are expected to assume duties traditionally assigned to governments. In addition to apartheid and the social problems and transitional developments that it engendered, the cultural value of Ubuntu has a considerable influence on CRE. Corporations are expected to share their wealth and success even with unaffiliated individuals, the local community, and the state and to repay society for the resources they receive and extract from the country. Overall, our research on South Africa illustrates the foundational role contextual and cultural elements—particularly history, social problems, and cultural values—play in CRE.

China (articles 4 and 5, Appendix I.D–E)

In China, corporations are considered part of the broader societal system, and corporate success and wealth are accordingly seen in relation to societal goals. Corporations can generate profits as long as those profits also benefit society and they sufficiently compensate society and the state for the public support and privileges they receive. As the representative of Chinese society, the government guides and supervises corporate action, thus ensuring that corporations contribute to realizing national long-term goals, foremost the socioeconomic development and prosperity of the Chinese nation. In the Chinese understanding, social and economic development are inextricably interlinked and can only be achieved together. This is reflected in the roles assigned to corporations, which tend to combine social and economic aspects. CRE in China are driven by a strong collectivistic mindset in that corporations are expected to align their actions and goals with the overarching societal system and they are evaluated based on the contribution they make towards society and the nation. Western-based models are only of limited relevance to CRE in China. Overall, our research on China reveals how business, society, and government are expected to interact in the Chinese socialist system; shows how cultural values—particularly collectivism—manifest in CRE; and illustrates the difficulties in capturing contextual differences using (Western-based) standardized questionnaires.

Switzerland (article 6, Appendix I.F)

In Switzerland, corporations are mainly expected to fulfill traditional economic functions. The clearly defined responsibilities in the economic sphere are supplemented by expectations to make societal contributions and ensure environmental protection. Responsibilities in these latter areas are, however, undefined most of the time and vague at best. The government plays a central role in supporting corporations in generating profits, protecting private wealth, providing infrastructure, ensuring a safe and stable business environment, taking care of social tasks and promoting social development, and absorbing risks and losses. The wealth and profits corporations generate are considered private, whereas corporate losses are expected to be shared with the public in one way or another. This is in accord with the combination of liberal tradition and public interventions to support struggling corporations that is characteristic of contemporary Switzerland. The perspectives on the roles of corporations evident in our Swiss data mimic academic conceptualizations, especially the shareholder model, stakeholder theory, and the shared value approach. When applied, these models were adapted to the Swiss context. Overall, our research on Switzerland shows how tensions between liberal ideals and corporate crises manifest regarding the definition of the roles of business, society, and government.

In sum, our country-specific studies show that CRE are rooted in contextual characteristics including history, economic system, political system, social problems, and cultural values and differ across countries. The classical CR literature has only limited relevance when describing the CRE in today's cross-cultural and cross-national world. In particular, traditional CR concepts are manifest to some degree only in Western contexts but are mostly absent in non-Western contexts. By contrast, the non-normative, flexible approach of corporate sustainability offers a valuable framework in systematizing the roles of corporations in society. The three dimensions of economic development, social development, and environmental management in combination with a multi-stakeholder understanding as outlined above were able to account for most of the CRE identified in our empirical studies.

5.3 Synthesis: The SCORE Board

We compared the CRE in South Africa, China, and Switzerland in light of the concept of corporate sustainability and the constellation of actors relevant to the relationship between business and society identified above, namely, business, society, and government.[18] The results of this comparison indicate that contextual and cultural differences mainly relate to three components of the business–society relationship.

The first component is the responsibilities assigned to corporations in the three sustainability dimensions (i.e., economic development, social development, and environmental management) and the importance assigned to each of the three dimensions. As our empirical studies indicate, these dimensions can mean different things across contexts and differ in terms of how they are prioritized. In Switzerland, for example, economic responsibilities were most elaborated, followed by prevalent but ambiguous social and environmental responsibilities. In contrast, in China and South Africa, the economic and social dimensions received the most emphasis, and the environmental dimension was underrepresented. Social responsibilities were discussed in terms of local initiatives to support and

[18] To provide a comprehensive comparison is beyond the scope of this dissertation. The following are the preliminary results of an initial comparison. The detailed comparison of the CRE in different contexts is a topic for future research for the SCORE research team.

change communities and societies in the case of South Africa and in terms of contributing to overarching national goals in the case of China.

The second component is the ensemble of relevant actors and the roles assigned to them. Across contexts, different actors are involved in defining the relationship between business and society, and the "same" actors may fulfill somewhat different roles. An illustrative example from our studies is the role of government. In South Africa, government is absent in discussions about the role of business in society. By contrast, in China and Switzerland, government occupies a prominent role as supervisor and manager of corporations and as facilitator and risk-taker, respectively.

Finally, the third component is the relations between the sustainable responsibility dimensions and the actors. Here we can further differentiate three subgroups, namely, the relations between actors, the relations between dimensions, and the relations between actors and dimensions. These three subgroups are closely intertwined. In our country studies, we found business and society to be understood as being separate (South Africa), inextricable (China), or interlinked (Switzerland). The dimensions economic development and social development were regarded as antagonistic (South Africa), mutually interdependent (China), or conditional (Switzerland). In line with these understandings, corporations were expected to support social development as compensation for taking economic resources (South Africa), to further social development through their business operations (China), or undertake social and environmental initiatives as a supplement to their economic duties (Switzerland).

Figure 9 provides a schematic representation of the three components. Used in combination, these components constitute an analytic framework, which we termed the SCORE (Sustainable Corporate Responsibility) Board.[19] The SCORE Board provides a flexible tool to analyze and describe the relationship between business and society in different contexts by mapping the constellation of actors, responsibilities, and their interrelations in a way that is representative of a particular context. Figures 10 to 12 show applications of the SCORE Board. They illustrate the relationship between business and society as evident in the CRE of advanced business and economics students in South Africa, China, and Switzerland, respectively. Each of the constellations represented in the figures shows a particular understanding of the relationship between business and society. These understandings form the basis on which actors formulate and negotiate mutual expectations locally and participate in global initiatives such as the UN SDGs. They are therefore the key to identifying and transforming unhealthy interdependencies into healthy ones and establishing a system of cooperation suitable for tackling the challenges of the 21st century. As an analytic tool, the SCORE Board can help identify and compare the

[19] This model and its representation have been inspired by discussions with members of the SCORE group, particularly Prof. Manfred Max Bergman.

understandings that are prevalent in different contexts and are characteristic of different actor groups. In doing so, it can help to determine challenges, opportunities, and workable solutions on the local and global levels.[20]

We would like to emphasize that the SCORE Board as presented here is based on an initial comparison of our findings and therefore preliminary. In this sense, this version of the SCORE Board is only a rough draft. To elaborate and refine this initial idea and turn it into a comprehensive analytic tool and model for sustainable corporate responsibility is beyond the scope of this dissertation. However, we hope that this early version illustrates the significance and potential of the context- and culture-sensitive approach in understanding the relationship between business and society, provides a basis for future research, and represents a good starting point for developing a context- and culture-sensitive model of sustainable corporate responsibility.

[20] Depending on the research focus, the SCORE Board can be adjusted to include other actors, for example, or focus on only one sustainability dimension.

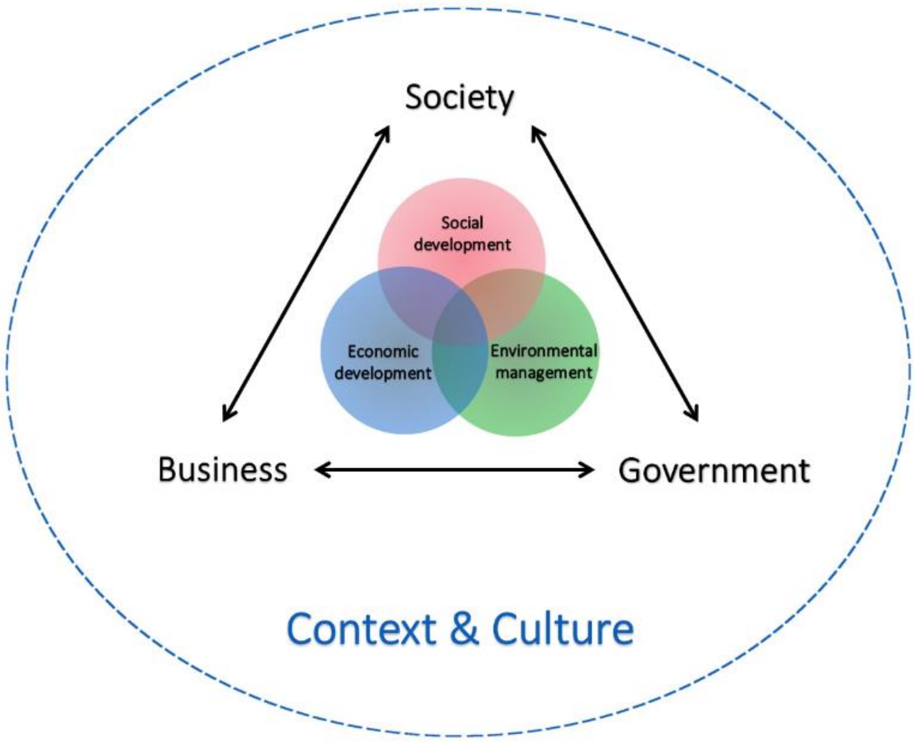

Figure 9. Schematic representation of the SCORE (Sustainable Corporate Responsibility) Board

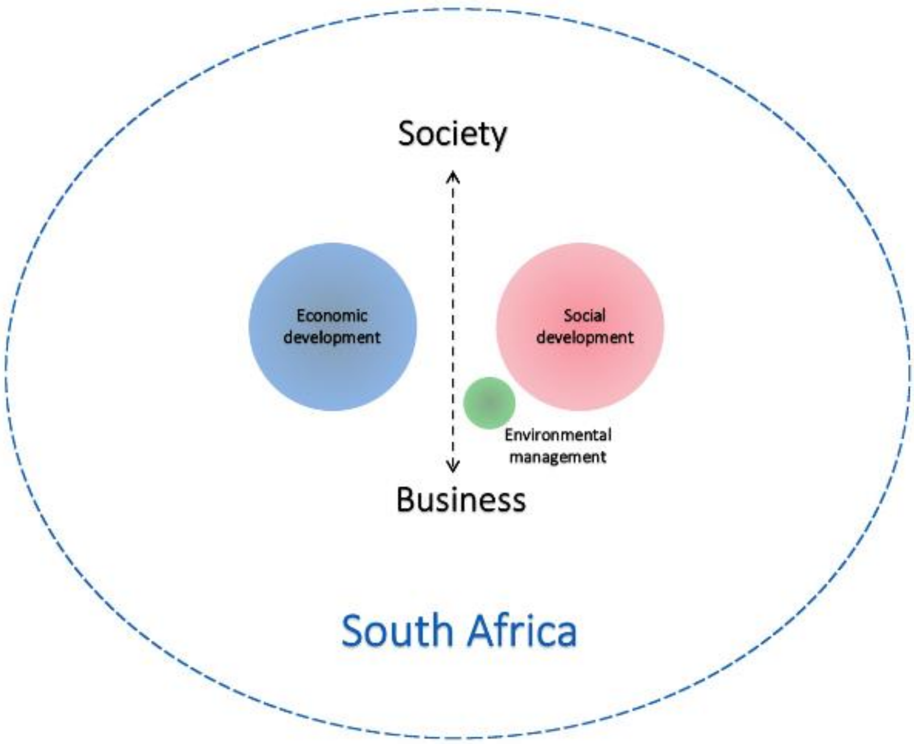

Figure 10. SCORE Board applied to South Africa

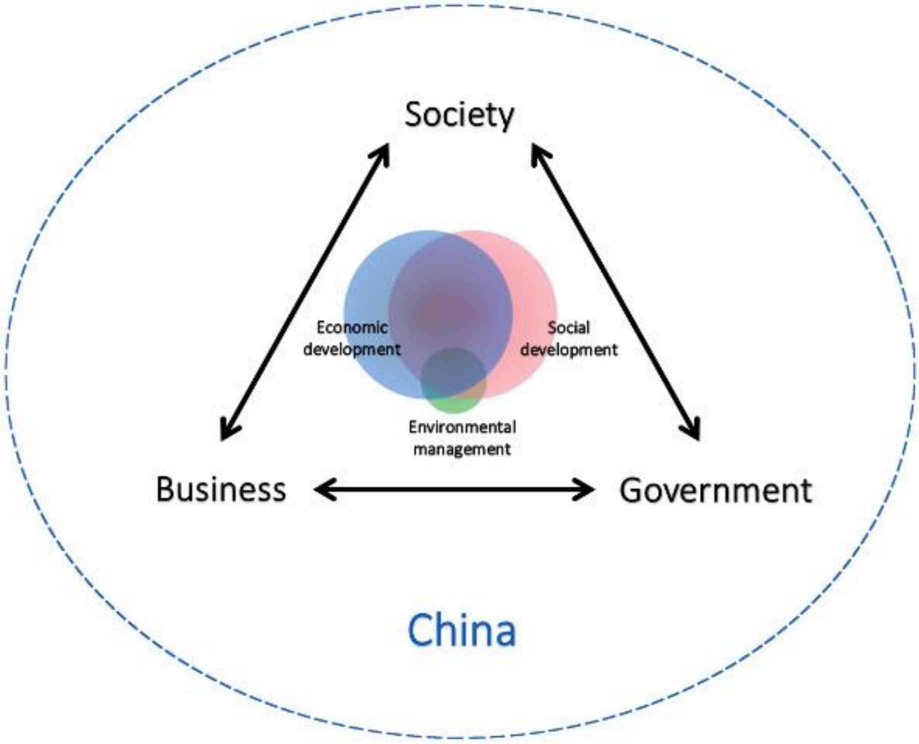

Figure 11. SCORE Board applied to China

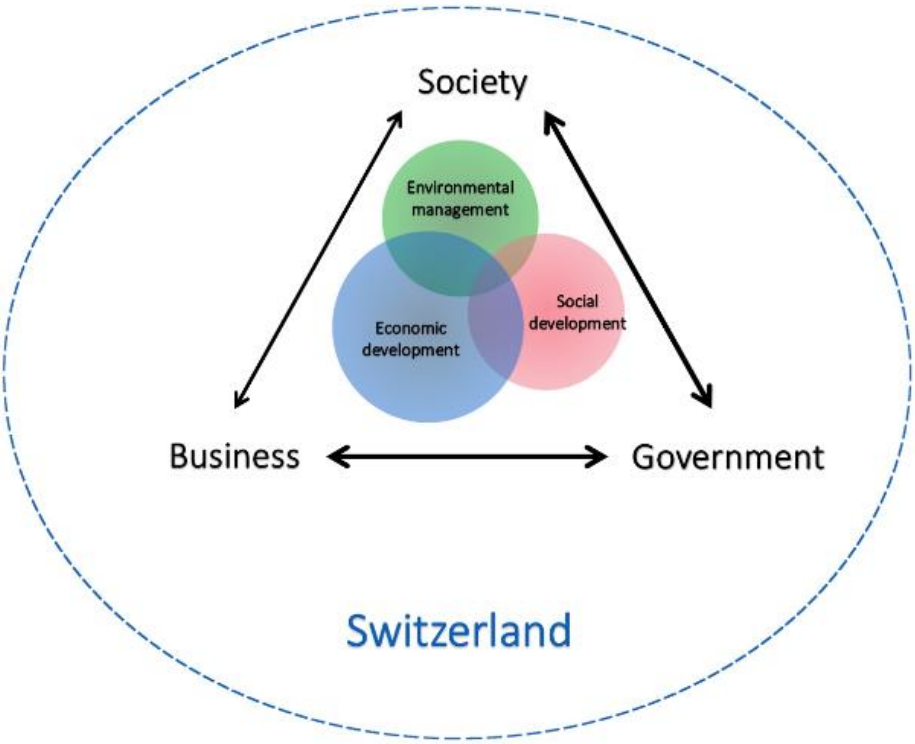

Figure 12. SCORE Board applied to Switzerland

5.4 Limitations

While the findings of the research papers that form the core of this dissertation contribute to understanding and systematizing the role of context and culture in the relationship between business and society, they are not without their limitations. In the following, we briefly delineate the three major limitations.

First, the combination of a non-probabilistic sampling technique (i.e., convenience sampling) with exploratory analytic techniques does not allow for generalization. Accordingly, the findings of our studies cannot be generalized beyond the sample; that is to say, they cannot be generalized to the entire population of advanced business and economics students in South Africa, China, and Switzerland, respectively. However, this is not to underestimate the value of our findings. Given that our respondents are representative of their respective populations, the patterns identified in our research—despite their partiality—provide important insights into the understandings that characterize the students in these three contexts as well as the relationships between these understandings and the context in which they are produced.

Second, our studies are restricted to the CRE of advanced business and economics students. The perspectives of other key stakeholders, especially government representatives, senior managers, and the public, which are crucial to the relationship between business and society, were deliberately neglected. While there are good reasons for this narrow focus (i.e., advanced business and economics students were chosen as study population owing to their role as the future economic elite, which makes their perspectives particularly relevant to our research, and the focus was kept narrow to allow for comparisons between contexts), it does limit the scope of our findings.

Finally, our studies explored the relationship between business and society with a focus on the responsibilities of corporations. Although our results provide important insight not only into the role of business but also into the roles of society and government as well as the interplay between actors of these three domains, the responsibilities of society and government are underrepresented. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between business and society, additional studies on expectations towards society and government would be necessary.

These three limitations suggest that the results presented above, and particularly the SCORE Board, must be understood as conditional, partial, and preliminary. Additional research that, for example, included other stakeholder groups or focused on the responsibilities of other actors, would be likely to yield enlightening new aspects or refine existing ones. The next section provides some ideas for further research to build on and elaborate the findings of this dissertation.

5.5 Future research on the role of context and culture

The research of this dissertation represents the first step towards a context- and culture-sensitive conceptualization of the relationship between business and society. However, there is still a long way to go until we are able to fully account for the role of context and culture in this relationship. Five directions seem particularly promising for future research.

First, the framework presented above is based on empirical investigations of three countries. These countries were chosen on grounds of how they compare and contrast along a set of dimensions including economic and political systems, economic and social development, and cultural values. To test and further elaborate the model, it would be beneficial to include additional countries. Interesting candidates are India as a fast-growing economy with a legalistic approach to CR, the United States as the largest economy in the world and a context with strong liberal traditions, Nigeria as the largest economy on the African continent, and Brazil as an economy fluctuating between rapid growth and recession.

Second, our research focused on the CRE of advanced business and economic students. While, as mentioned above, advanced business and economics students as the future economic elite of a country are of particular interest for analyzing the relationship between business and society, the perspectives of other stakeholders, especially civil society, business leaders, and government, are also of crucial importance. The SCORE Board could be used to analyze the perspectives of different stakeholder groups within a single context as well as to compare the perspectives of stakeholder groups across multiple contexts.

Third, our research has explored the relationship between business and society by looking at general expectations people have towards business. Despite this clear focus, the country-specific investigations revealed central similarities and differences in the roles not only of business but also of society and government as well as in the conceptualization of the links between different actors and responsibilities. To refine these, it would be beneficial to explore the expectations towards other actors, in particular the expectations towards society and government, as well as to refine the observations for business by, for example, developing models for different sectors or different types of business actors (e.g., small and medium sized-enterprises, multinational corporations, state-owned enterprises, nonprofits).

Fourth, cross-cultural investigations could help us to identify areas of opportunity and conflict where the understanding of the relationship between business and society is concerned. This is of particular interest in today's globalized world where multinational corporations operate in many different contexts and even corporations that operate exclusively in one particular context affect corporations and societies in other contexts through up- and downstream supply chains. An interesting case with which to study cross-cultural business–society relations is the increasing involvement of Chinese corporations in African countries.

Finally, observing the development of CRE over time would allow us to understand how roles and responsibilities are adjusted to changing contexts. The economic and social transitions currently taking place across the globe provide an excellent opportunity in this regard.[21] In particular, the radical changes that were engendered by Brexit and the introduction of the 2013 Companies Act in India represent interesting case studies.

[21] See Bergman (2015) for a discussion of the global transitions.

6 Conclusions

If humanity wants to ensure a sustainable future for itself as outlined in the Agenda 2030 (United Nations, 2015), business and society need to bury the hatchet and become partners. In this dissertation, we have explained why common perspectives on the relationship between business and society are not able to provide the necessary cooperation. We have also outlined an alternative conceptualization of the relationship between business and society that can serve as a roadmap to a partnership based on mutual understanding. At the core of this alternative conceptualization is a context- and culture-sensitive approach to the relationship between business and society. The focus of this work therefore lay on the role that context and culture play in the relationship between and the partnership of business and society.

The current divide between business and society is the result of continuing shortsighted and unaccountable behavior. In recent decades, business, society, and government have pursued their own interests and shifted or neglected uncomfortable responsibilities irrespective of the consequences this had for others. In doing so, they have created a situation in which the demands of the more powerful actors are met while the less powerful are not only ignored but also forced to bear the costs. The financial crisis of 2007–08 is probably the most obvious manifestation of these unhealthy dynamics and, not surprisingly, has in many ways been the initiator of the worrisome social developments currently taking place across the globe, including increased protectionism, the spread of anti-capitalism and anti-business sentiments, retrograde social movements, and extensive lobbying.

Common perspectives on the relationship between business and society have contributed little to bridging the widening gap between the two actors but rather fueled or obscured this system. They conceptualize business and society as separate entities with opposing interests and government as a mediator that manages the tensions between the two parties by developing and enforcing legal frameworks and dealing with social issues and corporate externalities. This understanding is in conflict with contemporary political, social, and economic realities because it does not take into account the fact that business and government are intertwined, business operations and impacts transcend the economic sphere, and government is not in a position to regulate global business comprehensively while also remedying corporate externalities and addressing social issues. As a consequence, initiatives inspired by this understanding are not suited to contemporary conditions and problems and tend to aggravate rather than resolve the gap between business and society.

Instead of conceptualizing business and society as separate entities with opposing interests, the approach presented in this dissertation understands them to be inextricable. Business depends on a well-functioning society to prosper while society depends on a sound economic system to flourish.

Accordingly, it is in the long-term self-interest of the actors in each domain to ensure the wellbeing of the others. A thorough understanding of the needs and expectations of the other actors and a creative stance on how one's own resources and capacities can be used to fulfill them form the basis of this self-interest-driven support. More specifically, business needs to understand how it can use its operations, products, and philanthropic engagement to make profits and contribute to social welfare, while society needs to understand how to adjust its expectations, demands, and incentive structures in such a way that they are in accordance with the capabilities and capacities of business to provide resources and long-term benefits. Finally, governments need to manage their mutual expectations by setting legal frameworks, monitoring social and economic developments, and coordinating social and economic interventions. If business, society, and government regard each other as inextricably interdependent, then creating and maintaining a system of mutually beneficial relations and acting as equitable partners would be the logical consequence.

At the heart of the cooperation that arises from this understanding are context and culture. The needs of business and society and the expectations actors in these two domains have towards each other as well as towards government differ across contexts and cultures. Partnerships between business and society on the global and the local levels can only be successful if the initiatives undertaken account for and are embedded in context and culture. Put another way, the corridor of legitimate action defined by common norms and values (Leisinger, 2015a) is broad, and accordingly the roles of and interrelations between business and society across contexts are manifold.

This dissertation contributes to an understanding of the role of context and culture in the relationship between business and society. Specifically, it does so in five ways. First, it has illustrated the foundational role of context and culture in the relationship between business and society. The studies conducted in this context on CRE in South Africa, China, and Switzerland have illustrated how the understandings of the role of and interplay between business and society differ across contexts. Second, it has identified and further developed a conceptual approach that is able to accommodate different understandings of the role of business in society. Its approach to corporate sustainability—defined as a systematic business approach and strategy that takes into consideration the long-term social and environmental impact of all economically motivated behaviors of a firm in the interest of consumers, employees, and owners or shareholders—is able to account for almost all CRE identified in our studies. Third, it has systematized the role of context and culture. For the three contexts of South Africa, China, and Switzerland, it has shown the multiple links between the understandings of the relationship between business and society and different contextual and cultural factors including history, economic system, political system, culture, and social problems. Fourth, it has identified the primary dimensions along which CRE differ across contexts and developed a framework for describing and researching differences along these same dimensions. By comparing CRE in South Africa, China, and Switzerland, it found that the major differences between the contexts are located on three levels, namely, in the types of economic, social, and environmental responsibilities and the emphasis placed on each of the dimensions, the relevant actors and their roles, and the interrelations between different dimensions of responsibilities and actors. The SCORE Board integrates these three levels into one framework. The resulting tool is suitable for mapping, comparing, and contrasting CRE across contexts and for different stakeholders. Finally, it has contributed to the development of research and computational methods and a research design suitable for conducting research in a context- and culture-sensitive manner. In short, this dissertation contributes to an approach to research and theory that is able to account for the contextual and cultural dimensions of the relationship between business and society.

With a partnership between business and society guided by the logic of their inextricable interlinkage and embedded in context and culture, humanity has a good chance of successfully addressing its current and future challenges and building a sustainable world that is equitable to all. We hope that, despite its limitations, this dissertation stimulates such a partnership.

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APPENDIX

PART I: RESEARCH PAPERS

A. An analysis of the conceptual landscape of corporate responsibility in academia
B. An empirical exploration typology, and definition of corporate sustainability
C. The influence of context and culture on corporate responsibility expectations in South Africa
D. Corporate responsibility expectations in China: Advanced business and economics students from Beijing
E. How well do Chinese corporate responsibility expectations map onto an international corporate responsibility scale?
F. The relationship between socioeconomic developments and corporate responsibility expectations in Switzerland

A. An analysis of the conceptual landscape of corporate responsibility in academia

Summary

Most corporate stakeholders agree that Corporate Responsibility (CR) ought to be part of modern business management and practice. Academic work has been seminal to a fruitful and collaborative relationship between business and society. A closer examination of the contemporary academic narratives on CR, however, reveals a plethora of positions orbiting this complex construct, rendering it and its applications opaque, amorphous, and contested. The bewildering array of conceptualizations and applications leads not only to unintended consequences but also to concrete negative outcomes for most stakeholders. In this study, we map the conceptual landscape of CR in academia by systematically analyzing 120 audio and video recordings of university sponsored or endorsed CR-focused workshops, business meetings, interviews, lectures, conference presentations, roundtable events, and debates deposited at the media repository iTunesU and held between 2010 and 2014. The recordings were analyzed using Content Configuration Analysis, a qualitative analysis method related to content and thematic analyses. Our results show how business ethics in academia are often debated in opposition to or independent from business and economic concerns. We highlight seven major shortcomings within this conceptual space, relating to conceptual disunion, Eurocentrism, lack of specificity with regard to domains, stakeholder bias, areas of application, and normativity. Recommendations to overcome some of these shortcomings are presented to develop policy-relevant and change-oriented approaches to CR, which would make academic work on business ethics more applicable to globalized business and business practices, as well as to further develop collaborative partnerships between academia, business, and society.

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Contribution

I was involved in the analysis, conceptualization, and write-up.

1 Introduction

> *The businessmen [who speak of social responsibilities of business] believe that they are defending free enterprise when they declaim that business is not concerned "merely" with profit but also with promoting desirable "social" ends; that business has a "social conscience" and takes seriously its responsibilities for providing employment, eliminating discrimination, avoiding pollution and whatever else may be the catchwords of the contemporary crop of reformers. In fact they are—or would be if they or anyone else took them seriously—preaching pure and unadulterated socialism. Businessmen who talk this way are unwitting puppets of the intellectual forces that have been undermining the basis of free society these past decades (Friedman, 1970).*

> *Business corporations have complex relationships with many individuals and organizations in society. An important part of management's role is to identify a firm's relevant stakeholders and understand the nature of their interests, power, and alliances with one another. Building positive and mutually beneficial relationships across organizational boundaries can help enhance a company's reputation and address critical social and ethical challenges. In a world of fast-paced globalization, shifting public expectations and government policies, growing ecological concerns, and new technologies, managers face the difficult challenge of achieving economic results while simultaneously creating value for all of their diverse stakeholders (Lawrence & Weber, 2008).*

At first glance, the ideological differences between these two quotations may be attributed to the different centuries from which they originate. A closer examination of the contemporary narratives on Corporate Responsibility (CR) at conferences, business meetings, and the management literature reveals that both positions are supported and contested today, as are a plethora of other positions orbiting this complex construct. Despite notable detractors (e.g. Ullmann, 1985; Friedman, 1970; 1982), most corporate stakeholders agree that CR ought to be part of modern business management and practice, even though the concept and its wider application is opaque, amorphous, continually emergent, and contested (e.g. Lockett, Moon, & Visser, 2006; Gond & Moon, 2011). This conceptual ambiguity may lead to unintended consequences, such as confusion and misinterpretation of corporate and stakeholder intentions, and it may diminish CR to long-term legalistic disputes and regulatory governance of corporate behavior.

By exploring the conceptual space of CR in academia, we reveal some of the contemporary obstacles toward its systematic and structurally unambiguous adoption and implementation. The goal of this paper is not to offer yet another definition of CR. Collections and discussions of definitions and conceptualizations can be found in various places (e.g. Gond & Moon, 2011; European Commission COM 2011; Dahlsrud, 2008; van Marrewijk, 2003). Carroll (1999; 2008) also provides a good overview of the development of CR and its relation to other concepts. Instead, this paper empirically examines the content of the CR construct and the foundations associated with CR as presented at international conferences and workshops around the globe. Based on a conceptual mapping of CR, we will extrapolate present understandings and conventions that may lead to adverse outcomes. Instead of concluding with a synthetic definition or normative ideal, we attempt to elucidate some of the contemporary challenges embedded in the various academic discourse strands on CR.

2 Theoretical background

Most theorists, researchers, and practitioners agree that no CR definition exists that satisfies all applications because companies, for example, vary in size, business activities and sector, leadership and management structure, region of operation, etc. A definition would have to be either overly generic to be suitable for all, which leads to vagueness and inapplicability, or specific to some, which leads to a multiplication of contested definitions. However, this conundrum should not alleviate the responsibility of theorists, researchers, and practitioners to engage conceptually, theoretically, and practically with defining a corridor of responsible practices or at least some non-negotiable essentials. We argue that some of the current difficulties in transforming CR theory into business practice is due in part to the interlinking between ideologically charged stakeholder positions coupled with conceptual vagueness. Before developing this position, it is necessary to first define a rough CR framework for ourselves: Despite critiques and alternatives (e.g. Epstein, 1987; Fleming, 1987; Frederick, 1994), Carroll's quadripartite theoretical framework covers most aspects of CR in the business and management literature. His "Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility" includes *economic* responsibilities, "the foundation upon which all others rest," as well as *legal*, *ethical*, and *philanthropic* responsibilities (Carroll, 1991, p.42; Carroll & Buchholtz, 2011): economic responsibilities include "attention to revenues, costs, investments, strategic decision making, and the host of business concepts focused on maximizing the long-term financial performance of the organization" (ibid, p.34); legal responsibilities refer to "ground rules—the laws—under which businesses are expected to operate. Legal responsibilities reflect society's view of 'codified ethics' in the sense that they embody basic notions of fair practices as established by our lawmakers" (ibid). Ethical responsibilities "embody the full scope of norms, standards, values, and expectations that reflect what consumers, employees, shareholders, and the community regard as fair, just, and consistent with respect to or protection of stakeholders' moral rights" (ibid, p.35). Philanthropic responsibilities (also referred to as voluntary or discretionary responsibilities)—a contested dimension in contemporary writing on CR even though it remains part of the academic discourse—are activities that are "guided only by business's desire to engage in social activities that are not mandated, nor required by law, and not generally expected of business in an ethical sense" (ibid, p.36).

An interesting conundrum presents itself in the relations between the four responsibilities. Although most authors argue that they are interrelated, it is difficult to concur if we examine the type of obligations toward these responsibilities: While meeting economic and legal responsibilities are ostensibly "required" for corporations, meeting ethical responsibilities are merely "expected" and philanthropic responsibilities "desired" (ibid, p.37). Accordingly, the relations between the CR components may be more complex than presented in the literature. Indeed, based on our empirical analyses, we will show that this is the first of seven major shortcomings in the conceptualization and application of CR in the corporate context. Another shortcoming, elaborated below, relates to an inadvertent ethnocentricity of the business and management literature. More precisely, the discourse on CR is mistakenly tied to a particular time period within a particular cultural space: Western ideology of the 20th Century. Although many writers on business ethics implicitly criticize neoliberal market economics, they nevertheless reify this model in the way they criticize certain business practices, propose or report on solutions, and understand CR as a corrective to "Corporate America" (e.g. Epstein, 1987; Carroll & Buchholtz, 2011). An antagonistic stance against markets or profits, particularly if it is founded on normative appeals grounded in Western philosophy and theology, falls short of CR's potential to the vision of "weaving universal values into the fabric of global markets and corporate practices" (Annan, 1999), thus helping to fundamentally recast global business practices and societal dynamics of the future.

3 Methods

Data for the analysis of the conceptual space of CR consisted of 120 audio and video recordings of workshops, business meetings, interviews, lectures, conference presentations, roundtable events, and debates on CR, obtained from the media repository iTunesU. All 120 CR-relevant events took place between January 2010 and December 2014. Either sponsored or endorsed by universities, they were held at a wide range of institutions including the Universities of Australia, New York, British Columbia, Beijing, Singapore, Virginia, Pennsylvania, MIT, INSEAD, Yale, Columbia, Oxford, Berkeley, LSE, and others. Data were analyzed using Content Configuration Analysis (CCA; Bergman, 2011; Bergman,

Bergman, & Gravett, 2011). CCA is a qualitative method of analysis loosely related to qualitative content and thematic analyses. It may be applied to various forms of non-numeric data, including textual and visual data, large data sets or a single case study, and at different levels of complexity, depending on the research focus and needs. It was used here to identify the foundations and conceptual mapping of CR to create a taxonomy of CR and to identify shortcomings within contemporary academic discourse.

4 Results

Results 1: The foundations of CR

With reference to the origins of CR, 46 presenters mentioned either individuals (e.g. Plato; Adam Smith), seminal texts (e.g. *The Republic; Wealth of Nations*), or time periods (e.g. 380 BC; 18th Century). Particularly conspicuous about these mentions, however, is the absence of detail and considerable divergences between presenters. Most dedicate less than one minute, many only one sentence, to hint at the historicophilosophical origins of CR, ostensibly due to time constraints and complexity of the issue. Even references to the modern foundations of CR theory are highly abbreviated, mostly limited to one sentence that may not even include the name of an author or text.

Seminal time periods of CR as identified by the presenters span 25 centuries, ranging from Ancient Greece, especially Classical Greece (e.g. Socrates; Plato), to the early or mid-20th Century (e.g. Clayton Antitrust Act of 1914; Dodge vs. Ford Motor Company, 1919; Bowen, 1953). Frequently and equally briefly cited is each century, starting from the 14th. Generally, most presenters identified a specific temporal origin, even though, as a group, they varied considerably. Whereas a good argument may be made about each of these centuries as the beginning of CR—depending on the interests, substantive focus, and academic discipline of the speaker—the ambiguity of its beginning as a whole is a harbinger of how difficult it is, even for experts, to identify the scope, limitations, role, and purpose of CR.

Central personae associated with the beginnings of CR were also mentioned regularly, even though, with some exceptions (e.g. Adam Smith; Karl Marx), few occurred more than thrice in the 120 presentations. These included Socrates, Plato, Sophocles, Cicero, Gaius, Gnaeus Flavius, Immanuel Kant, Joseph Schumpeter, Georg Friedrich Hegel, Alexis de Tocqueville, Max Weber, Michel Foucault, and others, who were presented, usually without much detail or connection to the main point of the presentation, as seminal to CR. The two economists usually denounced as antagonists to CR were Milton Friedman (especially *Capitalism and Freedom*, 1962, and *The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits,* 1970) and Gary Becker, although a closer reading of Friedman, for example, particularly his emphasis on legal and ethical constraints to profit seeking, as well as the societal "rules of the game", puts into question such a simplified interpretation. The identification of seminal personae tended to be related more to the presenters' background, academic discipline, and ideological stance, rather than a substantive component in their line of argumentation.

Surprising also was the infrequency with which academics gave a definition of CR. When provided, they usually emphasized the dichotomy between economic and non-economic aspects, but they also included divergent stakeholder concerns (e.g. investors, governments, customers, employees, communities, and civil society stakeholder), expectations (e.g. meet expectations vs. give back to the community vs. contribute to societal welfare), and levels of commitment (e.g. obligatory vs. voluntary). For example:

> [CR] is the responsibility that a business has beyond making a profit. So, its ethical and voluntary responsibility to its employees, its communities, and the societies in which it operates. (z12, 00:12)

> [CR] captures the idea that the purpose of a firm goes beyond generating profits and includes an obligation to contribute to the overall welfare of the community. (n6, 00:23)

> [CR] is when an organization gives back to the community in which they operate or to a national or international program using money that would have gone to stakeholders. (n34, 09:32)

Also varied were the general reasons that presenters gave to justify CR. The two main reasons were to be ethical for its own sake (often becoming entangled in circularities or tautologies, e.g. the necessity to be ethical in order to be ethical) and wealth creation (i.e. ethical corporate behavior increases profits). Other justifications for CR included the promotion of a better society, solidarity to workers or communities, social reform, public welfare, democracy, freedom, progress, creativity, innovation, Christianity, the greater good (vs. evil), the common good, conscientiousness, meet social needs, serve society, promote social responsibility (here too, circularity was evident), equality, equity, social integration, increase happiness, care, the ethics of care, kindness, risk management, improve or manage reputation, manage stakeholder relationships, governance, corporate citizenship, public relations, product identity, redistribute power, regulate or directly oppose neoliberal market economics, etc.

Generally, it was rarely clear to us what role the brief references to the foundation of CR played in the overall presentation because the substantive arguments of the presentations tended to be vaguely implied at best and unrelated at worst. Moreover, the divergences about seminal time periods or persons, as well as the lack or range of CR definitions implied a considerable flexibility of application of CR, tending toward the opaque and amorphous, and echoing Gond and Moon's reference to CR as a "chameleon concept" (2011).

Results 2: Traditional concepts of CR

After an exploratory, inductive analysis, which identified all relevant CR-related notions, a top-down analysis was conducted to sort and classify these constructs according to the traditional concepts of CR proposed by Carroll (1979), namely economic, ethical, legal, and philanthropic responsibilities. This analytic step revealed that ethical responsibilities (in their own right or as precursors or consequences of economic issues) are by far the most pervasive in the CR narratives. In contrast, philanthropic and legal responsibilities occur rarely, the latter mostly in association with either imposed or voluntary regulations. The following sections elaborate on these findings.

2.1 Ethical responsibilities

The dominant theme in the CR narratives, ethical responsibilities, embraces an extensive range of normative subthemes, such as not to cause harm, empathy, responsiveness, trustworthiness, prudence, morality, and transparency. One of the most striking features of ethical responsibilities in our data concerns the humanism implied by these normatively loaded themes. In this way, ethical responsibilities create the expectation of a 'moral corporation' with norms, values, and potentials in line with the historical period marked by the Enlightenment as well as Western thought of the second half of the past century. Various reasons are provided to justify why corporations should be or become moral, such as, but not limited to, profitability, the failure of the public sector and government in taking care of their citizenry, unethical actions on behalf of corporations that have caused distrust in communities, the importance of creating and maintaining a positive social gaze, but also because they are understood to be the most powerful actors in society. These moral duties, in combination with the important role corporations play in society, create the expectation that their role is to achieve "a relentless pursuit of excellence in social outreach" (n19, 11:55), even connecting morality to Christian theology at times:

> Prudence is the most important virtue for a business person. (z39, 00:25)
>
> If you want to achieve kind of the most social utility, you do somehow need that morality in corporations. (n33, 1:27)
>
> Moreover, in addition to that, we know … that we're called to go beyond the letter of the law, we are called to serve our customers with excellence, we are called to be good stewards of God's creation. That's true whether or not you believe in global warming, it's not even about that, it's about, as being a Christian are we going to be good stewards of what God has given us. (z64, 03:10)

An interesting side point here is that, while profit seeking in itself is nearly absent in the mainstream CR discourse as a central responsibility of corporations, it is present as a ***consequence*** of ethical business behavior, even though most presenters fail to provide robust evidence. Instead, such links are mostly backed by moral appeals, logical argument, or reference to an illustrative case study of economic success (if the corporation behaved ethically) or failure (if it did not).

2.2 Economic responsibilities

The academic discourse on CR relating to economic responsibilities is dominated by debates on its business case, i.e. whether and to what extent it may or may not be economically viable—obviously, most presenters argued that it is. Accordingly, presenters criticize that CR is not part of a core business strategy or a corporation's DNA, or they speak of difficulties in providing convincing empirical evidence that CR contributes to revenue growth, threats or opportunities in relation to productivity, reputation, and market share, risk management, and variations in commitment to CR of consumers, shareholders, and owners. Here some examples:

> Investors seeking to capitalize on the forces driving sustainability strategies must be able to distinguish companies that are pursuing carefully structured and successfully implemented sustainability strategies that deliver actual material business advantages from those with less well-designed or well-executed strategies. (z43, 05:17)

> Some companies are really good at talking about it [CR] but not as good at doing, and other companies are having trouble communicating the good things they do do. (z47, 02:11)

> Right now companies have a basic understanding of how sustainability works but for a variety of reasons sustainability managers tend to get outshouted by members of other departments such as marketing, HR, finance, investor relations, etc. who claim to have more important things to do for the organization. (z38, 01:40)

In an attempt to address some of these challenges, the economic responsibilities are connected to various strategies that could or should be implemented in the business sector. These strategies can be divided into two approaches: one relating to current, concrete actions and practices, and the other to ideal and often hypothetical practices. The first approach includes examples or case studies of business strategies that have been or are currently practiced by a corporation. These include, for example, connecting business drivers with sustainability strategies, influencing supply chain practices, implementing life-cycle product management, building sustainable products and brands, and institutionalizing CR matrices and their assessment. Here some examples:

> What we are seeing over the past three years is much more of a being on the offense on issues and that requires looking up your supply chain to see where you can have impact on issues around labor, around supply chain, around climate change, you know, as you influence your supply chain. (z5, 03:07)

> Europe has really led the way in producer responsibility, so the automakers have to be responsible for the end of life of vehicles. (z5, 10:51)

> For companies eager to highlight the business drivers behind the sustainability strategy, where to start? The authors suggest beginning with reporting matrix related to revenue growth and if your company tracks top line revenue impacts from sustainability designated products and services, consider creating a sustainability driven growth matrix. (z43, 04:33)

The second type goes beyond concrete practices to propagate a range of optimal CR strategies that corporations ought to adapt. These include, for example, sustainability marketing, glocality, creativity, value cycles, or collaborative supply-chain practices, which embed CR throughout the operations and approaches that are "integrated into kind of the DNA of the organizations" (n12, 02:18). Here some examples:

> Sustainability has two parts: sustain and ability. So it's the ability to sustain. You think this from the point of view of ecology, is our ability to sustain our life supporting systems, which are air, water, and land. But from the point of view of business, it is how you sustain your business for the long-term. (n42, 01:10)

> We have a perfect model of sustainable manufacturing that produces huge volumes of very sophisticated products, everything from high-tech surround mix to super computers. It's constantly innovating, constantly improving the performance of those products and does so in a way that never jeopardizes the sustainability and the livability of the planet. And that model is the earth biosphere. … It's not just the fact that this system has been operating for over 3.5 billion years, what's really important to remember is that the biosphere is the only model of a sustainable production system we have. We have no other place we can look too, to learn how to manufacture and operate sustainably on the planet. And that is the premise of my new book, [book title], that we can decipher the principles that account for the sustainability in the biosphere, we can translate them for business and we can embed them into the corporate DNA. And when you do that, sustainability will disappear as a management concern because you're doing business with the earth incorporated. (z35, 05:32)

The difference between the two approaches goes some way to illustrate the considerable gap between theory and practice evident in the data. In the first, CR deals mostly with local, limited, and concrete actions and practices that focus on past lessons, current states and projects, and future-oriented strategies. These are often presented by business consultants or managers themselves, and they are frequently used as concrete examples of 'good business practices'. They focus primarily on the business strategies, which have been adopted to integrate CR goals, and the (mostly financial) failures or success associated with these. The second approach tends toward ideal practices that are usually theoretical and insufficiently specific about the domain, type of corporation, or type of area of CR in which they could be usefully applied. The fourth shortcoming in the conceptualization and application of CR within this academic framework is thus the considerable theoretical and analytic gap between philosophy-based theoretical presentations and pragmatic and applicable strategies that may be useful for business practices.

The extent of the gap between academic theorizing and business practice is further illustrated by a near absence in the discourse on CR on economic responsibilities, which includes concerns about customer satisfaction, market share, profits, shareholder value, creating value through the provision of goods and services to people, etc. Only a minority of presenters mention this corporate type of responsibility, i.e. economic responsibilities. It could be surmised that the more mainstream CR discourse either ignores or opposes economic responsibilities, the more CR discourse could be misunderstood as hostile to core activities of corporations and, accordingly, be relegated to something that is indeed not part of a company's DNA.

2.3 Legal responsibilities

Although underrepresented, mentions of legal responsibilities refer to laws and regulations relating to labor and child labor, minimum wages, environmental laws, human rights, and property rights. Legal responsibilities are usually framed in relation to specific stakeholders. When legal responsibilities are connected to CR in our data, they tend to be concerned with stakeholder participation, stakeholder negotiation, and behavior that either refer to or transcend national laws and regulations, as the following excerpts illustrate:

> And these are regulated not by governments alone, not by corporations alone, but by if you like mixed methods, combining NGOs, trade unions, appropriate professionals, companies and governments. And this seems to be a model, which could be extended to a wider range of activities of corporations. …. And that's [UN Global Compact] again, if you like, a perfect example of a citizenship sort of model, multiple players working around agreed principles and trying, if you like, to manage them in the business. …. And one area where I think more work needs to be done is to develop codes which if you like guide companies in what appropriate lobbying is and I think transparency about lobbying has got to be central to that …. If the

> companies agreed among themselves with government and with civil society representatives what seems an appropriate code, then I think we get a lot more progress. And then the companies would be less perhaps reluctant to make transparent this information, because they know that it would be—assuming it was—acceptable. (n6, 09:14, 23:58, 25:43; 26:45)

> In that sense, CSR is a good way to hopefully limit the need for regulations … (z64, 05:31)

2.4 Philanthropic responsibilities

The data provide instances of traditional conceptualizations of philanthropy as a form of CR, even though the variety of projects falling under this rubric is large, ranging from a single monetary donation to a health center to programs of large foundations, for example. However, a far more interesting strand of discourse relates to how academics critique philanthropy as a corporate responsibility:

> The other area where there were differences and there have been is the style of philanthropy. Previously it was much more armchair giving, passive, you just give a grant, just a check, and you don't ask any questions after that. (z40, 04:05)

> Chevron operated with like a cash hand-out system with the community leaders … What they were doing that was just appeasing the community leaders. That's what Chevron was doing. (z31, 05:31)

In instances such as these, it is evident that philanthropy as a CR construct is in a state of evolution, moving away from actions that are understood as merely voluntary or discretionary, and, instead, engaging more systematically with societal expectations. Here, general societal problems are often used as the starting point to conceptualize CR, while philanthropy is positioned as an end-point or as a contribution toward problem solving. The obligation of corporations to intervene or 'do the right thing' serves as the gateway between them. Tighter linkages between philanthropy, ostensibly voluntary by nature, and strong societal expectations create complex and ambiguous CR constructs, a point to which we will return later. A case study of Chevron operating in the Niger Delta cited in the data serves as a good example here. In this case, Chevron is portrayed as having a duty to engage in philanthropy, i.e. beyond its corporate focus, based on the extent of the societal problems faced by communities in which they operate on the one hand, and the fact that they are involved in the extraction industry and therefore 'owe' the local community assistance, on the other. Here some examples:

> If you go to our communities you don't see government presence. No roads. The schools are not there. Even the existing schools are dilapidated. The roofs are leaking. There are no furniture for the students or people to sit, no dormitory facilities. And so the people now say, 'But in our community we have oil, with which the economy of Nigeria is being run. Why must

we suffer?' Government in these parts was not doing what it was supposed to do. That is, taking care of the welfare of the citizenry. Government was not doing it. The first thing that the communities tell you is that the problem is as a result of government neglect. That this is why they are quarreling with the oil companies. So, in their mind-set, the oil companies become representatives of the government. They represent the only formal structure they can hold accountable for their plights. (z31, 00:39)

Our style of philanthropy is much more strategic now, in the sense that we want to make a new impact, we want to make a new difference, we are always looking for areas which are underserved or where there are gaps or where a new way of doing things will help. So our new tack line is radical philanthropy. … There is a real need to shift from what they call incremental giving to transformational giving, in other words, you can either try to solve existing problems through existing channels or you can look at problems in a new way and try to come up with transformational strategies. And by in large philanthropists in Asia are doing the former not the latter. …. [Question: What kind of checklist would you offer to wealthy individuals that are ready to give and operate in the Asian region?] I think focus is very important. Problems are so complex, if you don't focus you cannot get deep in terms of helping to solve the problem and that focus must also resonate with your personal interest and the family's interest. (z40, 04:28, 04:56, 08:05)

We also found instances of instrumentalization of philanthropy as it becomes incorporated into business practices. Here, voluntary or discretionary actions are superseded by attempts to connect these activities to economic gain, brand reputation, and public recognition, as the following example shows:

Most corporates who give money in any sort of sophisticated way are demanding that organizations report-back the gift. They're looking for a win-win situation. (n9, 07:12)

Interestingly, philanthropic responsibilities are recast in these few cases as non-voluntary and system-relevant, and it is in these few cases where the core of CR as an integral part of society is revealed. Disentangling the implied meaning of philanthropy in these cases leads to an understanding thereof in relation to its structural interdependence between corporate behavior and social and ecological concerns, as most social and societal concerns cannot be addressed independently of corporations, due at least in part to a lack of good governance or limited capacities and power of some nation states, the interconnectedness between business and politics, or the tremendous power and resources of corporations have today. Philanthropy here is a misnomer because CR in this form is presented as a system-relevant, non-voluntary necessity that reifies both the successful corporation and the functioning society.

Results 3: The three pillars of sustainable development

The above analysis of the responsibilities of large corporations accounted for nearly two-thirds of the data. A further analysis sorted and classified the remaining CR-relevant excerpts to identify the thematic dimensions that are not accounted for by the four classical CR dimensions. During this inductive analysis, we found that the remaining CR constructs were mostly associated with the three pillars traditionally attributed to sustainability (e.g. Adams, 2006), i.e. economic, social, and environmental. Accordingly, we used the three pillars of sustainability as a subsequent coding frame, which accounted for the remainder of the CR-relevant data. In other words, the CR constructs, which did not form part the four responsibility types (economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities) were all attributable to the sustainability concept.

3.1 Social domain

Examples of CR constructs found in the social domain tend to be dominated by vague and unspecified statements about broad and general social outcomes concerning poverty reduction, health concerns, and sustainable societies. Corporations are expected to achieve these outcomes by collaborating with national governments, NGOs, NPOs, networks, and communities. The following are examples of such statements:

> Sustainable organizations [are] organizations that voluntarily integrate environmental and social issues into their business models and strategy. They do so in a way that synergistically co-generates economic as well as social and environmental value. (z41, 07:15)
>
> In that sense, CSR is a good way … to hopefully really address some of these concerns like poverty and environmental issues by being on the ground where those issues exist. (z64, 05:31)
>
> Social entrepreneurship actually creates seeds of innovation in our society, which are then taken up by governments and public policy or by the traditional social sector or by business corporations if there are for profit models involved and then can be scaled-up and mainstreamed by the other forces of society. (n41, 03:44)

The breadth of these statements leads to another shortcoming we identified in the academic discourse. By associating vague and overambitious CR ideals to corporate behavior, corporations are inadvertently made responsible for an extensive range of social (as well as economic and environmental) problems. Due to the perceived power of corporations as evident in the CR discourse, they are placed at the center of society and charged with the responsibility of engaging with and solving its problems. This may have the unintended consequence of negating the role other stakeholders, such as governments, NGOs, and civil society, could or should play in addressing problems in collaboration with corporations, thus inadvertently and wrongly removing important stakeholders from participating in the negotiation of societal and ecological responsibilities (Campbell, 2012; Graving, McGee, Smoyer-Tomic, & Aubynn, 2009; Sherer & Palazzo, 2011). Last but not least, this practice may give rise to expectations that are beyond what corporations can or want to do. Disappointed expectations often result in ill-feelings and lack of trust. Even though rare, there are some examples in our data, which reveals this potential distancing. Here is one of them:

> Because we care so much about social issues, corporations are not a vehicle that can ever effectively address them. It's not what they're set up for. Not only that, it also works against their missions, which has nothing to do with benefiting social society. (n33, 02:42)

3.2 Environmental domain

The environmental domain is the most codified and institutionalized of the three sustainable development pillars. Illustrative examples mentioned earlier include green- and eco-friendly production initiatives and regulations. This institutionalization could be due in part to the prominence of environmental issues in Western-driven, public discourse, especially in relation to growing concerns about global warming, the depletion of natural resources, and an increase of competition from South and East Asia. Here examples illustrating these points:

> With more and more in the news about earth's natural resources being consumed at a rapid rate, corporations are being challenged to provide a long-term plan for their contributions to the environment and sustainability efforts. (n34, 06:17)

> Put another way, Du Pont's revenue from products based on non-depleteable resources increased 100% over the six year period. (z43, 02:51)

> The Philadelphia Eagles, an NFL team from the US, has revolutionized their home stadium to be 100% sustainable. Also, saving themselves hundreds of thousands of Dollars in energy costs. (z12, 02:16)

> We're tackling sustainability at our facilities. The goal is to be zero waste carbon neutral by 2020. We've reduced waste by 59% relative to 2007 and carbon emission by 19%. (n45, 10:33)

Even though some statements in this category tend toward a vagueness and generality found in the social domain (for example, general mentions of "environmental performance" (z57, 01:54), "environmental concerns" (n40, 07:41), or "address some of these concerns like … environmental issues" (z64, 05:38)), many are clearly formulated, outcome-based environmental strategies. These include, for example, energy efficiency or carbon footprint strategies, or investing in specific environmental projects such as tree planting.

Overall, the three pillars of sustainability are frequently interconnected in the CR discourse as they are in the seminal literature on sustainability, and coverage of economic, social, and environmental issues tends to be interrelated such that environmental and social issues are presented as either precursors or consequences of economic development. This reflects well in Elkington's notion of the triple bottom line (3BL, 3Ps, or TBL, i.e. people, planet, profit), coined in 1994 (e.g. 1997). Within this framework, ecological and social performance is included as part of the financial performance of a corporation. Presenters in our data suggest this as an ideal situation and CR approach. Integrating environmental and social issues into business operations, for example, are linked to economic benefits such as avoiding risks, improving performance, increasing access to resources, and opening-up economic opportunities. Here some examples:

> So, this is one attempt to try to change corporate mindset over the long run so that companies don't just think about profit as the single bottom line but they think about the well-being of the planet and the well-being of the people as well in trying to create that profit. (z38, 02:01)

> This is not the Windows model, this is not Bill Gates making money of selling Windows and then setting out the Bill Gates Foundation to donate money. These are business models that have integrated those social issues that see them as opportunities instead of problems and therefore start solving these issues profitably. (z41, 08:00)

> If you take some of the top US corporations over a 20 years horizons, you will see that … what I would call sustainable organizations in fact have significantly outperformed both in terms of market performance as well as operational performance … [those organizations which are] perhaps the more traditional organizations, organizations that do not particularly integrate these social and environmental issues into the way they do business, into their daily operations if you like, or into their strategy more broadly. (z41, 06:14)

> What I'm really looking at is how we can convert these social and environmental responsibilities into economic opportunity and benefit. (z12, 00:25)

> How do we improve that collaboration and that synergy between corporations and capital market so that we are able to allocate capital to those organizations that are sustainable, that create economic but also create positive environmental as well as social value. (z50, 01:55)

Our analysis of the interconnections between the three sustainability pillars furthermore illustrates how they tend to be far less normative than the traditional CR constructs associated with Carroll (1979) and others. In this sense, contemporary academic discourse seems to be more focused on connecting CR constructs to sustainability by suggesting different ***ways*** of doing business globally and in the long run, rather than assigning responsibilities ***in addition*** to how corporations conduct their business. Also important here is that economic responsibilities are explicitly interrelated with social and ecological concerns, instead of either an addendum to ethical behavior or even in opposition to it. Of the three sustainability pillars, this is most evident in the economic and environmental domain, while the social domain, with somewhat vague and encompassing statements, remains the least well-developed, yet possibly the most important for businesses and societies in the future.

Finally, it is worth noting that these interrelations are not limited to the triple bottom line. As illustrated at multiple points in this paper, the complex and evolving interactions between different CR constructs are not static. Many instances in our data illustrate this complex relationship between CR constructs and the continued expectations built into interactions in different cultural, social or political contexts. Here an example:

> There are new models of business that have emerged, business set in society, embedded in society, we find businesses who are about more than just the money, they care about philanthropy, they care about CR, they care about the environment, in fact they see themselves as creating value for stakeholders, customers, suppliers, employees, communities, people with the money. (z45, 03:25)

Accordingly, it appears that the emerging CR discourse, based on sustainability, seems less normative and more attuned to business and societal concerns, more flexible, and more suitable for context- and culture-sensitive environments.

3.3 Economic domain

Few examples in the data connect to the notion of profit generation such as “[t]he purpose of business is to make money” (n34, 02:17) and “[w]here he said the social responsibility of business is to make profits” (z10, 00:52). However, in the economic domain, the most frequently occurring statements link profit generation to additional sustainability outcomes in more complex and interrelated ways. These instances make a strong case for how corporations can benefit from CR activities by, for example, increasing their competitive advantage, improving their brand reputation, gaining publicity, saving money, avoiding risks, increasing productivity and/or revenue, increasing investment, etc. This can best be described as corporations ‘doing well by doing good’ and includes statements such as:

> Publicity generated by Goodwill can be considered free advertising and get greater profits from that contribution. So, this can be a win-win for the corporation; doing good while generating more business to boost profits for the shareholders. (n34, 10:30)

> … because in fact it's not about CR, being a responsible business costing you, it's about how it can save you money, and about how it can make you money, if done well. (z13, 00:41)

> There is a lot of data out there that increasingly supports the proposition that companies with these strong social and environmental policies, for example, have lower turn-over, higher productivity, better brand reputation, customer loyalty, etc. (n45, 02:31)

> More and more companies are translating their sustainability efforts into revenue and productivity, but for the most part investors don't understand or even know about the shareholder value that sustainability initiatives can create. (z43, 00:35)

Results 4: Eurocentrism

A frequently occurring theme in the data concerns the many contextual differences, divergent norms and expectations, and conflicting regulations that multinational corporations are confronted with, and how these impact on the priorities and practices of corporations within the CR framework. In this sense, the rules of the 'CR game' seem continuously in flux, and multinational corporations face many challenges in their attempts to balance contrasting and shifting values and expectations. Here are some examples:

> Certainly you mentioned the factory conditions in Bangladesh and other areas of the world. And that's a real challenge as you go through the extended supply chain because often, you know, the contracts that are let in good faith by big brands are then subcontracted and subcontracted beyond that and it's a very difficult thing to control. So, I think right now one of the major challenges facing sustainability and supply chain executives is what to do in an area like Bangladesh, do you pull out or do you try and work toward helping them achieve something. (z5, 04:36)

> The client [a corporation] … said, 'it was not my [the consultant's] responsibility to tell him how to run his business. My job was to help him comply with these crazy environmental laws at the lowest cost and with the least disruption as possible'. (z35, 03:53)

> Then there is a range of choices that corporations have here. They could actually just simply insist and regulate very closely supplier companies but if the supplier companies found to fail, you simply exit. That actually isn't always a very constructive policy. You might then take a more gradual approach whereby you work with the supply company and try to improve their standards with them. Of course, there is another solution completely, which is you simply exit from Bangladesh because it might be easier, for example, for a UK company to supply from Turkey; the shorter supply chain, they may be able to manage it better, they might be able to

> rely on auditors better. Or even, come back to Nottingham, where there was a thriving textile industry until about 20 years ago. (n6, 20:11)

> It was a very difficult decision for [Google]. Should they go into China? Should they accept the local norms, which included censorship by the government or should they just say, 'no, we stay out, we take an ethical position'? … Google decided they would accept the local conditions, they would go into China and that once people got used to search and to access to knowledge the genie would be out of the bottle and there would be no turning back … and Google finally said, 'well, we gonna lift those restrictions, we no longer gonna censor our websites, our search function in China and if the government doesn't like it, we'll pull out'. And as far as I can tell, for now, the government hasn't kicked them out. So, the genie is out of the bottle. It was a gamble that paid off. But it was dealing with that tension that we always feel in CSR between the global and the local. (z10, 36:48)

Although examples such as these are useful to illustrate challenges associated with the contrasting ideals and expectations of multinational contexts, they are characterized by a strong emphasis on Western values, especially sociocultural individualism. Thus, challenges and solutions are often framed in a Eurocentric approach in that conflicting ideals need to be 'managed better', or complied with 'at the lowest costs and with the least disruption as possible', or by 'taking an ethical position' and 'simply exiting' countries, which do not share the same cultural or ethical values. The implicit expectation is that in order to make global business possible, countries, corporations, communities, and social groups must adhere to a Eurocentric prescription of ethical standards and that this should form the basis from which the 'tension in CR between the global and the local' should be resolved. As a result of these Eurocentric tendencies, many non-Western standards are labelled 'unethical' and corporations from non-Western countries are expected to adapt to these standards if they want to operate in a Western setting (often and dangerously understood as a universal standard and global setting), while the reverse discourse—how Western corporations should operate in non-Western countries—is largely absent in academic discourse on CR. This is especially evident along the normative, ethical lines within which academic discourse tends to prescribe the values and ideals corporations should strive for, as the following examples illustrate:

> In fact, the market economy needs to be disciplined in order to entail ecological concerns or sustainable or achieve sustainable development goals, and it should be corrected by political or cultural devices, political here equals public regulations or cultural equals business ethics, CSR, and so on. (n17, 01:36)

> Their vision… Be dissatisfied with your work until every handicapped and unfortunate person in your community has the opportunity to develop to fullest usefulness and enjoy maximum of abundant living. (n19, 07:05)
>
> That he [someone] feels too small and weak to change the world. I always say, 'It doesn't matter if you'll be able to do those things, if they will have any consequences on the world. It is important that you do your part. It is important that you do everything that must be done in your beliefs. Because everything you do will reflect on future generations and will reflect on your children.' (n10, 43:57)

While the intention of many of these statements are both laudable and potentially universal in global business environments, culture-sensitivity toward non-Western values and practices seems largely underrepresented, due in part to the overemphasis of business ethics based on Western thought.

5 Mapping the taxonomy of CR constructs: A summary

An exploratory, inductive analysis identifying the constructs of CR as presented in the 120 recordings made between 2010 and 2014 revealed a substantive range of stakeholder positions and corporate responsibilities, as well as complex interrelations between these. This heterogeneity of actors and purposes, when associated with ethics, was constrained by a relatively limited number of moral and moralizing degrees of freedom, which did not seem to connect closely to the economic responsibilities of large, multinational corporations. This focus seemed far less evident in the CR discourse based on sustainability. In order to summarize and discuss the implications of this taxonomy, we present seven shortcomings in academic discourse based on our data and their analyses:

Shortcoming 1: Conceptual integration and interrelation of CR constructs and their consequences

All four classical CR components were present, i.e. economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities. Given the prevalence of ethical expectations, which underpin many of the societal expectations connected to the excerpts on philanthropy, it would be easy to merge ethical and philanthropic responsibilities, something that Carroll proposed for a short time (Schwartz & Carroll, 2003) before reverting back to the quadripartite model. However, in addition to economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities, many authors added additional components, including social, environmental, political, and cultural responsibilities. Numerous instances in the data allude to complex interrelations between these and other constructs. Conceptual ambiguity may lead to unintended but potentially negative outcomes for most stakeholders or obstacles for constructive cooperations among stakeholders with different worldviews, cultural value-sets, or experiences. Perhaps the most problematic of these relates to the convoluted overlapping of societal expectations and moral philosophy in the CR discourse. Furthermore, conceptual and normative vagueness may, on the one hand, create unrealistic expectations of moral obligation of corporations by members of academia and representatives of civil society, and, on the other, be considered irrelevant to a sustainable business model by corporate management. One of the unintended consequences of such an approach is that corporations could be labelled 'good' by meeting these expectations through donations or charitable giving without having to change or adapt their business practices. 'Doing good by being good' becomes divorced from ways of doing business sustainably and is connected instead to individual CR initiatives for the purpose of reputation management and the annual reporting exercise.

Shortcoming 2: Eurocentrism

Although academics often engage with the contextual differences and the resulting divergent expectations in multinational and multicultural settings, the major shortcoming in relation to the CR discourse stems from the fact that it is rooted in business ethics associated with the Enlightenment, Western philosophy, Christian theology, and, due in part to this, it is based largely on late 20th Century Western cultural values. This Eurocentrism precludes concrete and applicable, context-specific recommendations, while rehearsing, if not imposing, norms and values, which have their roots in the specificities of Western ideologies. This has two important consequences. First, beyond suggesting to take 'a moral stand', a Eurocentric approach may not adequately respect cultural diversity and thus correspond inadequately with the interests and needs of modern and globalized businesses and societies. By implicitly insinuating a moral superiority of Western norms and values, such an approach may fail to provide viable, principled, sustainable, and pragmatic solutions to context-specific issues. It also is likely to impede legitimate corporate adaptation processes to changing and varying international business settings. Second, by not engaging more intimately with business practices and with the economic responsibilities of corporations, at home and abroad, the current CR discourse runs the risk of remaining academic instead of making CR a valuable, effective tool to support the global, societal reform process necessary for sustainable development everywhere.

Shortcoming 3: Varying foundations and definitions of CR

The opaque and shifting foundations and definitions of CR and their associated standards are due in part to the varying interests or substantive focus of the academic disciplines of the various presenters, as well as the many, often competing, organizations that aim at restricting or collaborating with corporations. Since this state of affairs is not only oriented toward business practices, it has limited business application, especially to those corporations operating in multinational or multicultural contexts. If present at all, foundations of CR are only mentioned in passing and remain mostly unconnected to the contemporary, substantive issues of CR. The underrepresentation or lack of CR definitions mimics the same trend. Although we are not propagating a definitive set of foundations or definitions, the fixing of CR foundations and definitions in relation to academic interests instead of business and societies' needs contributes to an increasing gap between theory vs. practice, usefulness relating to an academic contribution vs. usefulness to a CR-relevant business practice. The competition between academics and organizations, themselves in the business of taming unethical business practices, has produced a CR industry and, analogously, an outsourcing and professionalization of CR divisions within corporations. All this activity may even detract from CR-relevant debates and negotiations, away from core business activities and, at worst, may become a reason in itself for unethical business practice.

Shortcoming 4: Theory vs. application of CR

While the theoretical contributions tended to be overly vague about the domain, type of corporation, or type and area of application of CR, the case-specific presentations tended to be overly descriptive, making it difficult to discern the focus and limitations of CR in a particular case study. More generally, there exists to date a considerable gap between theory-based academic presentations and management-based case studies. This is most evident when considering the unrealistic ethical responsibilities often assigned to corporations or the vague and overambitious social expectations corporations are to fulfil. The inability of some of the academic discourse to translate ideas and theoretical contributions into concrete, applicable solutions relevant to a business model in specific contexts prevent the sub-systems of academia on the one hand, and the business world on the other, from collaborating more meaningfully in identifying and developing context-, culture-, and practice-relevant approaches to CR.

Shortcoming 5: Domains and stakeholders

Unsurprisingly, the substantive operative CR domains treated in the presentations varied widely. They included business and management practices, science and technology, work and labor, legal issues, discrimination, pollution, health and safety, and corruption. Equally varied were the stakeholder groups covered in the presentations, such as environmental groups, civic society, investors, CEOs, managers, contractors, customers, consumers, professional organizations, up- and downstream supply chains, various government agencies, unions, and social groups (e.g. women, ethnic or religious minorities, the disabled). The variety of stakeholders and domains is understandable because the link between business and society in its complexity is omnipresent. However, CR appears to be overused in some cases because, in a meaningful societal division of responsibilities, not all social problems can or should be addressed by altering business practices, something that is not explicit in the totality of the presentations analyzed for this paper.

Shortcoming 6: Overrepresentivity and underrepresentivity

It is not unreasonable to argue that Carrol's four responsibilities of CR (economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic) and the three pillars of sustainability (economic, social, and environmental) currently form the main conceptual landscape of CR. However, when academic discourse on CR is sorted accordingly, we find that certain dimensions are vastly overrepresented, while others remain underdeveloped. In its most general sense, most of the CR discourse is focused on ethics and connects all other CR-relevant components to it, either as a cause or consequence thereof, while neglecting the predominant raison d´être of business enterprises, i.e. the economic domain. This tendency reflects the academic focus and traditional ways to conceive of CR and, thus, prevents engaging with CR issues in a more specific, sensitive, and exclusive manner.

Shortcoming 7: Normativity

The shortcomings mentioned above create normative debates dominated implicitly by philosophy and religion, which adds to an antagonistic position toward business, as the latter may have developed antagonistic positions toward normative debates based on religion and philosophy in relation to business practices. While we are not underestimating the important role of business ethics, or the responsibilities of business toward societal concerns—we would even go as far as to posit that CR is a necessary condition for sustainable business and societal prosperity—we are not convinced by the ways normative ethics are imposed on these debates. The confusion between important universal rules, Western norms, and a naïve version of cultural relativism are particularly worrying in this context.

6 Conclusions

Corporations are inextricably linked with societies and its members, and corporations, whether or not their representatives admit this, are always engaged in activities that go far beyond economic responsibilities toward shareholders. A careful reading and transposing into today's global economic context of Milton Friedman's work, a favorite bogeyman of the CR literature, would reveal this. Market failures, stakeholder versus shareholder interests, management versus corporate leadership, laws and regulations, as well as efficiency versus equity will always dictate business and societal agendas. To deal with these, all large business corporations are complex and their functions are highly diversified. Tasks are divided into economic, legal, technical, developmental, ethical, and other responsibilities. This division of labor, seemingly efficient, creates a number of internal as well as external conflicts, sometimes leading to loss of credibility, reputation, law suits, profits, and market share. Embedding CR concerns in this situation exclusively in moral philosophy, is highly problematic because the ethical discourse is intricately linked with normativity, subjectivity, owner discretion, and a plethora of differing ethical schools. Worse yet, it creates a misguided dichotomy between economic and ethical concerns, leaving many empiricists to study whether or not a particular ethical behavior is profitable or not—in itself not a very good basis, neither for business nor for society. What would happen if no compelling evidence can be found to make a business case for ethical behavior? Surely not that business ought to behave unethically in the interest of economic profit!

Academics have been at the center of describing and understanding relations between business and society. They have contributed significantly to improvements thereof, and they are continuing to play a central role as facilitators and referees between business and societal interests. The CR-relevant catalogue of responsibilities produced in this light, especially in relation to the wide range of domains, scopes, and components, is indeed bewildering. Considering the range of issues and ostensible duties, it is not surprising that most CR business is relegated to legal departments or compliance officers. Considering their corporate-specific brief and limited insight and power, complying with legalistic frameworks neither does justice to the thrust of CR, nor may it suffice to avert business-related CR problems, now or in the future. In other words, it could be argued that the more varied, opaque, amorphous, and insistent CR-related demands are, and the more varied, numerous, and powerful the stakeholders become, the more likely it is that CR will be embedded in a culture of antagonism and legalism. By no means is this an argument against CR. Instead, we found that the main thrust in the CR presentations were either couched in antagonism, if the presenter represented stakeholders other than the corporation, or defensive and self-aggrandizing, if the presenter represented a corporation. At times, we could not shake the impression that the routinely staged cacophony of demands from many stakeholders in the direction of many other stakeholders was merely an organized spectacle. Worse yet, some of the spectacles at conferences and business meetings seemed to keep CR from actually taking place, while much of corporate business, including CR-related business, was taking place elsewhere.

The considerable variation of the temporal origin of CR and personae associated with the beginnings of CR creates additional ambiguity of the scope, limitations, role, and purpose of CR. These brief, vague, or unrelated mentions have the unintended consequence of tying CR to particular sociohistorical and cultural norms without making explicit what they may mean in practice. Neither would be erring in the opposite direction, i.e. attempting an all-encompassing definition of the foundation would not be satisfactory or desirable. A more constructive approach could be to make the purpose of defining specific foundations clear to illustrate how these references are important or useful to contemporary CR and how they connect to global or specific business practices. Instead of mentioning Milton Friedman in passing, for example, it may be more useful to illustrate how contemporary CR norms have evolved in relation to the idea that ‘the business of business is business’ or, instead of using biblical references as a foundation for CR, to make clear how Christianity may have influenced the development of a particular strand of expectations in CR that may or may not be of similar importance in a global context. Only when the purpose of using specific CR foundations is made explicit can it be usefully and substantively connected to current and future CR practices.

In sum, the seven shortcomings identified in this text indicate that business ethics as an academic discipline is relatively autonomous and distinct to business practices, and that CR-relevant concerns associated with economic, social, and environmental sustainability based on stakeholder concerns may be a more fruitful approach. Collaborative partnerships between academia, business, and society could help overcome some of these shortcomings and make CR more applicable to business and business practices, as would a closer collaboration (in some industries already institutionalized) between corporations and societal representatives and NGOs/NPOs in order to prevent rules and regulations that may not be in the interest of either business or society. Six possible ways to create more integrity and ownership of CR are (1) an expansive presentation of CR-relevant empirical evidence, including a better database of case studies, (2) clearly mapped stakeholder positions in relation to CR expectations, (3) explicit linkages between CR responsibilities and the domain of application, (4) an explicit recognition of the interrelationship between key CR components, (5) the careful separation and arbitration between ethical non-negotiables and culture-relevant corporate behavior—in context, and (6) the explicit and unapologetic integration of economic responsibilities as part of every corporation's brief.

Finally, business practitioners encounter and need to resolve many challenges resulting from divergent contextual characteristics. In this regard, members of academia within the field of business ethics ought to use their skills and expertise to address complexity and contextuality, and, in addition to their specific interests, ought to be willing to contribute to practical strategies and approaches in the interest of sustainable economic and social development. In order to make recommendations more applicable and in line with the needs and interests of businesses, regions, communities, social groups, and societies, we need to develop a pluralistic, cultural-sensitive approach to CR, while concurrently resisting a naïve cultural relativism. Such recommendations ought to consider not only different contexts and cultures but also explore how they can enhance the potential of CR within future-oriented, global settings. For academics, the easiest way out would be to propose either a universal set of business ethics or to reduce complexity by referring to cultural and contextual relativism, although neither would be satisfactory for business and globally linked societies. An academic contribution to a healthy business and a prosperous society would include an application of our theoretical, empirical, and critical tool kit in the service of both.

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B. An empirical exploration, typology, and definition of corporate sustainability

Summary

The relationship between business and society is evolving. On the one hand, social, environmental, and long-term economic issues subsumed under the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are inspiring intergovernmental organizations, governments, NGOs, NPOs, foundations, and civic society to legislate and regulate corporate behavior toward a greater concern for the wellbeing of groups, regions, or entire societies. On the other, a growing trend toward protectionism, nationalism, and populism may be the consequence or expression of a dissatisfaction with the perceived dissociation of the private sector from society. As a form of self-regulation, corporate responsibility deals with the complex responsibilities businesses have toward society. However, it tends to be hampered by an emphasis on theology- and philosophy-based business ethics, which are difficult to integrate into day-to-day business operations or to translate between national or corporate cultures. In this article, we argue that corporate sustainability could be a more useful concept to help improve on how government, the private sector, and academia understand the links between business and society, and how to translate the interdependence between business and society from one culture to another. For this purpose, we empirically analyzed the relevant academic literature on corporate sustainability, using Content Configuration Analysis. Our analyses revealed three conceptual types and nine subtypes of corporate sustainability. Based on their assessment, we suggest conceptual preferences and a definition of corporate sustainability, which fulfil criteria that may render the concept more useful to global political and socioeconomic negotiations among stakeholder groups for the long-term benefit of business and society.

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Contribution

I was involved in the conceptualization.

1 Introduction

The UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs), and its associated 169 targets were unanimously adopted by all 193 member states at the 70th session of the United Nations General Assembly on 25 September 2015 (United Nations, not specified). This seminal event represents a paradigm shift, ushering in a new era of global development. If the achievements of the United Nation's Millennium Developmental Goals (UN MDGs), its predecessor, are anything to go by, the next decades will bring enormous socioeconomic development for hundreds of millions of people around the world. During their 15-year tenure, the UN MDGs contributed to lifting more than one billion people out of extreme poverty (Goal 1), the global mortality rate of children under the age of five declined by more than half (Goal 4), tens of millions of lives were saved through the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment interventions of tuberculosis, malaria, measles, and HIV/Aids (Goals 4 & 6), and more than two billion people worldwide gained access to improved drinking water and sanitation (Goal 7) (United Nations, 1991).

The most important difference between the UN MDGs and the UN SDGs relates to inclusiveness in at least three ways: first, instead of dividing the world into donor and recipient nations, the UN SDGs implicate all nations in achieving the 17 UN SDGs; second, the UN SDGs require commitment from governments, the private sector, and civil society; and, third, achieving these goals is based on close national and international partnerships (Goal 17).

The astonishing backing displayed by the national governments toward the UN SDGs is timely: water and food insecurities loom large as rapid and uneven population growth, scarcity of resources, environmental degradation, and geopolitical power shifts are unbalancing fragile ecological and social systems. Political uncertainty, instability, and conflict create and exacerbate migrant flows and humanitarian crises. Sectorial changes and inequalities, and the thus resulting underemployment generate ambiguities about what our world will look like a decade from now, and what we can do to combat or sometimes even prosper from massive transitions.

Such global developments defy the financial and management capacities of any national or regional civic institution as governments strain under public pressure, insufficient revenue, and high national debt. However, global transitions may also present immense opportunities for—and much needed partnerships between—individuals, social groups, regions, governments, and the private sector. Indeed, without the private sector, it will be impossible to reach any of these goals, and failing to advance toward the goals endangers the prosperity of both business and society.

To date, reflections on the responsibilities of business toward society from a self-regulatory perspective tend to fall under the rubric of business ethics, specifically addressed by corporate responsibility (e.g., Carrol, 1991; 1979; 2016) and its derivatives, including corporate responsiveness (e.g., Ackermann 1973; 1976), corporate performance (e.g., Preston, 1978; Wood, 1991), corporate governance (e.g., Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2015), and corporate citizenship (e.g., Matten & Crane, 2005; Matten, Crane, & Chapple, 2003). As we will argue in this article, corporate responsibility in its traditional form is no longer suitable for the purpose of understanding the interdependent relationship between business and society, mainly because its academic pendant places philosophy-derived business ethics in the center of the debate, because it is difficult to integrate into a universalistic debate on ethics the necessary cultural and contextual nuances, because it struggles with being relevant and applicable to a competitive and global business climate, and because an ethics-based debate about corporate responsibility is often detached from essential economic, social, and environmental parameters (e.g., Bergman, 2015; Bergman, Leisinger, Bergman, & Berger, 2015). However, to promote and fund sustainable development based on an agenda driven by society and the private sector—to the benefit of business and society—the largest commitment and change has to either come from, or be imposed on, societies and their business sectors. As we will show in this article, even a strong commitment to corporate responsibility in the classical sense may not contribute adequately to sustainability in a globalized world.

To make this point, let us first juxtapose two clearly identifiable positions in the debate on corporate sustainability: one, which emphasizes that "corporations are the fundamental cell of modern economic life, [shaping] the physical and social world in which we live" (Griffiths, 2005, pp.3-4); another, which emphasizes that corporations gain their wealth and power by drawing from the resources of the planet and its people (Benn, Dunphy, & Griffiths, 2015). Indeed, "strong markets and strong societies go hand in hand" (United Nations Global Compact, 2015, p.29), and the UN SDGs are inviting us to rethink the multiple roles and expectations of corporations and societies in ways that explore their potential contributions to business and society. This is because sustainable development as connotatively defined by the UN SDGs is based on the interdependence between economic, social, and environmental dimensions, shadowing the key notions behind the triple bottom line (TBL) (Elkington, 1994; Sachs, 2016) and the three overlapping spheres model of sustainability. Sustainability as an increasingly important driving force in politics and society will put pressure on regional, national, and international business to adopt a more sustainable business model, which is likely to differ for different business sectors, regions, political systems, and corporate cultures. It could be argued that the recent rise of isolationism, nationalism, and populism on the political left and right may be due in part to a dissociation of social concerns and economic interests. The recent political and socioeconomic dynamics that can be observed in Britain and the US—but also in France, Germany, and the Netherlands, among others—illustrate this point. Thus, the pressing questions in this regard are: How does corporate responsibility, as an established concept, connect to sustainability in general and corporate sustainability in particular?, and How can corporate sustainability be captured in ways that will encourage change-oriented and policy-relevant business practices in the interest of both business and society?

In this article, we develop a typology of corporate sustainability to be used in research and business, to identify, systematize, and formalize corporate sustainability strategies.

2 Methods

To develop a typology of corporate sustainability, we selected as our data topical overview chapters and review articles on corporate sustainability from different sub-disciplines, including business management, economics, sustainability, environmental management, business ethics, leadership, and organizational behavior. Based on theoretical sampling, we identified and analyzed articles iteratively to explore variations in conceptualizations associated with corporate sustainability. As a first step, we identified a subset of 10 relevant review articles and conducted an exploratory, inductive analysis to identify all the concepts associated with corporate sustainability mentioned in them. Next, we sorted and classified these concepts thematically and developed a typology of corporate sustainability based on our data. We then used this typology as an analytic framework to conduct a quasi-deductive analysis on consequent articles. New, additional concepts identified during this part of the analysis were used to refine the typology until it accounted for all mentions of corporate sustainability. Data collection ended with saturation, i.e., when newly sampled texts no longer contributed to the refinement of our results. Details of the studies on corporate sustainability on which this analysis is based can be found in Benn, Dunphy, and Griffiths (2015), United Nations Global Compact (2015), Christofi, Christofi, and Sisayne (2012), Daily and Walker (2000), Dyllick and Hockerts (2002), Funk (2003), Hahn, Figge, Pinske, and Preuss (2010), Hellweg and Canals (2014), Lo and Sheu (2007), O' Rouke (2014), Salzmann, Ionescu-Somers, and Steger (2005), Siew (2015), Sukhedev (2012) and Van Marrewijk (2003), and Visser (2007). The conceptual space in these articles and chapters was explored by Content Configuration Analysis (CCA; Bergman, 2011; Bergman, Bergman, & Gravett, 2011). CCA is a systematic method of analysis for all non-numeric data, including documents and, in this case, academic articles and book chapters. It combines aspects of qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis. For this paper, CCA was used to identify the concepts and ideas associated with corporate sustainability, and to synthesize these into a typology of corporate sustainability. Our typology is based on types of corporate sustainability gleaned from the literature, where authors cover overlapping conceptualizations of corporate sustainability. Of course, authors are not altogether consistent within and between texts. In different parts of a single text, authors may adopt different stances toward corporate sustainability as they take position toward various debates in the literature. However, there also exist many overlaps within and between texts. This is especially true for theoretical, review, and overview chapters, which form the bulk of the literature analyzed for this paper. In other words, it is not unusual to identify dozens of varying positions on corporate sustainability within one single text. For this reason, our synthesis of different ideas on corporate sustainability crosscuts many texts, and it is therefore not possible to clearly attribute a specific position to single authors or texts. Instead, we aimed at creating a typology of corporate sustainability based on different sets of ideas and positions within and between texts. Thus, our analyses were guided by our intention to disassemble the positions in the overall debate on corporate sustainability into its constituent parts, to reflect on their nature and potential meaning, and to reassemble them into a typology that may be a useful guide toward theory, empirical research, and application.

3 Typology of Corporate Sustainability

Based on our analyses of the academic literature on the conceptualization of corporate sustainability, we identified three types and nine subtypes:

1—Corporate sustainability in relation to corporate responsibility (CS&CR)

1a Corporate sustainability is similar to corporate responsibility (cs ≈ cr)

1b Corporate sustainability is different from corporate responsibility (cs /= cr)

1c Corporate responsibility leads to corporate sustainability (cr → cs)

2—Mono-focal corporate sustainability (CS1)

2a Corporate sustainability as moral leadership (cs/moral)

2b Corporate sustainability as a strategy (cs/strategic)

3—Inclusive approaches to corporate sustainability (CSn)

3a Corporate sustainability as a holistic concept (cs∞)

3b Corporate sustainability as part of the triple bottom line (csTBL)

3c Corporate sustainability as a financial incentive (cs$)

3d Corporate sustainability as an indexing exercise (cs/index)

3.1 Connecting Corporate Sustainability with Corporate Responsibility (CS&CR)

The first major type connects corporate sustainability to the established literature on corporate responsibility (CR&CS) by positing different kinds of relationships, such as an overlap or contrast between corporate sustainability and corporate responsibility. As the predominant conceptualization of corporate sustainability in the literature, CS&CR tends to emphasize either the similarities to, or differences with, the reference construct, corporate responsibility.

The subtype that focuses on similarities to corporate responsibility (cs ≈ cr) usually lists shared characteristics between the constructs and, based on this overlap, they are considered similar, even synonyms. Here are two examples:

> In general, corporate sustainability and CSR refer to company activities—voluntary by definition—demonstrating the inclusion of social and environmental concerns in business operations and in interactions with stakeholders. This is the broad—some would say “vague” definition of corporate sustainability and CSR […] In the past, sustainability related to the environment only and CSR referred to social aspects, such as human rights. Nowadays many consider CS and CSR as synonyms. (Van Marrewijk, 2003, p.102)

> In summary, corporate sustainability (CS) and corporate social responsibility (CSR) are referred to as voluntary business activities, including social and environmental concerns, so as to interact with stakeholders. (Lo & Sheu, 2007, pp.346-347)

A second subtype of CS&CR conceptualizes corporate sustainability in opposition to corporate responsibility (cs /= cr). Distinctions are usually drawn based on differential historical roots or interest groups they purport to serve. From this perspective, corporate responsibility is associated with its normative tradition, for instance by framing workers’ rights as an ethical issue. Its proponents tend to draw on philosophy and theology, frequently viewing shareholder interests and value creation as antagonistic to corporate responsibility. Within this subtype, corporate sustainability is based on environmental management, and its roots are traced to the environment-focused sustainable development literature. As a relatively new concept, and in contrast to corporate responsibility, corporate sustainability from this perspective does not typically engage with business ethics in detail. Instead, this variant connects to notions associated with TBL, particularly its economic and environmental components. While the association between corporate sustainability and TBL will be covered in detail later, important for this subtype is that corporate sustainability is defined in opposition to corporate responsibility, the former based on especially environmental principles, and the latter on socio-ethical principles. Here two examples:

> Just as scholars and practitioners concerned with sustainable development have focused mainly on environmental management, those concerned with corporate social responsibility (CSR) have focused on social and ethical issues such as human rights, working conditions and philanthropy. (Sharma & Ruud, 2003, pp.205-206)

> While corporate responsibility refers to social aspects such as human rights, sustainability is usually related to the environment. (Lo & Sheu, 2007, p.346)

The third subtype of CS&CR describes an evolving, at times causal relationship, where corporate responsibility imbricates corporate sustainability (cr → cs). One recurring notion in the literature is that corporations need to undergo a transition from currently unsustainable toward increasingly sustainable practices by implementing corporate responsibility strategies. According to this variant, integrating corporate responsibility elements into corporate strategies and actions will ostensibly lead to corporate sustainability. Here an example from the literature:

> Some would argue of the "vagueness" between CS and CSR, but recently there are more and more studies trying to clear the lines between these two concepts. Wempe and Kaptein (2002) indicate that CS is the ultimate goal, with CSR as an intermediate stage where companies try to balance the Triple Bottom Line (profit, people and planet). (Lo & Sheu, 2007, p.347)

The three subtypes of CS&CR, emphasizing similarity, dissimilarity, and progressive development between corporate responsibility and corporate sustainability illustrate the burgeoning debate among business ethicists, particularly their attempt to position corporate sustainability in relation to the dominant parent construct, corporate responsibility. Whether emphasis is placed on similarities, differences, or their developmental evolution, they largely occupy the same conceptual space. Although formulating corporate sustainability in relation to the entrenched corporate responsibility literature has the advantage of providing access to a wide and well-established range of concepts and theories, this strategy may also be considered a weakness in this type of theorizing, particularly for corporate sustainability. Corporate responsibility is often criticized for being vague and contested, inapplicable, or unfriendly to the actual business environment (e.g., Lockett, Moon, & Visser, 2006). This inheritance, as an unintended consequence of a union of both concepts, may render corporate sustainability as unwieldy and contested as its parent concept.

3.2 Mono-focal Corporate Sustainability (CS1)

The second type of conceptualization of corporate sustainability emphasizes one specific dimension. In contrast to CS&CR, the predominant focus of CS1 is on either ethics or management issues. Corporate sustainability as an ethical approach (cs/moral) advances the idea that corporate sustainability is chiefly about the morality of corporate behavior. It is argued here that, instead of focusing on profits, for example, a corporation's most important concern ought to be on values. The literature highlights this type of corporate sustainability in two ways: The first concerns the ethical values and principles of individual decision makers because, it is argued, corporate culture and its sustainability are dependent on, and a reflection of, the values of its leadership. Corporate sustainability is thus defined as the embodied ethical values of a corporation and its leadership. According to this type, corporate sustainability is made up of the range of implicit and explicit ethical principles, which are or should be applied in corporate contexts. Usually rooted in the ethics of morality, many discourses in CS1 tend to relate to Eurocentric theological and philosophical principles. Here are some examples:

> It is evident in many of the definitions and concepts that they contain an implicit appeal to values and/or self-transcendent behavior, i.e., that we should be contributing to something or helping someone beyond our selfish concerns, or acting in the interests of the common good. (Visser, 2007, p.4)

> For any company seeking to be sustainable, it begins with operating with integrity […] Responsible businesses enact the same values and principles wherever they have a presence, and know that good practices in one area do not offset harm in another. (United Nations Global Compact, 2015, pp.8, 11)

> [Corporate sustainability] is aspirational in nature, a meta-ideal, one inherently infused with societal values of justice, integrity, reverence, respect, community and mutual prosperity. (Wheeler, Colbert, & Freeman, 2003, p.18)

A second mono-focal subtype of CS1 is oriented toward business strategy (cs/strategy), conceptualizing corporate sustainability in relation to management issues. Here, corporate sustainability entails the manner in which a corporation's sustainability priorities are defined, implemented, and communicated. On the one hand, corporate sustainability in this sense relates to the capabilities and capacities of managers to implement the strategies that would make a corporation more sustainable. Connected to this is the role that leadership plays in envisioning sustainability strategies at an executive level. On the other, this type of corporate sustainability is concerned with the way corporate responsibility is extended globally as senior managers and executives influence supply chains and industry at large. Here are some examples to illustrate this type of corporate sustainability:

> Epstein and Roy (2001, p.589) presented a framework that should assist managers in operationalizing corporate sustainability strategies based on economic rationale. (Salzmann, Ionescu-Somers, & Steger, 2005, p.31)

> Effecting change begins with the company's leadership. A public commitment by the chief executive, with support from the Board of Directors […] Leaders also recognize they cannot shift systems alone, working with others to shatter barriers and increase the odds of success. Sustainability requires a long-term vision and commitment to ongoing efforts, both to ensure

> progress and keep pace with a rapidly changing world. (United Nations Global Compact, 2015, p.9)
>
> Business "statesmanship" is essential for raising the urgency of sustainability issues at the global and local levels. Advocacy by business leaders can influence peers, consumers and, importantly, governments on the need to tackle societal crises and how responsible business practices can help. In the realms of carbon pricing and transparent public procurement, for example, the collective voice of business can encourage policy makers to move rapidly in the right direction. (United Nations Global Compact, 2015, p.31)

While attempts to define corporate sustainability in this mono-focal, moral manner are more distinct in purpose and outcome, compared to the CS&CR approach, their appropriateness in a multicultural, business-oriented, and globalized corporate world is questionable. Ethical principles, for example, can vary widely between and within countries, cultures, and contexts, and the generic prescription of a fairly narrow set of morals may be considered inappropriate or inapplicable across national cultures or business contexts. A similar argument can be made about managerial strategies. Business strategies are essential for achieving sustainability, but success is dependent on their appropriateness for the particular business sectors and context. Approaches which successfully implement corporate responsibilities or develop a sustainable corporation in one setting may not be applicable or appropriate in others. However, CS1 often implicitly assumes that this is indeed possible, even necessary. Far from proposing cultural relativity, we argue for a more subtle and differentiated approach, where applicability and appropriateness of most corporate actions within cultures and contexts need to be assessed in situ; some are never acceptable, some are always permissible, and some—probably the largest proportion—need to be negotiated. Although CS1 approaches to corporate sustainability draw our attention to the potential contribution a moral focus could make to the benefit of business and society, the extent to which CS1 can be generalized across cultures and contexts, or be successfully transferred into globalized business practice, remains unclear.

3.3 Inclusive approaches to Corporate Sustainability (CSn)

So far, we have covered conceptualizations on corporate sustainability in relation to classical corporate responsibility and in relation to a single focus. The third type of corporate sustainability conceptualizes the construct inclusively by integrating multiple, interdependent dimensions (CSn). Here, corporate sustainability is understood as an inclusive concept. Four subgroups of CSn can be identified in the literature. Most ambiguously, corporate sustainability is used as a holistic umbrella term, a catch-all phrase for concepts and theories relating to corporate responsibility, stakeholder theory, environmental management, sustainability, corporate citizenship, and organizational theory (cs∞). Here some examples:

> Aside from creating profit, sustainable company leaders capture other qualitative, non-financial criterion as references for their performance, such as quality of management, corporate governance structures, reputation, human capital management, stakeholder relations, environmental protection and corporate social responsibility. (Lo & Sheu, 2007, p.345)

> Szekely and Knirsch (2005) define sustainability for corporations as 'sustaining and expanding economic growth, shareholder value, prestige, corporate reputation, customer relationships, and the quality of products and services. It also means adopting and pursuing ethical business practices, creating sustainable jobs, building value for all corporation's stakeholders and attending to the needs of the underserved'. (Siew, 2015, p.181)

> Corporate sustainability is a contested concept, which to a greater or lesser extent (depending on the author) draws from and overlaps with notions of sustainable development, corporate citizenship, corporate (social) responsibility, environmental management, business ethics and stakeholder management. (Visser, 2007, p.1)

Although inclusive, the scope and ambiguity of the subtype cs∞ makes it one of the least applicable variants of corporate sustainability.

A more focused way to define corporate sustainability within CSn is in reference to its association with the sustainability concept (csTBL), especially in relation to Elkington's TBL and a tripartite, overlapping spheres model of sustainability. This approach recognizes the interdependence between economic capital in relation to social and environmental resources. Given the concurrent emergence of TBL and corporate sustainability, some authors argue that they represent the same idea. Conceptualized in this manner, corporate sustainability concerns the development of a new model of corporate behavior, which sustains not only itself, but also society and the environment. Here are some examples:

> The connection between the bottom line and a company's environmental, social and governance practices is becoming clear. The well-being of workers, communities and the planet is inextricably tied to the health of the business. (United Nations Global Compact, 2015, p.7)

> [Corporate sustainability is] the field of thinking and practice by means of which companies and other business organisations work to extend the life expectancy of: ecosystems (and the natural resources they provide); societies (and the cultures and communities that underpin

commercial activity); and economies (that provide the governance, financial and other market context for corporate competition and survival). (Elkington, 2007, p.133)

The mainstream of the literature on corporate sustainability follows the win-win paradigm, according to which economic, environmental and social sustainability aspects can be achieved simultaneously; indeed, corporate sustainability has often been defined by the intersection of these three areas. (Hahn, Figge, Pinske, & Preuss, 2010, p.217)

The fully sustainable organization, that is, an organization that is itself sustainable because its stakeholders, including its employees, will continue to support it. But it is also a sustaining organisation because it is sustaining the wider society and the ecological environment. (Benn, Dunphy, & Griffiths, 2015, p.13)

Historically, corporate sustainability has evolved as a result of economic growth, environmental regulation-stewardship, and a push for social justice and equity. (Christofi, Christof, & Sisaye, 2012, p.158)

In its original form, TBL was used as the entry-point to develop the business case for social and environmental inclusion, the so-called win-win strategy, whereby new and more sustainable ways of doing business were said to benefit corporations, its customers, and the environment (Elkington, 1994; 1997; 2004). The understanding behind the subtype csTBL is to invite corporations to reconsider their role within society and to realign their practices in a way that would bring balance and simultaneous benefits to all.

A related variant to csTBL assumes a positive relationship between the value of a firm and its social and environmental investment (cs$). Despite a considerable investment in resources, attempts to demonstrate a clear causal link between a corporation's financial performance and its environmental and social investment have not been demonstrated at a level that would convince many corporate decision makers (Abbott & Monson, 1979; Griffin & Mahon, 1997). As the business case was taken up by academia, environmental organizations, NGOs, consultancies, and the corporate sector, the 'win-win paradigm' has become one of the most widely adopted approaches to the justification of corporate sustainability (Griffin & Mahon, 1997; Epstein & Roy, 2003; Holliday, Schmidheiny, & Watts, 2002; Moore, 2001; Reed, 2001; Repetto & Austin, 2000). Integrating social and environmental dimensions into business practices to enhance the long-term shareholder value of a corporation is the main driver behind the subtype cs$. Here are some examples:

Ultimately, according to the win-win paradigm, corporate sustainability boils down to a business approach that creates long-term shareholder value by embracing opportunities and managing risk from three dimensions: economic, environmental and social dimensions. (Lo & Sheu, 2007, p.346)

Even though more recently some scholars have followed a more contingent approach to the business case for sustainability (Barnett, 2007; Rowley & Berman, 2000), the ultimate focus is still on the identification of situations and strategies in which environmentally friendly and/or socially responsible corporate behaviour pays off financially. (Aragón-Correa & Rubio-López, 2007; Hahn, Figge, Pikse, & Preuss, 2010, p.218)

The DJSI covers the top 10 percent of the biggest 2500 companies in the Dow Jones Global Index that pursue economic, social, and environmental reporting (Dow Jones Sustainability Index, 2009). Dow Jones defines corporate sustainability as 'a business approach that creates long-term shareholder value by embracing opportunities and managing risks deriving from economic, environmental and social developments'. According to them, leading sustainability companies display high levels of management competence in addressing global and industry challenges dealing with economic, environmental, and social opportunities and risks that can be quantified and screened for investing purposes. (Christofi, Christofi, & Sisaye, 2012, pp.162-163)

The most prominent critique leveled against the overly optimistic win-win paradigm is based on the limitations it imposes on corporate sustainability strategies because of the tendency to focus on achieving simultaneous benefits as corporations attempt to balance economic, social, and environmental objectives. Hahn and colleagues (Hahn, Figge, Pinkes, & Preuss, 2010, p.219) argue that, by only seeking out corporate responsibilities that lead to explicit gains, corporate sustainability "turns a blind eye to conflicts and trade-offs between different aspects of corporate contributions to sustainable development" by ignoring the complexity and diversity of many of these issues in favor of a win-win solution. According to them, trade-off situations are the norm rather than the exception but, given the pervasiveness of the win-win paradigm, trade-offs tend to be overlooked, thereby limiting the potential and types of contributions corporations could make.

The final subtype of CSn connects a range of sustainability guidelines and principles to the measurement of effectiveness of corporate strategies. Even though it is not possible to cover in detail this rapidly expanding branch in the literature, sustainability reporting and the indicators involved in this process is another noteworthy way of defining corporate sustainability (cs/index). This understanding of corporate sustainability is embedded in indexing initiatives, such as the FTSE4Good Index Series, the Dow Jones Sustainability Index, the Global Reporting Initiative and its precursor, the MSCI Global Sustainability Indexes, or the Shanghai Stock Exchange Indices for Sustainable

Development Industries and Social Responsibility. The largest of these initiatives is the United Nations Global Compact. Since its launch in 2000, the Global Compact has expanded to include approximately 12,000 signatories in more than 170 countries at the time of writing (UN Global Compact, not specified). According to the Global Compact, corporate sustainability comprises five defining features: principled business, strengthening society, leadership commitment, reporting progress, and local action. Based on these features, the Global Compact's corporate sustainability initiative developed ten principles, which include human rights and labor issues, the environment, and governance (United Nations Global Compact, 2015). Using these as a foundation, this initiative and cs/index more generally provide a framework to assist corporations to implement corporate sustainability regardless of their size, complexity, or location. Here are some examples:

> Corporate sustainability is imperative for business today—essential to long-term corporate success and for ensuring that markets deliver value across society. To be sustainable, companies must do five things: Foremost, they must operate responsibly in alignment with universal principles and take actions that support the society around them. Then, to push sustainability deep into the corporate DNA, companies must commit at the highest level, report annually on their efforts, and engage locally where they have a presence. (United Nations Global Compact, 2015, p.7)

> Increasingly, companies are understanding that they must collaborate and coinvest in solutions to shared, systemic challenges. In a major shift over the past 15 years, stakeholder groups—including business, investors, governments, UN, civil society and labour—are increasingly joining forces on common objectives covering all societal goals from poverty alleviation and peace, to disaster relief, environmental protection and equality. For business, this also means a willingness to move beyond first-mover approaches and embrace partnerships and collective action efforts that pool resources, share risks and aim to find solutions faster. (United Nations Global Compact, 2015, p.31)

Even though cs/index initiatives, such as the Global Compact, go beyond TBL to also include ethical and legal dimensions, the vast majority of these approaches are based at least in part on TBL (although some stock market indices are mainly based on environmental indicators, while others evaluate corporations largely on social investment). As a relatively new and emerging approach to corporate sustainability, the adequate measurement of constructs, standardization of indicators, assessment tools, and benchmarking still need work, possibly the largest drawback of this subtype of corporate sustainability. Furthermore, measurement, indexing, and reporting may diverge from larger sustainability issues, reduce complex constructs or systems to a narrow number of unrepresentative indicators, and indexing exercises may not take into consideration important national, cultural, and contextual variations of firms and industries. Although many corporations participate in indexing exercises, actively measuring and reporting on their activities, a generally acceptable delimitation of corporate sustainability based on a set of indices remains elusive.

Nevertheless, our preference for a conceptualization of corporate sustainability that attaches explicitly to sustainability with its three interdependent spheres—economic development, social development, and environmental management, rests on the following: Corporate sustainability (a) should relate to corporate responsibility but offer something that goes well beyond ethics-based considerations; (b) should integrate and embrace economic concerns, instead of opposing them; (c) should take into consideration the dependence of economic concerns on societal and environmental interests and impacts; (d) should allow negotiations between different stakeholder groups about conflicts, trade-offs, and contradictions that have scope for application beyond academic debates; (e) should be understandable and transferrable across different contexts and cultures; and (f) should provide a basis upon which corporate sustainability can be assessed, measured, reported, and improved. Thus, our preference rests with the third type, an inclusive approach to corporate sustainability (CSn) and the subtypes associated with TBL (csTBL), with an attempt to demonstrate a positive relationship between the value of a firm and its commitment to social and environmental concerns (cs$), or with an indexing approach that aims at measuring, ranking, and reporting corporate sustainability practices beyond financials (cs/index).

From these considerations, we propose the following definition:

> *Corporate sustainability refers to a systematic business approach and strategy that takes into consideration the long-term social and environmental impact of all economically motivated behaviors of a firm in the interest of consumers, employees, and owners or shareholders.*

Considering furthermore the political and cultural influence in the negotiation process between stakeholder groups on the scope and content of corporate sustainability, a strong argument could be made to include politics and culture as important components of corporate sustainability. We argue to include politics and culture not as additional spheres but, transversally, as influences on corporate behavior in specific contexts when negotiating between the three sustainability spheres—economic development, social development, and environmental management.

4 Conclusions

Corporate sustainability forms many strong links to the well-established literature on corporate responsibility and its derivatives, whether or not the business literature makes these associations explicitly. Both concepts are neither indistinguishable, nor are they orthogonal. It would be pointless to conceptualize corporate sustainability independently of corporate responsibility, as it would be futile to consider corporate sustainability independently of at least economic, social, and environmental dimensions. The question we are pursuing in this article is not whether there is an association between corporate sustainability and corporate responsibility but, instead, how to make this link without inviting the same conflagration of concepts and theories, which have burdened corporate responsibility, and which have created confusion and circularity.

In this article, we proposed a typology of corporate sustainability that could be useful for research and business applications—to identify, systematize, and formalize corporate sustainability strategies and behaviors. By examining the differences between sets of ideas on corporate sustainability, we were able to classify them according to their action potential for corporate practices. Through this process, we were able to propose a definition of corporate sustainability that includes the most important qualities that distinguishes it from its parent concept, and that may be more useful, considering the burgeoning demands from governments and civil societies on the private sector.

We are living in times where economic, social, and environmental concerns can no longer be treated as separate and independent. Whatever the position toward the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its associated 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals, they will find their way into executive, legislative, and judiciary branches of governments; they will fund and inspire NGOs, NPOs, foundations, and intergovernmental organizations; and they will be part of an increasing sensibility among voters, consumers, and civic and civil societies around the world. We are observing a growing trend toward further blending of business interests and government politics. As a consequence, and to counteract trends toward protectionism, nationalism, and populist anger, stronger concepts, theories, tools, and actions are needed to capture the interdependence between business and society. Corporate sustainability, carefully conceptualized and strategically applied, could be useful in this respect. It is our hope that corporate sustainability will enhance and encourage change-oriented and policy-relevant research and applications for the purpose of creating a more sustainable future for business and society.

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C. The influence of context and culture on corporate responsibility expectations in South Africa

Summary

Our primary aim with this article is to explore the foundational role of context and culture on corporate responsibility expectations in South Africa. The secondary aim is to develop an assessment and analysis tool that captures adequately the influence of context and culture on corporate responsibility expectations, which may be adapted to study corporate responsibility issues between different contexts, cultures, business sectors, stakeholder groups, regions, nations, etc. Overall, this article contributes to the empirical study of corporate responsibility within international policy and business applications.

To explore context and culture in a specific environment, we studied advanced, i.e. post-BA economics and management students in South Africa, who provided written essays on their corporate responsibility expectations. This data collection strategy allowed respondents to use their own words, logic, and understandings about the issues under investigation. We analyzed the data using Content Configuration Analysis and Multidimensional Scaling within a Hermeneutic Content Analysis framework.

The main findings are that our respondents bypass or transcend the mainstream academic literature on corporate responsibility. Their responses are more akin to the debates around sustainability. Economic and social development are the main spheres within which corporate responsibility is conceptualized among our South African advanced economics students, while environmental issues are mostly absent. The two spheres are related in that the dimensions that form the spheres are interconnected: the economic sphere is interdependently tied to social development. A finer analysis of the MDS structure reveals close ties between the respondents' expectations of the responsibilities of corporations, the historical context, and cultural dimensions prevalent in South Africa.

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Contribution

I was involved in the analysis, conceptualization, and write-up. I was solely responsible for the quantitative analysis and in charge of the conceptualization and write-up.

1 Introduction

The kind and degree of responsibilities of corporations are influenced by many factors, including the specific historical, political, and legal contexts and conditions (Burke, 1999), legitimization of corporate action and social support (Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975), corporate image, and competitive advantage (Mhamood & Humphrey, 2013). Accordingly, expectations relating to corporate responsibilities, often managed within a multi-stakeholder framework, have become important frames of references and sites of intense negotiations.

Context and culture mediate corporate responsibility (CR) and corporate responsibility expectations (CRE). Researchers in this field have explored what these characteristics are in specific contexts (e.g., Idemudia, 2007; Mhamood & Humphrey, 2013) and how they vary between different contexts (e.g., Factor, Oliver, & Montgomery, 2013; Orpen, 1987). For example, Wong, Long, and Elankumaran (2010) found that business students from the United States emphasize legal requirements, while Chinese business students highlight economic issues and Indian students stress philanthropy as dominant responsibilities of corporations. Hou and Li (2014) describe differences in the development of CR between the United States, Europe, and China. The authors explore how national variations relate to contextual characteristics, such as social, historical, and cultural aspects. Kim and Choi (2013) show that undergraduate students from the United States evaluate CR practices more favorably compared to students from South Korea. However, these findings have not been integrated in CR theory. There are two interrelated reasons for this. First, the concrete role of context and culture on CR has not yet been explored systematically. When it is considered, it is usually limited to reporting statistically significant differences of cross-national survey responses. The extent to which the question items in these surveys appropriately reflect context and culture remains unexplored. Second, the diverse and extensive nature of the object of study makes it difficult to identify general patterns and regularities within and between contexts and cultures.

The field of study encompasses variations in types of responsibilities, contexts characterized by different historical, social, political, and economic features, disparate sectors, dissenting value sets, variations in stakeholder positions, etc. Methods currently used to explore variations of CR based on context and culture are dominated by survey research, in which are often reflected the values, concerns, and interests of the survey designers, usually academics from advanced economies. To study the effects of context and culture on responsibility expectations in a comprehensive, yet context and culture-sensitive manner, an exploratory method is needed, which minimizes the framing of CR according to the cultural values imbued in the question items of surveys. In this paper, we aim to expand the scope of inquiry about the role of context and culture on CR and CRE.

South African advanced economics students provide an excellent case for the study of the influence of context and culture on CRE. First, South Africa represents an interesting context to explore responsibilities of large corporations. On the one hand, the country is still coming to terms with its Apartheid past, and it faces major social problems typical for a developing economy, such as poverty, inequality, and unemployment. On the other, South Africa offers an excellent business climate for corporations. In the Global Competitiveness Report (World Economic Forum, 2012), South Africa tops all African countries with its rank of 52, the third highest among BRICS-countries. Second, advanced economics students from South African universities are particularly interesting in this new democracy. They influence and will constitute the economic and political leadership of a nation characterized by tensions between historical injustices, socioeconomic challenges, and economic opportunities.

This paper consists of four parts. After presenting the cultural context of South Africa, we explore the extent to which culture and context are part of the CR literature. We then describe our methodological approach in relation to context and culture sensitivity before presenting and discussing our findings and their implications for the understanding and global implementation of CR. Overall, this paper makes contributions toward the development of culture-sensitive theories and policy-relevant applications within the field of CR.

2 Contextual and cultural background of South Africa

Transitions toward a democratic South Africa

After the first democratic elections of the country in 1994, President Mandela's new government faced the difficult legacy of its Apartheid past, continued racial tensions, underdeveloped institutions and services for the majority of the population, and a passionate optimism of what democracy would deliver in the short run. The oppression and marginalization of non-white South Africans had caused severe socioeconomic problems. Some of the main issues were unemployment, poverty, inadequate public education and health care services, and inequalities along racial lines (Adelzadeh, 2003; Deegan, 2001). The newly elected government needed to develop rapid and effective social and economic policies to facilitate a peaceful transition. It adopted a constitution in 1996, considered one of the most progressive in the world (Marais, 2011), which guarantees citizen rights to adequate housing, health care services, food and water, social security, and basic education, among other things (South African Constitution, 1996, Chapter 2).

Also implemented was the Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP, 1994), which promised government interventions to develop the country. Among many other proposals, the program scheduled the provision of at least one million houses within five years. However, the government soon realized that the available resources were insufficient to achieve the aims and to meet the basic needs of its citizens (Barberton, 1995, cited in Deegan, 2001). In two years, only 15'000 houses had been constructed (Deegan, 2001). As a consequence of an Apartheid history and democracy-inspired high expectations, due in part to a progressive constitution in association with unrealistic election promises, service delivery protests and rights-based court cases soon followed (Goebel, 2011; National Planning Commission, 2012). Although progress toward social and economic development is slow in many sectors, the political heirs of this complex system continue to extend former promises to stand a chance in each subsequent election, and to pacify the majority of the historically disadvantaged and discriminated population.

Corporate expectations

The state also adopted business-related strategies to encourage investment and redistribute wealth. In 1996, Trevor Manuel, then Minister of Finance in the new post-apartheid dispensation, introduced a major macro-economic program, entitled Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR; Department of Finance, Republic of South Africa, 1996), which included efforts to increase employment opportunities, improve wages, reduce the budget deficit, and liberalize markets. This program was followed by other business-related initiatives (National Planning Commission, 2012; The Presidency, Republic of South Africa, 2006). Waged jobs increased the standard of living, and it lowered poverty and inequality for many South Africans. The government took additional steps to create favorable business conditions in order to attract foreign and private investment. For example, the government liberalized trade and capital flow, introduced a regressive tax system, and expanded the national infrastructure to reduce service deficiencies (Marais, 2011).

To stimulate economic growth, the Mandela government assigned corporations a central role. It did not merely invite corporations to assist in the country's economic development; it actually expected them to be the drivers (e.g., National Planning Commission, 2012). One reason for the pressure government exerted on corporations after 1994 was rooted in the actual and suspected collusion of many major domestic and overseas corporations with the Apartheid regime. Some domestic corporations were even set up as sanctions-busting enterprises. Of course, the roles corporations assumed during the Apartheid era were manifold, ranging from outright collaboration to awkward co-existence. Even though many foreign corporations were prevented by their governments from participating in South African markets due to an international boycott before 1994 (the disinvestment left a vacuum for South African companies), many national and international corporations nevertheless colluded with or actively profited from the situation and, thus, maintained an Apartheid government materially and ideologically.

With varying degrees of complicity across almost half a century, corporations participated in the racialized labor market and, thus, contributed to black segregation and deprivation (Mangaliso, 1997; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa, 1998a). Because of such behavior during this era, corporations, in general, are often regarded as partly responsible for the oppression of the majority of South Africans (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa, 1998a). After 1994, the collusion of corporations with the Apartheid government formed the basis of the demand for reparations and assistance for the formerly disadvantaged groups (Everatt & Solanki, 2004; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa, 1998b). One of the roles corporations were meant to play in the eyes of the government was to make amends for past misconduct.

Evaluations of the post-Apartheid government's economic initiatives and efforts show a mixed picture. The country made progress in the area of poverty eradication but poverty, unemployment, and inequality remained (and still remain) problem areas (Millennium Development Goals Country Report, 2013; World Bank, 2014). The limited success had two important consequences. First, it contributed to a discourse of citizen involvement (Marais, 2011). Since 1994, extensive promises of improvement were a central device used by political leaders to retain power and maintain relative peace and order in the country. The outcomes of social and economic interventions, however, repeatedly revealed the insufficiency of the government's resources and capacities to achieve its lofty aims. The government found itself in a difficult situation. It had to maintain promises in the face of public expectations, even though most political leaders were aware of the impossibility of satisfying these in the short run. The government increasingly referred to enablement, empowerment, and self-help of its citizens (ibid). For example, the ruling party proposed that the "attack on poverty must seek to empower people to take themselves out of poverty" (ANC, 2007). Second, non-state actors, including corporations, needed to become more active in these pursuits. Some corporations became involved in welfare, education, health and HIV/AIDS, crime prevention, etc. (Hamann, Agbazue, Kapelus, & Hein, 2005). This engagement was based on government support and self-interest on the part of the corporations, but it also helped shape corporate expectations in South African society.

Ubuntu

Public and state expectations toward private corporations were fostered and reinforced by South African cultural values. One of the most important values in the complex cultural landscape of the country is Ubuntu. It combines the core values of respect, caring, and solidarity, and it is characterized by a strong belief in reciprocity, connectedness, and interdependence (Murithi, 2006). Applied to business, Ubuntu emphasizes "fair resource distribution" and "sharing of the earth's resources for the benefit of all" (Murithi, 2006, p.32). Corporations managed along lines of Ubuntu are expected to share wealth and make "(at the very least) basic services, such as food, housing access to health and education accessible and visible to all members of … [the] global family" (Nussbaum, 2003, p.3). The downside of Ubuntu in a corporate and government setting is its potential link to opportunism and entrenched corruption.

In sum, different developments in South Africa's recent past, primarily associated with a relatively peaceful transition from Apartheid to a democratic government, in conjunction with a pronounced cultural value set, may have created a set of expectations on how businesses ought to be conducted in South Africa, not only in the population at large but also among some of the future business and political leaders.

3 Responsibilities of corporations

Before we explore the links between context and culture and corporate responsibility, we will outline relevant strands in the literature on expectations toward corporations. Two approaches stand out in the literature: the classical approach to corporate responsibility and an ever-increasing tenor relating to sustainable development.

CR approaches and their link to context and culture

Responsibilities covered by CR theories are diverse and numerous (Garriga & Melé, 2004; Melé, 2009), encompassing value maximization (Friedman, 1970), citizenship rights (Matten & Crane, 2005), ethical responsibilities (Carroll, 1979), production (Preston & Post, 1981), advancing the social good (McWilliams & Siegel, 2001), and others. Most approaches share a common characteristic in that they clearly distinguish between economic responsibilities and non-economic responsibilities, the latter including legal, ethical, philanthropic, and social responsibilities. For example, McGuire (1963) differentiates between economic responsibilities, legal obligations, and responsibilities to society exceeding economic and legal obligations. Relations between economic and non-economic responsibilities are presented in three ways. First, their relationship is thought to be independent and hierarchical (e.g., Steiner, 1971; Tuzzolino & Armandi, 1981). Linked to this, economic responsibilities are usually presented as antecedent, fundamental, or superior to non-economic responsibilities. For example, Carroll (1979) presents a model consisting of four types of responsibilities: economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary (later termed philanthropic). Here, economic responsibilities are fundamental and all other responsibilities are predicated on these. Second, authors focusing on non-economic responsibilities often detach them from economic responsibilities. In these approaches, economic responsibilities are assumed or taken for granted. Even though Davis (1960), for example, implies economic responsibilities, he does not elaborate on them but, instead, emphasizes responsibilities emanating from the power of corporations. Third, theories focusing on responsibilities of one type often present these in opposition, antagonistic, and incommensurable to other responsibilities (e.g., Friedman, 1970; Visser, 2010). For example, Friedman emphasizes profit generation (i.e., economic responsibility) and presents spending on social expenditures (i.e., non-economic responsibilities) as unethical and contradictory to corporate goals. Similarly, writers focusing on ethical responsibilities often present these as antagonistic or at least independent to economic interests—as a form of necessary additional costs that need to be incurred for a corporation to be considered responsible.

Contextual and cultural influences on corporate responsibility are rarely covered in the CR literature. Of course, a plethora of studies exists in which statistical differences of responses (e.g., managers from different countries) on CR-related survey items are compared across groups of respondents. There are a number of problems with this approach. First, it is not clear whether the questions, usually developed in a specific cultural space and historic moment, are relevant to a particular context or culture. Second, and associated with this critique, it is likely that the question items or constructs embedded therein are interpreted differently by different respondent groups. Third, and as a consequence, the meaning of the differences in responses may, thus, neither be interpretable nor comparable. In short, most standardized surveys relating to CR may not adequately study context and culture because they may ask the wrong questions, may be interpreted differently by different groups, and may, therefore, not allow comparison and interpretation.

Finally, issue framing is typically part of a closed-ended survey question. For example, most of our respondents would have rated the protection of the environment as very important if we had asked a question on environmental protection. However, environmental protection was clearly not part of their mental map when asked for an open-ended, unstructured response where they use concepts and connections according to their own understanding of CR.

Even though laws, regulations, norms, values (Carroll, 1979; Aupperle, Carroll, & Hatfield, 1985), public policy, public opinion (Preston & Post, 1981), and citizens' rights (Matten, Crane, & Chapple, 2003) imply a sensitivity toward contextual and cultural differences, few explicit elaborations that directly address such differences exist. Whenever differences in context and culture are mentioned, they tend to refer to non-economic responsibilities. For example, the ethical dimension of Carroll's model of corporate performance "reflects unwritten codes, norms, and values implicitly derived from society" (Aupperle, Carroll, & Hatfield, 1985, p.455). The theories thus indicate that contextual and cultural aspects are relevant only for non-economic responsibilities without developing this point further. Thus, theories of CR conceptualize responsibilities of corporations as two separate clusters: economic versus non-economic. Contextual and cultural influences, where mentioned, are associated with non-economic concerns.

Sustainable development approaches to CR and their link to context and culture

Sustainable development is a systemic approach that does not focus on corporations *per se* but describes global relationships, dynamics, and mechanisms (Strange & Bayley, 2009) pertaining to societal institutions, of which corporations are part. At the center of this approach is the idea that resources ought to be managed so that they remain sustainable and allow current and future generations to meet their needs (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). Because corporations play a central role in the extraction, allocation, use, and distribution of resources, sustainable development is increasingly linked to CR (e.g., Kleine & von Hauff, 2009; Strange & Bayley, 2009).

The literature on sustainable development presents the economy, society, and the environment as inextricably interlinked global systems (Strange & Bayley, 2009), from which follows that most actions have multiple effects on systems and subsystems. Because of the interrelatedness of systems and subsystems, effects of corporate actions are not limited to the economy but also encompass social and environmental dimensions, as do social and environmental changes effect corporate action windows and, thus, corporations. CR, in the sense of sustainable development, "integrate[s] social and environmental concerns in […] business operations and in interaction with […] stakeholders" (Commission of the European Communities, 2002, p.5). The non-economic, i.e. the social and environmental dimensions, thereby, are not regarded as separate add-ons to the economic dimensions. In contrast to the classical CR literature, economic, social, and environmental dimensions must be understood as non-hierarchically interdependent.

Context and culture feature regularly and explicitly in the sustainable development literature. Several authors identify both as central for sustainable development (e.g., Meuleman, 2013; Hawkes, 2001). However, most approaches are centralist and use monolithic notions (e.g., the economy or the climate; Meuleman, 2013). Even though context and culture are recognized as central to sustainable development, they have not been integrated in the mainstream literature (Hawkes, 2001) but are often treated as obstacles to be managed or eliminated (Meuleman, 2013). Accordingly, the influence of context and culture on sustainable development, especially with regard to CR, remains vague and idealistic.

The conceptualization of CR from a sustainable development perspective differs from that of classical CR theory. Although both refer to economic and non-economic responsibilities, the dominant CR theories consider non-economic responsibilities as separate, conditional, and optional, while sustainable development posits that economic development is irreducibly interconnected with social development and environmental concerns. Neither examines in detail the influence of context and culture on CR. In this article, we will explore the dimensionality of corporate responsibility, interrelations between the dimensions, and extent to which context and culture nuance CR expectations. With this analysis, we hope to sensitize work of this nature to the importance of context and culture, which are omnipresent and fundamental to expectations and negotiations relating to CR.

4 Methods

To capture context and culture-sensitive data, data collection must be non-leading as much as possible in order to allow study participants to express themselves in their own language and along their own sociocultural dimensions of thought. Exploratory interviews or essay writing are two examples of such data collection methods. Given the target populations' familiarity with writing narratives, we decided on an essay-like method, not only because of its advantages in relation to data collection and transcription, but it also creates an excellent basis for subsequent comparative studies between nations, sectors, stakeholder groups, etc. Between May and October 2013, 37 written responses ranging from 66 to 215 words were collected from advanced, i.e. post-BA economics students, studying at the Universities of Johannesburg and the Witwatersrand, both in the Gauteng Province of South Africa. Participants were asked to give written responses to two questions: "In your opinion, what are the responsibilities of large corporations?" and "Why do large corporations have these responsibilities?"

We analyzed the essays using Hermeneutic Content Analysis (HCA; Bergman, 2010), which consists of three steps. The first step consists of an initial qualitative content analysis to identify thematic dimensions within the texts. For this, we used Content Configuration Analysis (CCA; Bergman, 2011; Bergman, Bergman, & Gravett, 2011) to explore the thematic dimensionality of CR as conceptualized by our study participants. There were 261 responsibilities identified in the essays. Examples of responsibilities included "maximize shareholder value," "develop and improve people's standard of living," "invest in initiatives related to schools," or "alleviate poverty." Inductive coding of these responsibilities yielded 12 dimensions and sub-dimensions, namely finance and profits, employment, throughput, business relations, the national economy, leadership and decision-making, ethics, skill development, community development, social development, environment, and unspecified mentions of CR. In the second step of HCA, a quantitative dimensional analysis was used to explore the structures underlying the dimensions identified in the first step, which are based on the 261 responsibilities subsumed within the 12 dimensions. We examined the structures underlying these dimensions by applying Multidimensional Scaling (MDS). MDS is a quantitative technique to visualize relationships between objects. Co-occurrences of dimensions were calculated using the Association Strength Index (Van Eck & Waltman, 2009). The MDS figure was computed by applying a primary approach for ties and a non-metric procedure, using NewMDSX (Roskam, Coxon, Brier, & Hawkings, 2001-2012). The third step of HCA improves on the interpretation of the structures identified in the second step (Bergman, 2010). This third step consists of a recontextualizing qualitative analysis. More precisely, we return to the results of the CCA, as well as the raw data, the essays, in order to better interpret the MDS maps calculated in Step 2, to either confirm or elaborate on the structures identified with MDS, and to gain a deeper understanding of the meaning of the MDS structures.

5 Results

The first set of results presents the dimensionality of CRE by our participants. The second connects these expectations to contextual and cultural characteristics of South Africa.

Structures of Corporate Responsibility Expectations

The first analysis focuses on identifying the dimensions of CRE and their relations to each other among South African advanced economics students. For this purpose, we computed a two-dimensional figure representing the co-occurrences of the 12 dimensions in the data.

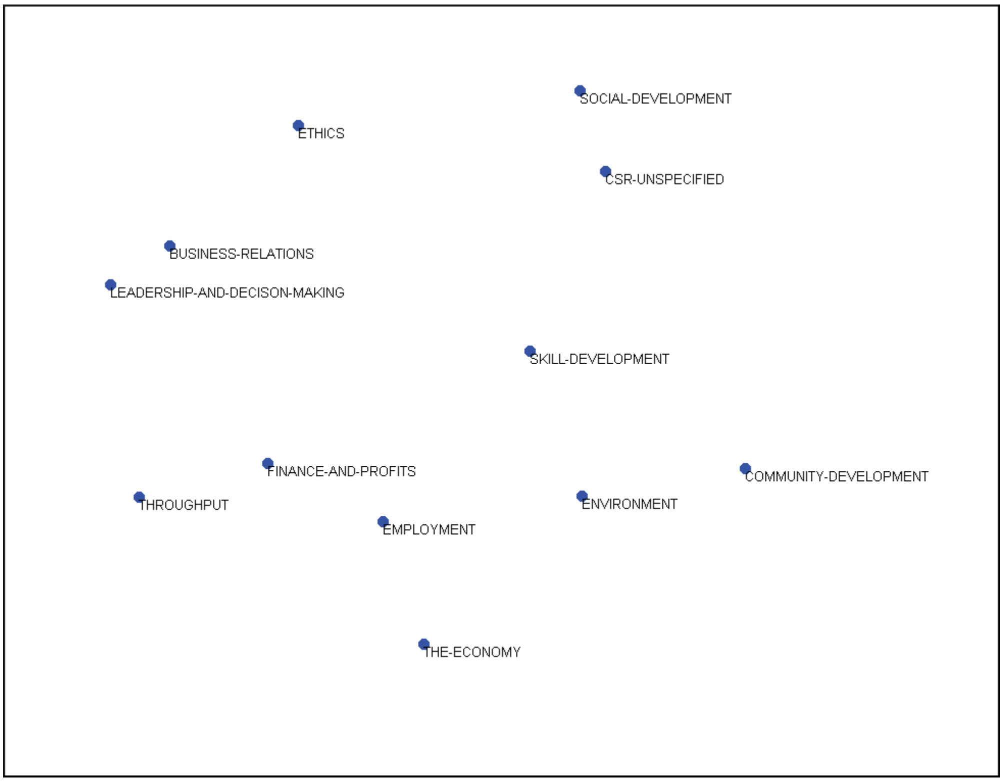

Figure 1. Co-occurrences of the 12 dimensions in the data

The points in Figure 1 represent the different dimensions. The spatial relationships between these points reflect the relations between the dimensions in the narratives. The more systematically the two dimensions co-occur in the essays, the closer the points representing these dimensions are located in geometric space, and the more they need to be interpreted in relation to each other. Analogously, the less systematic two dimensions co-occur, the more distally they are plotted in relation to each other, and the more they can be understood as orthogonal or independent from each other. Accordingly, the output of our MDS analyses can be interpreted as a form of a collective mental map that reflects the contextual and cultural nuances with which our participants expressed their expectations of the responsibilities of large corporations in their own thoughts, words, and cognitive meaning constructions.

In Figure 1, the dimensions labeled finance and profits, and throughput are direct neighbors, which implies that mentions relating to finance and profits in the narratives co-occurred with throughput. Thus, the dimension throughput must be understood as closely related with the dimension finance and profits among the mental map of our respondents. In contrast, the dimension social development is relatively distant from the dimension finance and profits, signifying that social development did not frequently co-occur with finance and profits. Accordingly, respondents whose CRE included finance and profits seem to dissociate this dimension from social development. In contrast, those who mention elements relating to social development do not include finance and profits in their mental map.

The composition of the dimensions displayed in Figure 1 reveals two spheres of responsibilities. On the left side of the figure, we find responsibilities related to economics, such as business relations, leadership and decision-making, finance and profits, throughput, the economy, and employment. On the right side, we find dimensions associated with non-economic responsibilities. Located in this area are the dimensions of social development, CR (unspecified), skill development, community development, and environment. If we consider that there were only 12 distinct environment-related mentions in the raw data, we can conclude that the non-economic expectations are clearly dominated by social development concerns, and that environmental concerns are marginal. We therefore label these two spheres the economic and social development spheres. We will explore the environmental dimension in more detail later, but based on this initial analysis, we find that our sample of advanced economics students divides corporate responsibility into two distinct spheres: an economic sphere and a social development sphere. In the next analytic step, we explore the relations between the two spheres by examining the connections between the dimensions composing the two spheres. To achieve this, we first identify the quartile of pairs of dimensions that most often co-occur in the narrative data and then map these into Figure 2.

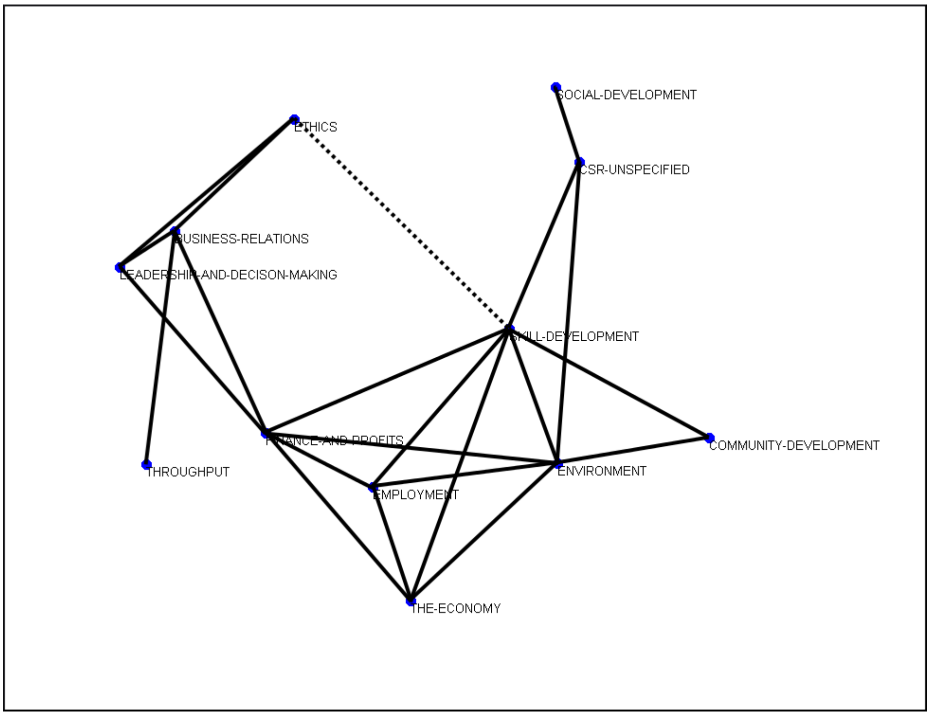

Figure 2. MDS dimensions of corporate responsibility expectations, including ties between the 22 most frequent co-occurrences

Note. The figure is based on NewMDSX calculations (Roskam, Coxon, Brier, & Hawkings, 2001-2012) and additional programs: For data preparation, we used R, e.g., to calculate similarity matrices, for plotting and some minor computations (e.g., find the highest similarities), we used MATLAB, to add lines, texts, etc., we used GIMP.

The adjusted figure reveals a semi-circle-like structure, known as a horseshoe pattern (e.g., Coxon, 1982). Every dimension co-occurs frequently with a proximate neighbor and less frequently with dimensions further apart. The curved pattern of the horseshoe reveals co-occurrences between dimensions belonging to both spheres. For example, the dimensions employment, the economy, and finance and profits co-occur frequently not only with each other (making them a formative cluster of the economic sphere) but, albeit to a lesser degree, also with the dimension skill development. This means that skill development as a dimension from the social development sphere forms many interconnections with the economic sphere such that it must be interpreted as a link or bridge to the economic sphere. In other words, skill development among employees or community members, although a formative component of responsibilities associated with the social sphere, is understood among our respondents as contributing to the economic sphere of CRE.

The environmental dimension plays a particularly interesting role here. Even though it is an underdeveloped dimension (not even 6% of the expectations relate to the environment, and environmental issues, where mentioned, were vague and undeveloped in the narratives), it nevertheless plays an important role in connecting the economic and the social development spheres. According to the mental map of the respondents, environmental issues are not a third pillar but, instead, connect the economic with the social sphere. Thus, we can state that, first, environmental issues play a subordinate role in relation to corporate responsibility expectations, far weaker than expectations relating to the social development, and, second, that environmental concerns form a link between social development (e.g., find sustainable solutions for energy needs of society) and economics (e.g., economic activities put strain on the environment). Thus, even though a weak dimension, it ties the economic and the social sphere together, similar to the skill development dimension. Thus, the collective mental map reveals that even though expectations of corporate responsibility is divided into an economic and a social development sphere, they are interconnected, especially by the well-developed dimension skill development and a less well-developed dimension environment.

Our analysis of Figure 1 and Figure 2 indicates that there are direct relationships between economic and social development responsibilities. This finding is based on frequency counts, which are abstract and decontextualized co-occurrences between themes derived from the coding of narrative data. In the third HCA step, we return to the narratives to recontextualize our findings, not only to seek confirmation but also to extract deeper interpretations of our data structure. In simple terms, we return to the raw data to check whether we could identify relations between economic and social development responsibilities to confirm and to elaborate our findings so far.

Our analyses revealed several direct connections of economic and social development responsibilities. For example:

> The phenomenal amounts of financial, human, physical capital that forms the constituents of large corporations enables firms to make supernormal returns. The funds made here are sufficient to fund not only the salaries and running costs of the employees/ers but also to make a difference in our world. Initiatives such as CR help to balance out the imbalances of the have and have nots in society and to invest in initiatives related to school, service provision, etc. (W6)

This respondent links finance and profits, employment, CR (unspecified), social development, skill development, and throughput. Thus, our recontextualizing analysis illustrates the connection between the economic and the social development sphere. Furthermore, the recontextualizing analysis deepened our knowledge about how these spheres are connected by showing the central role the dimension skill development plays. Our analysis shows that skill development is used in two different ways to connect the two spheres. In the first, participants describe an obligation of corporations to provide skill development opportunities based on moral grounds, i.e. as a form of compensation for the value they extract. The above excerpt is a good example of how "supernormal returns" bind corporations to such developmental duties. Alternatively, participants link the social and economic spheres through a skill development feedback-loop. In this second way, investment into skill development projects provides corporations with skilled workers, thus facilitating value extraction. In this case, CR is presented not on moral grounds but rather because investing in society is a way of investing into the future and profits of the corporation. Here an example of this second interpretation of skill development as a link between the two spheres:

> These industries can offer skills and training to try to eliminate the issue of scarce skills in the labor market in order to lower unemployment and hence improve skills and expertise of individuals that would be utilized in the work place (in the long run). (W4)

By recontextualization, we understand that skill development not only connects the economic and social spheres in multiple ways, but also that it is justified using different reasons. On the one hand, it can be used to placate the communities surrounding large corporations and, on the other, it is a way of investing into the corporation by activating and improving the skill set of the labor force.

Returning to the narratives also reveals that CRE are less influenced by mainstream CR theory (e.g., legal, ethical, and philanthropic concerns are difficult to discern) but far more guided by a sustainability discourse, particularly emphasizing the social development dimension, while nearly excluding the environmental. If the environment plays a role at all, is as an interconnector between economic and social development concerns. This finding hints at the influence of context and culture on CRE, the focus of the next set of analyses.

The role of context and culture on CRE

In Figure 1, social development, for example, encompasses the specific expectations "reduce poverty," "lower unemployment," and "foster social welfare." Every dimension in Figure 1 represents a set of explicitly named responsibility expectations. In this final analytic step, we explore sets of expectations that are in close proximity in the horseshoe pattern to understand what these sets have in common. The analyses reveal that proximate dimensions within the horseshoe pattern form groups, which correspond to specific corporate roles. For example, the dimensions social development, CR (unspecified), and skill development cluster within the horseshoe pattern. Exemplars of CRE from these three dimensions refer to corporations as change agents, i.e. actors that are expected to change social structures. They include "poverty eradication" (W12), "tackle some of the issues we are facing"

(W6), “minimize the level of crime in the country” (W16), and “uplifting unempowered and uneducated people”. (J18)

Based on this analytic process, we identified seven corporate roles underlying corporate responsibility expectations. These are: respect basic principles of behavior, achieving goals, perform, impact business environment (i.e. provide employment, satisfy a need, and contribute to economic growth), care for the social environment (i.e. respect the rights of workers, give back to communities and contribute to building the economy of the country), and change and support society. Figure 3 superimposes the different corporate roles onto the dimensions of corporate responsibilities.

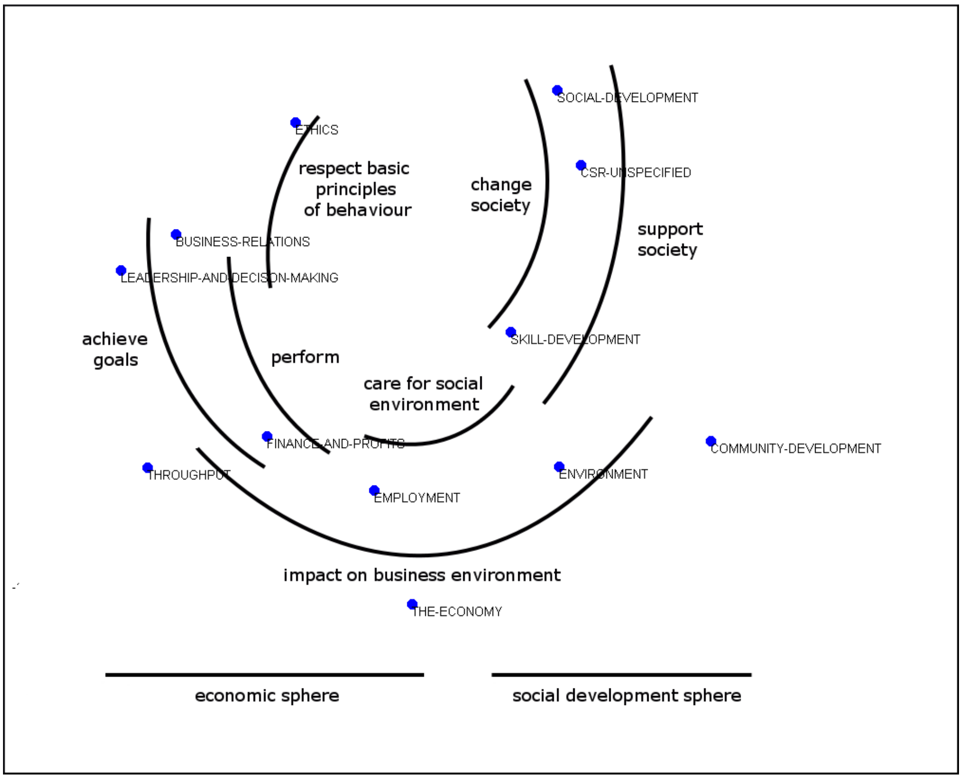

Figure 3. MDS output of the dimensions of corporate responsibility expectations including corporate roles

Note. The figure is based on NewMDSX calculations (Roskam, Coxon, Brier, & Hawkings, 2001-2012) and additional programs: For data preparation, we used R, e.g., to calculate similarity matrices, for plotting and some minor computations (e.g., find the highest similarities), we used MATLAB, to add lines, texts, etc., we used GIMP.

While this analysis describes the dimensions of corporate roles, it cannot explain their context. For example, it cannot explain why corporations are expected to contribute to positive change of societal structures. To explore the extent to which context and culture influence CREs of the advanced economics students, a secondary qualitative analysis of the students' narratives was conducted. The first corporate role refers to corporations as change agents of societal structures. Here are two excerpts of narratives associated with this role:

> Many companies benefited from the policies of the Apartheid government and should thus now ensure that they contribute towards redress. (W14)
>
> The only way we can make our world a better place and tackle some of the issues we are facing is if we do it together. Emphasis being placed on those who have the financial muscle to do so. (W6)

These narratives imply that corporations should make positive contributions to societal structures because of their past misconduct and because they have the financial capabilities to do so. This understanding is related to the South African context as introduced at the beginning: South Africa's Apartheid past, the role some corporations played in maintaining Apartheid, and the government's post-Apartheid strategy to integrate business to foster socioeconomic transformation of the nation.

The second corporate role describes corporations' impact on the national business environment. Here are two examples:

> [large corporations] stimulate economic growth and provide employment for individuals in an economy. (J5)
>
> A large corporation should also create employment because they tend to have a larger market share as compared to smaller corporations. And since large corporations have a bigger market share the decisions that they make can have a greater impact on the economy in terms of economic growth […] They have these responsibilities because they are a key player in influencing the GDP. Therefore, if they are irresponsible, they can have very negative effects on the economy such as inflation and increasing unemployment. (J3)

Here, corporations contribute to the growth, reputation, and stability of the economy, and they create employment. The idea of corporations as actors that can stimulate economic growth and create employment is central in the understanding of South Africa's political leaders and forms the basis of economic intervention programs. For example, the government attempted to create favorable conditions for business in order to stimulate economic growth and reduce unemployment. The third corporate role refers to corporations as actors that should look after and provide for communities and society in various ways. For example, corporations should "donate money to shelters" (J2), "invest in initiatives related to school" (W6), and "invest in the external environment" (W4). In the narratives, this corporate role refers to giving back to the communities or society because they extract value or exploit its resources. Here are some excerpts:

> To develop the communities in which they operate, by […] giving bursaries to promising students from the area to further their studies, making sure that there are proper schools in the local community […] Because first of all: they "tap" from the local communities, i.e., use their resources and people to make profits, so they should invest back into the community. (J4)

> However, the reason for this profit is not only for the shareholders but all invested stakeholders, this includes the public, government, and employees that help make them a large success. As such, substantial share of profits should be used to help develop and support social projects and uplift the communities that they operate in. (W13)

According to this cluster, corporations depend on communities and society to achieve their economic goals. In return, in the sense of balance or punishment, they must reciprocate by sharing their earnings and take care of the needs of the community or society within which they operate. Reciprocity, sharing, caring, or rectifying are typical cultural components of Ubuntu. Interestingly, this cultural dimension connects with a rights-based mindset. Constitutionally enshrined and reified during each election cycle, many South Africans have come to expect their share of the profits and successes of corporations. And the more success a corporation is perceived to have, the more it is expected to share its wealth and success with even unaffiliated individuals, the local community, and the state.

The fourth and final corporate role describes corporations as partners in a network of a multi-stakeholder environment. For example, corporations should "protect the rights of their employees" (W15) and "act responsible and with prudence toward the environment" (J18). Here are two additional excerpts:

> To ensure the welfare of their employees […] It would be unethical for a corporation to not advance any form of support to the people who are the reason for their continued success. (W10)

> Large corporations have the responsibility of producing efficiently by not using material that will harm the environment. (J2)

The final set of analyses revealed the intricate links between CRE, context, and culture, which is particularly pronounced in responsibilities associated with social development. Connections of this kind are in accordance with the government's economic model, in which economic growth associated with employment leads to higher standards of living and the eradication of poverty and inequality.

Thus, our advanced economic students, when reflecting on responsibilities of large corporations in South Africa, are reproducing the government's social development narrative, imbued in its historical context and in cultural values.

Our findings on the influence of context and culture on CRE among South African advanced economics students may be summarized as follows: first, responsibilities cluster around 12 dimensions (finance and profits, employment, throughput, business relations, the economy, leadership and decision-making, ethics, skills development, community development, social development, environment, and unspecified CR mentions). Second, the responsibility expectations are divided into an economic and a social development sphere. Third, there are systematic links between the two spheres. From the content of the narratives as well as from the structural characteristics of the dimensions based on MDS, it appears that corporate responsibility is described by way of sustainability rather than classical CR theory, especially in relation to the concepts used in the narratives and the interrelationship between the economic sphere and social development sphere. Fourth, underlying the structure formed by the CRE are corporate roles. Fifth, the contextual and cultural characteristics of South Africa systematically shape roles corporations are assigned. The effect of contextual and cultural characteristics is especially pronounced in the social development sphere.

6 Discussion and conclusion

In this paper, we explored the influence of context and culture on CRE among advanced economics and management students from South Africa. More specifically, we explored the structures underlying CR dimensions and the meaning of these structures, as well as their links to context and culture in South Africa. With this study, we have made a number of contributions.

First, we found that our study participants ascribe varied roles to corporations, such as to rectify previous harm and positively change society. Based on these corporate roles, they assign specific dimensions of responsibilities to these corporations, such as profit reallocation and social development. These findings help to explain, anticipate, and frame CR in different contexts and cultures. For example, our findings from this small sample of respondents indicate that a corporation operating in South Africa is expected to engage in positive societal change and social development on a community and national level. Our findings also help to understand what this responsibility means: the corporation is expected to contribute to social change (e.g., eradication of poverty) through the effects that it has on the direct business environment (e.g., employment and skill development of employees). However, our study population is limited to a non-representative sample of advanced economics students. One extension of this study would be to widen the investigation to a more general population.

Second, our investigation shows that context and culture play a central role in CRE. Contextual and cultural aspects shape the roles ascribed to corporations and therewith the responsibilities they assign to them. In addition, contextual and cultural characteristics are at the basis of relations between corporate roles. Multinational corporations must deal with different and sometimes contradictory regional and national contexts, cultures, and expectations in order to manage stakeholders adequately. A comprehensive framework describing the dynamics of context and culture on CRE would be of interest to these corporations as well as to relevant stakeholder groups engaged in these issues. Our study represents a step towards developing such a framework and methodology.

Third, our study illustrates that CR theory is relevant in only limited ways to what our target group expects from corporations. The distinction between economic and non-economic responsibilities was replicated here. However, our findings support the idea that the economic and the non-economic (in the South African case, especially the social development) spheres, were considered inseparable and interdependent, more akin to the understanding of sustainability. The latter is also favored by the fact that ethical and philanthropic concerns are inseparable and strongly connected to a social dimension. Environmental resources and concerns play a minor and diffuse role among our participants.

Fourth, this study aimed at exploring context and culture-sensitive expectations around CR. For this purpose, a mixed-methods research design was developed that emphasized an inductive and exploratory approach. HCA allowed us to explore the dimensions of responsibilities, the structures underlying these dimensions, and the meaning of these structures. This approach offers new possibilities in the investigation of context-specific and cross-cultural perspectives on corporations. An application of this approach in other contexts could help to identify general patterns describing the role of context and culture for the responsibilities of corporations, as it could be used to explore dimensions of convergence and divergence among stakeholder groups (e.g., between government representatives, NGOs, and corporations), comparisons between industry sectors or firms within an industry sector, specific areas of disagreement during negotiations, and so on.

In this article, we showed how the perspectives of individuals on the responsibilities of large corporations are systematically structured. Context and culture contribute considerably and fundamentally to the shape and interpretation of these structures. To achieve this, we developed a research design that permits investigations of context and culture using non-numeric data, i.e. data that is much closer to human reasoning and interaction. Even though much research still needs to be conducted in order to comprehensively understand the role of contextual and cultural characteristics on expectations of different agents toward corporate responsibilities, in this study we presented a new approach and some relevant patterns, which we hope may inspire future research in this field.

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D. Corporate responsibility expectations in China: Advanced business and economics students from Beijing

Summary

In this study, we examine the influence of context and culture on corporate responsibility expectations of future political and economic leaders in China. In contrast to implicit assumptions in the established literature, corporate responsibility is not universally shared and understood independently of context and culture. We explored corporate responsibility expectations of 80 advanced business and economics students from first-tier universities in Beijing. The data for this study consisted of essays written by the participants. Hermeneutic Content Analysis was used on the essays, which includes a combination of Content Configuration Analysis and Multidimensional Scaling. Our results revealed that, according to our respondents, corporations ought to be fully integrated into a meta-system that includes the state and society. Corporate success in terms of technological advancement, profits, and market share are thought possible through collective contributions by the state and society, which in turn expect considerable, systemic, and continuous contributions by corporations toward national socioeconomic development and prosperity. The responses seemed entirely independent of the business and economics literature to which the respondents are exposed. Furthermore, the respondents understood the interdependent and reciprocal relations within this meta-system with reference to the Chinese nation. Profit seeking or market share increase in their own right, or references to corporate responsibilities beyond national boundaries were mostly absent.

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Contribution

I was involved in the analysis, conceptualization, and write-up. I was solely responsible for the quantitative analysis.

1 Introduction

One heart, one soul,

One mind, one goal

Extract from the national anthem of the People’s Republic of China.

Studies on culture in the business and management literature have traditionally focused on statistical differences of survey responses on leadership, management, and work environments between nations or industry sectors. Corporate responsibility (CR) and expectations thereof have rarely been the focus of investigations from a culture-sensitive perspective, primarily due to the assumption that most conceptualizations of CR are based on seemingly universal notions of business ethics (Haniffa & Cooke, 2005; Wang & Juslin, 2009). However, corporations are deeply embedded in the culture of communities and societies within which they operate, and the needs and expectations of these communities and societies are vital for the understanding of CR expectations. A context-sensitive and culture-relevant understanding of the relationship between business and society in different nations and cultures would sensitize our understanding of stakeholder positions when interacting and negotiating within and between cultures. This has been particularly important since the turn of the century, when massive geopolitical and economic power shifts have led to a renegotiation of business practices in a global market place in general, and with regard to developing economies’ accelerating developmental trajectory and global ambitions in particular. In this sense, China is particularly relevant, considering its trajectory and global development initiatives, for example the Silk Road Economic Belt or the Maritime Silk Road initiatives.

In this study, we investigated the CR expectations of business and economics students from first-tier universities in Beijing for the purposes of understanding the contextual and cultural dimensions of what is expected from corporations. The perspectives of the research participants are particularly significant because they are the beneficiaries of China’s rapid development and because they are faced with some of the negative consequences of socioeconomic change. As advanced business and economics students of elite academic institutions, they represent a population of future political and business leaders and decision makers. As such, their perspectives provide insights not only into current expectations but also the influence they may have on future business-society relations in China. In this article, we are pursuing two aims: to systematize the influence of context and culture on CR expectations of business and economics students from Beijing, and to illustrate how such a context-sensitive and culture-relevant approach to CR can be of value to the understanding of business-society relations in China.

2 Theoretical background

Cross-cultural studies have primarily focused on contrasting and systematizing cultural patterns between nations or how managers or employees relate to others (Hofstede, 1984; 1991; Triandis, 1995; 1996). In its most simplified form, cultural differences can be explained as the extent to which cooperation and competition, for example, are emphasized (Mead, 1967). Culture shapes and is shaped by shared beliefs, attitudes, norms, values, and behaviors, resulting in systemic variations in economic, political, social, and cultural systems (Triandis, 1995).

Culture and globalization

While cultural studies have identified a multitude of different cultural dimensions and their relations to social and economic structures, one of the most decisive and mutually agreed value dimension pertains to individualism vs. collectivism. In collectivistic societies such as China, the interests of the collective is given priority over the interests of the individual. In contrast, in individualistic societies, the reference entity tends to be the individual. Somewhat simplistically stated, in the latter, wellbeing is dependent on the protection and expression of individual rights, while, in the former, the collective's wellbeing is the main objective of all of its members. Due to individualization, globalization, and Westernization, some argue that cultural dimensions, such as cooperation vs. competition or individualism vs. collectivism, no longer describe modern societies adequately (Valsiner & van der Veer, 2000). Tomlinson (2003, p.269) argues that "before the era of globalization, there existed local, autonomous, distinct and well-defined, robust and culturally sustaining connections between geographical place and cultural experience." Ostensibly, this is no longer the case because we live in a highly interconnected and interdependent world, characterized by the daily, worldwide exchange of capital, goods, services, and information (Bhagat, Triandis, & McDevitt, 2012). This has led some theorists to argue that cultural identity has lost its local roots as it became a product of globalization (Tomlinson, 2003; Xue, 2008). Accordingly,

> […] cultural experience is in various ways 'lifted out' of its traditional 'anchoring' in particular localities [leading to] a transformation in our routine pattern of cultural existence which brings globalized influences, forces, experiences and outlooks into the core of our locally situated lifeworld. (Tomlinson, 2003, p.273)

Based on this, theories on the globalization of culture tend to conclude that globalization homogenizes or fractures culture.

An alternative variant of this view is that cultural variations disappear due to cultural imperialism. According to Kellner (1998, p.23), Western cultural imperialism has emerged through "strengthening the dominance of a world capitalist economic system, supplanting the primacy of the nation state by transnational corporations and organizations, and eroding local cultures and traditions through a global culture.” Economic globalization from this point of view has its origins in Western capitalism that nurtures Western and individualistic values (Bhagat, Triandis, & McDevitt, 2012). Globalization ostensibly fosters standardization whereby exposure to global markets and mass media enhance acculturation and homogenization of value systems, lifestyles, and consumption. Zang and Shavitt (2003) identified the influence of Western mass media, especially via advertising, on shaping Chinese cultural values. According to them, Chinese Generation X

> […] is partly the product of Chinese modernization and global marketing. These young adults live in the cities in which there are growing numbers of international contacts, networks, and organizations (Hermans and Kempen 1998). Geographically, most of these cities are located along the east coast of China, such as Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Dalian, Qingdao, Nanjing, Wuhan, Xiamen, and Shenzhen. […] [The] geographic, economic, and educational characteristics of the Chinese X-Generation put them in a position to be more influenced by Chinese modernization and provide more opportunities for exposure to other cultures. In addition, an extensive exposure to mass media and advertising accounts for the Chinese X-Generation’s cultural adaption […] In general, these young urban adults were found to be more receptive to advertising communication and to welcome Western values and ideals […] As such, these young urban adults represent the context in which cultural change is likely to be the most rapid and have the greatest long-term impact. In other words, the Chinese X-Generation exists not only as a profitable market, but also as a force that determines the cultural orientation of China's future (China; X-Gen Study 1996). (pp.23-24)

In line with globalization theories, which tend to focus on the hegemonic influence of individualistic, Western consumer lifestyles on local cultures, their results suggest that Western-style advertisements encourage an adoption of Western value sets, especially among Generation X.

In contrast to cultural homogenization, other scholars emphasize the fracturing nature of globalization. Instead of a Western-based monoculture, they propose that globalization is appropriated differently by different groups and cultures, thereby increasing the opportunity for new forms of hybrid syntheses, variety, and diversity (Kellner, 1998). According to Xue (2008, p.112), “American food, music and films are available all over China. These American commodities are becoming Chinese favorites and consumption of American commodities has been an authentic and everyday practice. Thus, the term cultural imperialism is out of date and is problematic because it can’t explain what is happening in this society and interpret the cultural meaning at a micro level.”

Accordingly, Western cultural influences are only partially appropriated. They are interpreted in new, hybrid forms, and embellished in a novel, yet thoroughly Chinese interpretation.

Context

While culture is indeed an important behavioral predisposition, the immediate context, including socioeconomic, political, or relevant person-specific events, for example, may subdue, qualify, neutralize, or even aggravate the effects of culture. There exist many contextual factors that may influence CR expectations of advanced business and economics students in China. Here, we will briefly cover two: the influence of China's current political landscape, especially the institutionalization of corporations by the Communist Party (CP), and the influence of exposure to the mostly Western, mainstream CR literature.

Especially since the late 1970s under Deng Xiaoping, the CP has transformed Chinese society through massive economic reforms, increasing the quality of life for Chinese people in unprecedented ways. The Chinese leadership under the Hu-Wen administration has made several policy adjustments in 2005 to further reform the economy, for example, by building the Harmonious Society as one of the primary long-term goals (Lin, 2010). To ensure the collective welfare of its citizenry, the CP has implemented progressive CR legislation to help guide the actions of public and private corporations. Some of these include the Guide on Listed Companies' Social Responsibility, the Guide on Environmental Information Disclosure for Listed Companies, or the Guide Opinion on the Social Responsibility Implementation for the State-Owned Enterprises Controlled by the Central Government, which set out the guidelines for how state-owned enterprises should engage in CR, and Article 5 of the 2006 Chinese Company Law, which states that "[i]n the course of doing business, a company must comply with laws and administrative regulations, conform to social morality and business ethics, act in good faith, subject itself to the government and the public supervision, and undertake social responsibility" (Lin, 2010, p.71). The stance taken by the CP and the associated legislative policies show that, in relation to large corporations, there are well-defined expectations fundamental to the Chinese context, which are neither accounted for by cultural dimensions nor by globalization. While some of our respondents may not be familiar with legislative policies that define the responsibilities of large corporations in modern China, they may nevertheless contribute to the contextual environment that influences how elites reflect on the responsibilities of corporations.

Parallel to these developments are educational effects on our respondents: According to Doh and Tashman (2014), CR and sustainability have gained attention among business schools worldwide as these concepts were integrated into curricula in an attempt to overcome a disconnect between CR and core business practices. While CR theories have traditionally differentiated between the economic responsibilities of large corporations, such as production and value creation, and other, non-economic responsibilities, including legal, ethical, philanthropic, and social responsibilities (Bergman, Bergman, & Berger, 2017; Bergman, Leisinger, Bergman, & Berger, 2015; Berger, Bergman, Bergman, Leisinger, & Ojo, 2014; Freeman, Harrison, Wicks, Parmar, & De Colle, 2010), contemporary applications transcend this bifurcation. This is encapsulated in approaches such as the three pillar model of corporate sustainability, which connects economic, social, and environmental components to business practice (e.g., Elkington, 1997). While traditional business ethics have been widespread in the business, management, and economics literature for several decades, others, such as concepts associated with sustainable development, are new to academia. Our respondents have been exposed to the mainstream literature on CR based on the diffusion of the mostly Western or Western-influenced literature on business ethics in Chinese business and management programs. Despite exposure, however, we do not expect that academic CR concepts have influenced our respondents' expectations, given the superficiality with which business ethics are covered in competitive business and economic programs and the powerful socialization the respondents experience from continuous exposure to their powerful national culture.

Thus, while we anticipated some superficial reference to Western CR and sustainability, we nevertheless expected that our respondents would reflect on the responsibilities of large corporations in ways that harmonize with socioeconomic reforms of the recent past and contemporary global ambitions of China.

3 Methods

Eighty advanced business and economics students from first-tier universities in Beijing were invited to write a short position paper about the responsibilities of large corporations in China. Specifically, our respondents provided written responses to questions, posed in Mandarin, on responsibilities of large corporations and why corporations held such responsibilities. The thus produced essays, initially written in Mandarin, were translated into English for analysis. Data was analyzed using Hermeneutic Content Analysis (HCA; Bergman, 2010). HCA is a three-step mixed methods approach, which combines Content Configuration Analysis (CCA; Bergman, 2011; Bergman, Bergman, & Gravett, 2011) and Multidimensional Scaling (MDS). CCA is a qualitative method of analysis, which can be applied to all non-numeric data, including written, visual, and audio data. As a method of analysis, CCA has been used in a variety of fields, such as business, economics, philanthropy studies, public health, education, media studies, mobility studies, and sustainability studies. MDS is a quantitative dimensional analytic technique used to visualize the relationship between objects in multidimensional geometric space based on how these objects systematically co-occur. In our research, we have used MDS to analyze the perspectives of various stakeholders in relations to ethics, business practices, organizational theory, CR, and culture.

4. Results

4.1 Results 1, HCA Step 1—CCA: Thematic dimensionality of the perspectives of Beijing students on the responsibilities of large corporations

In the first step of HCA, an exploratory, inductive analysis was conducted to identify all responsibilities mentioned in the essays, and to sort and classify these into thematic structures. From this analysis, we identified 19 themes, that could be subsumed into four dimensions: business operations, economics responsibilities, social responsibilities, and environmental responsibilities (Table 1).

The predominance of themes associated with business and economics, i.e., business practices and economic responsibilities, is unsurprising given the nature of the essay questions on the role of corporations and the academic subject area of the respondents. Of interest is that we can identify the three dimensions of sustainability—economic, social, and environmental spheres—, and a fourth, namely business operations, a theme associated with responsibilities that are clearly dissociated from economic responsibilities. Interesting also is that, although present, the environment is by far the least developed thematic dimension. Finally, it is also worth noting that references to ethics and philanthropy were mostly absent among our 80 respondents, which is interesting, considering how central the concepts of ethics and philanthropy are in the academic literature on CR. Accordingly, the results of CCA provided us with an overview of the different thematic dimensions of responsibilities evident in our data. In the next step, we explored how the themes identified in the essays relate to each other based on MDS modeling.

Table 1. Thematic dimensions of the responsibilities of large corporations

Business Operations	Economic Responsibilities
Employment Employees Corporate Relationships Ethics Sustainable Development Innovation Role Modelling	Profits & Shareholders Corporate Development Create Value Tax Economy National Governance
Social Responsibilities	**Environmental Responsibilities**
Social Development & Stability Social Responsibility Social Hot Spots Philanthropy Give to Society	Environment

4.2 Results 2, HCA Step 2—MDS: Mapping the thematic dimensionality of corporate responsibility expectations among advanced business and economics students in Beijing

To explore contextual and cultural influences on corporate responsibility expectations, we modeled an underlying structure of the themes identified in the previous step, based on the co-occurrences of themes within each essay. We did this by plotting the themes from the qualitative analysis using MDS. Figure 1 shows a detailed representation of the resulting MDS map.

Figure 1 can be interpreted as a collective mental map, reflecting the CR expectations of our 80 respondents. The layout of the themes—represented by the distances between the points in the diagram—are indicative of how often themes co-occur. Themes in close proximity tend to co-occur frequently, while themes further apart co-occur rarely. The closer the themes are to each other, the more frequently they are associated with each other in the essays. For example, the theme labeled 'innovation' is close to 'giving to society' and 'employment', implying that when respondents refer to industrial or business innovation as a form of corporate responsibility, they associate it with creating employment and contributing to Chinese society. The opposite is true for the themes 'innovation' and 'role model', since they are at opposite ends of the map. The distance between the two points implies that ideas subsumed under the theme 'innovation' are least likely to co-occur with ideas subsumed under the theme 'role model'. In other words, our respondents tend to think of the responsibility of being innovative and inventive as something that is in opposition to conforming to corporate role expectations. Finally, we can see from the scatter of the themes that there are no clear, separated clusters, illustrating the high interconnectedness of the themes identified by CCA.

Figure 1. Multidimensional Scaling (MDS) output of the thematic dimensions of corporate responsibility expectations

4.3 Results 3, HCA Step 3: Connecting CR expectations to corporate roles

Next, we analyzed the associations between themes. According to the MDS output, we are able to identify corporate roles that describe the main CR expectation dimensions. These corporate roles are indicative of an underlying understanding of the responsibilities of corporations. Corporate roles as presented here are not distinct or mutually exclusive. They represent the connections between themes. Figure 2 provides a visual representation of the layout of eight corporate roles. They are loosely structured in the shape of a horseshoe, formed by a base at the bottom with two arms extending outward on each side. In the following section, we first examine the various corporate roles individually before we interpret the overall structure. Our interpretation of the MDS map is assisted by referring to the relevant raw data, which helps in interpreting the relations between the individual themes and associated corporate roles, as shown by the MDS map.

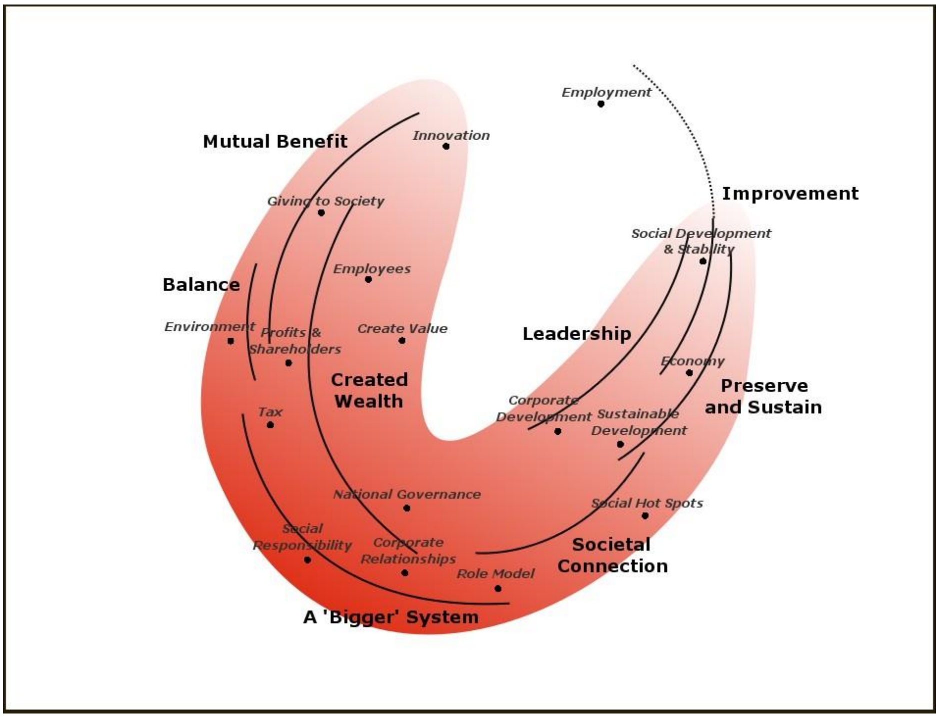

Figure 2. MDS output of the thematic dimensions of corporate responsibility expectations, the horseshoe (red), and the corporate roles (black)

4.3.1 Foundations of CR

A 'bigger' system

At the bottom of the horseshoe are four interrelated themes that make up the base of the horseshoe, namely Tax, Corporate Relationships, Social Responsibility, and National Governance. These four themes, labelled A 'Bigger' System suggest that corporate roles are defined and located within Chinese society. Responsibilities in this part of the horseshoe connect three major actors—the state, society, and the business sector. Corporations are viewed as an integral part of this larger, interdependent meta-system, that includes the government and society. Responsibility is associated with the size of the corporation: the larger the corporation, the larger its responsibility toward the government and society. This includes, for example, that large corporations have a responsibility to ensure the proper functioning of the nation, such as to uphold and advance this meta-system. Corporations can do this by paying taxes, generating wealth for the nation, closely collaborating with government, and fulfilling their role as one of the primary economic actors in the market economy. Here are some examples from the essays that illustrate this point:

> A large corporation should make use of its size, resources and capital to undertake social responsibility on the premise of maintaining its self-interest. Besides, corporations should provide technology and capital to support upstream and downstream firms. Finally, corporations' actions should be in line with government policy; donate when natural catastrophe occurs. Corporations are the basic element of modern commercial society. Large corporations have more advantages and privilege (such as monopolization, centralization, favorable policy) to support their development. Hence, large corporations should fulfill their obligations and social responsibility while enjoying their rights. Doing such things also can help the corporation to avoid some unknown risks that could harm their reputation. (39-1&2)

> Create profit for the State. As the main body of the nation's economy, large corporations make contributions to the State through creating profit. Large corporations are the organic component of the whole society rather than an entity that is isolated from society. Hence, the Old Saying "With great power comes great responsibility", after reaching a certain scale, corporations must take on some social responsibilities. From a corporation's perspective, these responsibilities help to support the long-term development of the corporation. From the nation's perspective, if large corporations refuse to undertake these responsibilities, it will create instability in the nation. If large corporations do not take the environment into consideration, declare bankruptcy whenever they want, cut down the staff as they want, only care about their profit, it will bring disorder to the society. (33-1&2)

> Large corporations control the most state resources. Size is proportional to responsibility. (7-2)

Similar to the base of a horseshoe, this corporate role lays out the foundation upon which CR expectations are built. In this way, corporations are viewed as one of three cornerstones of Chinese society. They stand in dutiful relation to the state and society within this interdependent meta-system, continuously making and repaying debts. CR expectations are grounded in the central position corporations occupy, and the CR goals and aspirations of the nation are built onto this foundation.

4.3.2 CR Means

The connections and interrelations of themes on the left side of the horseshoe may be understood by three corporate roles, namely Balance, Created Wealth, and Mutual Benefit.

Balance

Balance subsumes fives themes: Employees, Environment, Create Value, Profits, and Shareholders. These themes connect with each other to make up a corporate role that centers around balancing different outcomes. Essentially, it encapsulates the idea that the role of corporations should include but not be limited to the maximization of profit. Rather, it should be extended to also include the interest of other stakeholders, as well as concerns for the environment. In other words, to engage responsibly in ways which balance the generation of profits while avoiding harm. Here are some examples that illustrate this corporate role:

> The responsibility of large corporations means that the activities of corporations should follow the development of people, nature, and society. In other words, the corporation should not blindly pursue self-benefit through damage to society and the natural environment. (12-1)
>
> First, internal responsibilities: responsibility for shareholder profit, for employees, and for management. Second, external responsibilities: responsibility for society, for the environment, for the community, for clients, and for the welfare of society as a whole. (9-1)
>
> Their development also leads to many negative influences, such as pollution. They need to pay for these damages to the environment and society. (64-2)

Created wealth

Created Wealth includes the themes Giving to Society, Employees, Environment, Create Value, Profits and Shareholders, Tax, and Corporate Relationships. It is based on the notion that corporations ought to share the wealth they create with those who helped to create it. This responsibility set connects to employees on the one hand, because of their direct participation in wealth generation, but also to a more general, societal entity. Accordingly, corporations have the responsibility to share accumulated wealth in order to ensure the wellbeing of the country and its citizenry, and to actively participate in, provide for, and improve society. This is because wealth and success of corporations are often portrayed as the consequence of years of societal support that allowed corporations to use significant social resources to achieve growth and success. Here, resources refer to financial resources, human resources, communal facilities, government assistance, subsidies, tax relief, infrastructure development, etc. Given the advantages and resultant success of corporations, they now have an obligation to return this wealth to the societal stakeholders who enabled it. Here are some examples:

> The profit corporations generate come from people, so they should absolutely benefit people. Corporations will find it difficult to develop without the support of people and the nation; the corporation's main mission is to create value for its shareholders. Besides, if corporations lack the support from their employees, it will be hard for them to achieve sustainable development; the early stages of our reform strategy stated "to allow some people to get rich first, and later on the rich will drive our development forward for all, and then lastly we will achieve common prosperity." So, the nation gave corporations many privileges to support their development and that is why corporations should fulfil social responsibility, to return to society. (79-2)

> The basic mission of a corporation is to make profit and most of it is created by employees, so corporations should share the profit with the employees in order to encourage them; large corporations should realize that with great power comes great responsibility. Otherwise, a corporation's development also depends on its surroundings, so corporations should make a contribution to society. (22-2)

> Create value for shareholders; create benefit for society; provide a platform for employees to develop themselves. From the corporation's perspective, the purpose of a corporation is to make profit and create value for shareholders; meanwhile, the corporation is a member of society and has the responsibilities to make a contribution to its environment; to provide a growth platform for employees is also a reflection of a corporation's social responsibility. (38-1&2)

> To create value, corporations occupy social and public resources, so it is their responsibility to pay back to the society. (6-2)

> Create and share value with society. (42-1)

Mutual benefit

This corporate role includes the themes of Innovation, Giving to Society, Employees, and the Environment. While the previous corporate role connected to the concept of wealth and who it should be shared with, the corporate role of Mutual Benefit provides the blueprint for how this wealth should be shared: by creating mutual benefit for all. Similar to Created Wealth, a prominent justification for corporations to engage in mutually beneficial practices is that large corporations use considerable resources, from which arises the responsibility of giving back to society. Present also are key stakeholders, namely employees, the environment, as well as society as whole. This corporate role, however, lays down various strategies and examples for how benefits should be shared. These include improving staff benefits and providing a platform for growth for employees through educational and skill training. In this business role, technical innovation is seen not only as an important business strategy to further the development and market share of corporations, but it is also framed as a vital contribution toward a successful society by benefiting employees and contributing to the growing wealth of society. Technological advancements by corporations are seen as a public good, although it is initiated, developed, and implemented by corporations. The purpose of innovation, according to our respondents, is to increase the quality of life for all citizens by making life easier and more efficient, and by creating mutual benefit for all. Here are some examples:

> Make a contribution to society, such as environmental protection or job security; focus on technical progress and cultural development. Large corporations are an important part of society and they should use their influence to benefit society. In conclusion, with great power comes great responsibility. (50-1&2)

> A large corporation can improve its products and services to increase the welfare of the public; promote society's level of technical innovation in order to escalate social efficiency. Large corporations are members of society, it is their duty to undertake social responsibility; large corporations are technologically advanced which could build a creative environment to promote the level of technology in society as a whole. (52-1&2)

> Make a contribution to society, such as environmental protection, public welfare, employee development, and so on. (20-1)

> Large corporations occupy a significant proportion of high-quality social resources, so it is their duty to give back to society; large corporations also gathered highly qualified people, they have the capability to advance technical research and development which can benefit both society and the corporations themselves. (32-2)

The three corporate roles presented here reflect strong collectivistic ties wherein corporations occupy a central position within a larger, interdependent collective meta-system, which includes the business sector, communities, society as a whole, the state, and the environment. According to these corporate roles, corporations ought to align their goals, objectives, skills, and resources toward the greater good of the collective. Such an alignment will reconfirm the commitment of the other components of the meta-system to contribute resources toward the success and wellbeing of the corporation. The CR expectations upon which these corporate roles are based provide the blueprint for how CR goals and ideals can and should be achieved—the means to an end. Accordingly, when corporations aspire toward balanced outcomes, share the created wealth with those who have helped to create it, and leverage their skills and resources to bring mutual benefit to all, then CR goals are realized.

4.3.3 CR ends

On the right side of the horseshoe, there are four corporate roles, namely Societal Connection, Leadership, Preserve and Sustain, and Improvement.

Societal connection

This corporate role includes the themes Role Model, Corporate Development, Social Hot Spots, and Sustainable Development. It is built on expectations for corporations to foster their societal connection by integrating themselves into local communities, participating in public activities, allowing the public to participate in corporate affairs, and helping the government to establish, maintain, and increase social security systems. One way they can do this is by focusing on so-called hot spots in Chinese society. In our data, hot spots refer to sensitive societal issues or trigger points, which need special care to ensure public stability and societal welfare. CR expectations in relation to these hot spots include, for example, helping vulnerable social groups and the poor, investing into local communities and social needs, and improving the quality of life for citizens. It is understood that taking on social responsibilities will create more value for large corporations since these close societal ties will be beneficial in shaping their public image and developing a good reputation. Embedded in this corporate role is the notion of a reciprocal relationship between corporations and society. On the one hand, engagement in societal issues ensures the reputation and legitimacy of the corporation in society and, as a consequence, positively impacts corporate development. On the other hand, it creates a role model for society, which fosters responsible behavior among other societal actors. Here are some excerpts illustrating these points:

> Large corporations should play a positive role in social affairs through integrating themselves into their local community and donating to charity organizations in the region. (69-1)
>
> Pay more attention to the disadvantaged; help the government to establish a social welfare system, to ensure a wider coverage and a larger number of benefited people. […] The reputation of large corporations can be effective in creating a large range of social benefits; their social image can cause other members in society to take on social responsibility thus creating a social sense to promote social development in all aspects of society. (8-1&2)
>
> Responsible companies are accepted by the employees, clients, and society. Taking on responsibilities will promote their development, improve their productivity, and increase their profits. (9-2)
>
> Build an organization which the public can join and supervise. (60-1)

> Companies can be examples in many aspects, such as showing integrity, charity, and caring for the retired. (7-1)

> […] even spread a new culture or positive energy to society as a whole. […] Finally, through fulfilling its responsibilities, the company will transfer this positive mental power to society as a whole. (10-1&2)

Leadership

Leadership as a corporate role includes the themes Corporate Development, Social Hot Spots, Sustainable Development, Economy, and Social Development and Stability. It captures the idea that corporations should take on a leading role in the development of industry, as well as in economic and social development, given their central, powerful, and privileged position in China. In this way, decision-making processes and business activities should aim to develop a corporate culture, which cultivates socioeconomic development. Providing quality products and services, for example, fosters the development of the company and the economy at large, which supports the socioeconomic development of society. Connected to this are the notions of leadership versus competition. Even though market competition is mentioned as being part of corporate strategy, there emerges in the data a distinct expectation of leadership and cooperation. Fulfilling responsibilities as leaders of industry simultaneously promotes the continual development of these corporations while also improving society and the economy as a whole:

> Therefore, besides economic benefit, large corporations should also consider social benefit while making decisions. (14-1)

> Provide quality products and services to support the development of society and the economy. (44-1)

> When large corporations fulfil their responsibility, it can help to develop a corporate culture that supports its sustainable development. (68-2)

> Large corporations play a primary position in the market economy of a socialist country, so they should undertake the responsibility of economic development. Besides, state-owned enterprises should preserve and increase the value of state-owned assets and accelerate economic restructuring. (75-1)

Preserve and sustain

This corporate role includes the themes Sustainable Development, Economy, and Social Development and Stability and is based on the expectations that it is the responsibility of large corporations to promote a successful market economy and in doing so, preserve and sustain social stability. Some of these responsibilities include sustaining market order, stabilizing prices, maintaining sustainable levels of development and competitiveness, and steady social and economic development on a societal level. As a corporate role, it encapsulates the goal of sustainable development and connects to all levels of society. Because of the contribution corporations make, they can ensure that the national development of the economy, society, and industry, as well as their own are preserved and sustained. Here some examples:

> Stabilize the social and economic order; promote economic development. Similar to bellwether, which can lead the flock of sheep to go forward, large corporations can play an important role during the process of economic development. On the other hand, large corporations have a deep impact on society, so they should make use of this influence to undertake social and economic responsibilities. In conclusion, with great power comes great responsibility. (40-1&2)
>
> Large corporations play an important role in social development, the implementation of corporations' responsibility can ensure plenty of people's lives and then maintain social stability. (5-2)
>
> China needs to develop sustainably despite a shortage of resources under such a large population. (60-2)
>
> Promote the development of society and industry. These responsibilities are good for a corporation's long-term development. (49-1&2)

Improvement

Improvement as a corporate role includes the themes Economy, Social Development and Stability, and Employment. This final corporate role extends the goals of preservation to the central role of corporations to ensure continued socioeconomic progress. The goal of maintaining China's developmental trajectory and ensuring its continued growth is seen as an integral responsibility of corporations because they possess the necessary resources and capabilities. Also, by pursing these responsibilities, corporations do not only enhance society and the economy but also benefit through the improvement of society and the economy. Corporations can do this by promoting the development of local industries and the economy, solving employment problems through job creation, and contributing to social progress. Here are some examples:

> Large corporations should take on social responsibility and make contributions to support social progress; large corporations should pay attention to social benefit rather than only caring for their own interests; solve the employment problem. Because large corporations have enough resources to influence society, therefore, they should prioritize social responsibility. (47-1&2)

> The nation and society provided a platform for corporations, so corporations ought to provide more job opportunities in return to society; every corporation has the responsibility to promote economic development. (78-2)

> The social behaviors of corporations have significant influence on society's progress and lack thereof; only large corporations can undertake the responsibility of pushing the progress of society forward, in that way, the economy and society can become much better than before. (17-2)

> Large corporations should comply with local law and provide more job opportunities, besides; they should accelerate economic development and increase social welfare. As an essential component of society, they should give back to accelerate the development of society and mankind in order to improve themselves. (66-1&2)

> […] the third responsibility is to solve the employment problem in order to maintain social stability; the fourth responsibility is to change people's lifestyles. Large corporations occupy a lot more social resources, so they should take on relevant social responsibilities; the corporation is one of the important powers to promote social progress. (16-1&2)

Most CR expectations reported by our respondents reflect different CR goals or ideals. In Societal Connection, for example, the goal of CR is to become responsible societal role models. By integrating into local communities and by helping the government to provide and maintain social security systems, taking care of vulnerable groups as well as addressing societal hot spots, they set an example that others will follow. This connects to the strong Leadership role corporations are expected to embrace. As a CR ideal, corporations are expected to lead the development of technology, the economy, and society. Two further CR goals relate to preserving the success, which has been achieved thus far, and ensuring the continued socioeconomic progress of the nation. Where the previous corporate roles on the left side of the horseshoe laid out the means with which to reach the end, the corporate roles on the right side lay out the various responsibilities that capture this end, i.e., the goals of CR as it is or as it should be.

4.3.4 Making connections

The themes at the base of the horseshoe form the foundation of CR expectations. They position corporations as central actors with responsibilities and obligations toward a much larger, interdependent meta-system. Accordingly, corporations do not only have responsibilities toward their senior managers, shareholders, customers, and employees, but also in relation to other stakeholders, including Chinese society and the state. CR expectations within this bigger system are defined by means and ends. On the one hand, the ends of CR include connections to society in that they not only build strong and trustworthy reputations, but that their actions set the benchmark for how others should behave; that they should lead by developing business practices and corporate cultures, which emphasize socioeconomic development of all sectors including the economy, society, and industry; that it is their task to ensure that this is part of a sustained effort; and that they realize their role in a continued improvement of the country's developmental trajectory. On the other hand, the means through which these CR ends can be achieved include, for example, that corporations are expected to balance profit generation with accounting for the impact they have on the environment and society; that the wealth which has been created should be shared not only with shareholders but also with employees and society more generally; and that this should be done through various initiatives and by leveraging innovative technology to benefit the environment and society.

4.4 Results 4: Additional findings

Two additional findings, both relating to public relations (PR), merit mentioning. Both illustrate how CR notions are uniquely developed, extended, and manifested in the Chinese context.

4.4.1 Public relations

In our data, we find a strikingly different notion of public relations (i.e., via a role model), which contradicts PR in the Western sense. PR in the sense of role modelling is characterized by strong reciprocity. Role modelling is not only concerned with making the public aware of corporate actions and strategies and thus creating a positive public image but also with setting the benchmarks for how other societal actors should behave through exemplary corporate conduct. By constructively addressing or avoiding social hot spots, CR strategies ostensibly have the ability to develop and transmit positive social values, teach cooperation and consideration, and instill care for all members of society.

In this regard, it is also interesting to note that a more global perspective is almost entirely missing from our data. Except for a single reference to how Chinese corporations are expected to lead globally, any reference to international linkages or global expectations are absent. Instead, perspectives on CR tend to be nationalistic and inward looking, focusing on the role of CR within the meta-system bounded by the Chinese nation. Even environmental concerns are limited to the wellbeing of the Chinese citizenry, the health of the workforce, or the reduction of health costs for the state. As such, corporate roles in association with CR expectations conceptualize an interdependent meta-system bounded by a national system.

4.4.2 Creating value

Value creation is also developed in an interesting way. In our analysis, Create Value extends well beyond the notion of market share increase or profit generation. It is the most connected theme in the horseshoe, connecting in some way to nearly all of the corporate roles discussed in this paper. For our respondents, value creation transcends profit and market share; it is embedded in multiple layers of society. It is not only viewed in monetary or market terms relevant to the corporation, but also in terms of socioeconomic development, environmental sustainability, and mutual benefit. As such, creating value is not a corporate goal, but a societal and national one.

5. Discussion and conclusions

From systematizing the CR expectations of our respondents from Beijing, we were able to identify a variety of cultural and contextual characteristics embedded within their expectations of the role that corporations play or ought to play. We observed multiple, distinct references toward collectivism, where group membership, social relations, mutual benefit, and the contribution to the national wellbeing are or are expected to be constitutive of corporate behavior. However, this collectivism integrates in interesting ways the pursuit of technological innovation, efficiency, and profit. As size is associated with collective duty, the larger and more powerful the corporations, the more responsibility they are expected to assume, and the more support they are to expect from society and the state. Collectivistic values are also evident with reference to CR expectations that encourage cooperation, cohesion, and harmony, especially in relation to promoting and maintaining social stability. Corporations are an integral and interdependent part of a meta-system that includes society, the state, and the environment, and our respondents equally viewed themselves and members of Chinese society as part of the meta-system with all its duties and privileges. Except for a few mentions of profits, shareholders, and competition, individualistic values such as self-reliance and personal gain are uncommon, as are expectations associated with globalization, competition, or Western consumer lifestyles. This is not to say that these are absent from the lives of our Beijing respondents. Rather, they do not seem to be prominent in relation to expectations they have of corporations. The one Western concept that was mentioned by our respondents again and again is the saying 'with great power comes great responsibility', made famous by the Marvel superhero character, Spiderman.

Beyond these cultural characteristics, there are various contextual elements that circumscribe the CR expectations of our sample. Perhaps the most important of these is the emphasis on the role corporations ought to play in relation to national governance. Not only are they expected to comply and cooperate with the state, but they are also expected to contribute to and further develop state resources, to help realize national long-term goals, foremost among them the socioeconomic development and prosperity of the Chinese nation. Corporations are also recognized as one of the primary actors through which social development can be achieved. Interestingly, these responsibilities and expectations are not imposed on corporations but are based on assumed reciprocal relations, where success, wealth, and stable growth of the corporation is achieved by collaborating with a socioeconomically developing nation, which, in turn, assists corporations to further achieve success, wealth, and stable growth. The nation is expected to help corporations to be or become successful, and the corporations in turn help society to prosper.

Even though we expected our respondents from Beijing to touch on dimensions associated with Western conceptions of CR, particularly due to their exposure to the academic literature and their considerable ability to ingest and regurgitate large quantities of academic texts, there were no apparent or overt mentions of academic theories, constructs, or ideas. Instead, the emphasis rests on corporate success as part of socioeconomic development and vice versa. We also find, unsurprisingly, that CR expectations associated with the environment are underdeveloped, usually subordinated to societal needs or, if it appears in its own right, as a vehicle through which social goals can be achieved. In other words, improving the environment is valued not in itself but because it will benefit society or the employer by developing marketable technologies, improving public health, or strengthening the health or commitment of the workforce. Also, by connecting ideas of sociopolitical stability, for example, in the form of avoiding hot spots, with socioeconomic development and growth, this sustainability pillar is best understood within the contemporary Chinese context.

From the perspective of developed economies, business ethics is often presented normatively, as something that corporations ought to engage in—because it is the right thing to do. This is not the case in our data. Even though there were some mentions of responsibilities that seemed similar to Western notions of ethics, such as “fairness”, “transparency”, and “honesty”, we find these references deeply embedded in a meta-system of interdependence. Our respondents did not refer explicitly to business ethics because they formed an underlying basis of corporate responsibility expectations and are thus omnipresent.

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E. How well do Chinese corporate responsibility expectations map onto an international corporate responsibility scale?

Summary

Despite the high prevalence of Western-based models and the prominent role foreign companies play in China, there is evidence that the unique characteristics of the national context shape the meaning of corporate responsibility (CR) there. In this study, we explore the relevance of Western-based models for capturing Chinese corporate responsibility expectations. More specifically, we examine how well Chinese corporate responsibility expectations map onto an international corporate responsibility scale.

We collected short essays and questionnaire responses based on the 25-item scale developed by Quazi and O'Brian from 80 advanced business and economics students at a first-tier university in China. The data were analyzed using a combination of qualitative and quantitative analytic strategies, including cluster analysis, Multidimensional Scaling, and Content Configuration Analysis.

Our analysis indicates that the Western-based views are inappropriate for the Chinese context. Instead of the opposing and incompatible views proposed by Quazi and O'Brian, we found different, but highly integrated, perspectives on CR characterized by a strong emphasis on the interdependence between the responsibilities of the economic and social domains. Overall, our research shows the fundamental role context and culture plays in understanding corporate responsibility expectations, while also illustrating the difficulties in capturing contextual differences using standardized questionnaires.

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Contribution

I was responsible for analysis, conceptualization, and write-up.

1 Introduction

> *[China] is a subject to which we can no longer remain indifferent, because circumstances are bringing every day more clearly into view the important part China must play in the changes that have become imminent in Asia, and that will affect the security of our position and empire in that continent. A good understanding with China should be the first article of our Eastern policy, [.…] Her interests coincide with ours and furnish the sound basis of a fruitful alliance. (Boulger, 1893)*

Established corporate responsibility (CR) concepts and scales tend to originate in developed economies and, as a consequence, are strongly influenced by Western, especially North American, British, and Australian worldviews, value premises, organizational culture, market logics, socioeconomic sensitivities, and historical and political developments. Due to the powerful link between the prevailing CR discourse and the Western context, we wonder how appropriate CR-relevant logics are for non-Western, especially emerging economies, which, viewed from the perspective of Western cultures, are often presented as lacking in sensitivity or sophistication in business ethics generally, and CR specifically. Any standard developed in one culture and applied to another is likely to reveal shortcomings in the latter and an ostensible superiority, moral and otherwise, in the former. This does not mean, however, that business ethics in general and CR debates in particular need to succumb to a dangerous cultural relativism. In view of globalizing economies and societies, drawing a line or, more appropriately, an acceptable and culture-sensitive corridor of responsible corporate practices is becoming more urgent than ever. Despite the dominance of Western models within the CR discourse and the prominent role foreign companies play in establishing the concept in modern China, the unique characteristics of the national context may nevertheless affect the development and understanding of CR. This is implied by Wang and Juslin, when they state that "Western CSR concepts cannot fit the Chinese market well" (2009, p.435). A variety of indicators suggest context-specific developments of CR-relevant concepts in China. For example, Chinese culture and philosophy, especially in the Confucian and Taoist traditions, affect the notion of ethics and business ethics, and they contribute to the formation of specific ethical position such as the Harmony Approach (Wang & Juslin, 2009), the Confucian Firm (Ip, 2009), and the Good Person Culture (Lu, 2009). The impact of the Chinese context is also evident in CR practices. Philanthropy—often regarded as a "nice to have" but insignificant or even problematic dimension in the Western discourse on CR—plays an important role in Chinese corporate engagement, due in part to its philosophical and historical links to Confucianism and communism (Bergman et al., 2015). More fundamentally, there is evidence for context-specific understandings of the meaning of CR. Studies of CR in China often operate with categories uncommon in the Western discourse, for example promoting state development (Peng et al., 2007), political tendency (Su, 2013), social stability, development, and progress (Xu & Yang, 2008). Even well-established CR dimensions, such as economic, legal, social, and environmental responsibilities may be perceived in divergent ways (ibid).

Given the implication of a culture-specific and context-sensitive representation of CR in China, we wonder how well Western scales, even if they have been formally tested in non-Western contexts, account adequately for Chinese perspectives. In this study, we explore empirically how well Chinese corporate responsibility expectations map onto an international corporate responsibility scale.

2 Theoretical background

Based on an extensive literature review, Quazi and O'Brien (2000) developed a two-dimensional model of CR. The first dimension differentiates between a "narrow responsibility" position, which limits the responsibilities of corporations to profit maximization and shareholder value creation based on the provision of goods and services, and the "wide responsibility" position, which includes "the expectations of society in areas such as environmental protection, community development, resource conservation and philanthropic giving" (ibid, p.35). The second dimension refers to the consequences of CR in that one end of the continuum represents costs associated with CR programs, while the other emphasizes their benefits. The two dimensions are assumed to be orthogonal, and each quadrant refers to a CR type, namely the classical, socioeconomic, modern, and philanthropic "view". According to the classical view, "there is no provision to look beyond a narrow view of profit maximization as it is seen to generate a net cost to the company without any real benefit flowing from an activity" (ibid, p.36). The socioeconomic view posits that certain social interventions may be beneficial for the corporation although it rests on a narrow responsibility position (ibid). The philanthropic view refers to businesses engaging in CR despite the perceived costs associated with these activities (ibid). The modern view—the label and language used to describe this quadrant clearly reveals the authors' preferential position among the four—"captures a perspective in which a business maintains its relationship with the broader matrix of society where there are net benefits flowing from socially responsible action in the long run, as well as in the short term" (ibid cf. Carroll, 1991).

The theoretically derived model was tested with a questionnaire, in which 320 CEOs of corporations from the textile and food industry in Australia and Bangladesh were asked to respond to 25 statements associated with this typology. The results of this study supported the two-dimensional concept of CR, and it revealed further that the most prevalent types represented in the study were the classical and the modern view (ibid). As a suitable representative of a CR scale, Quazi and O'Brian's typology was used to investigate the extent to which corporate responsibility expectations in China map onto Western understandings of CR.

3 Methods

Data for this project included short essays based on the question “In your opinion, what are the responsibilities of large corporations?”, as well as questionnaire responses based on the 25 item scale by Quazi and O’Brien (2000). 80 business and economics students at an advanced Master’s or doctoral level from a first-tier university in China participated in our study. All data were collected in Mandarin and translated into English for analysis to assure that the respondents could express themselves without linguistic constraints, i.e., we translated the questionnaire items from English into Mandarin, and the essays written in Mandarin into English.

The data were analyzed using a mixed methods approach, consisting of four parts. In the first, we identified the CR dimensions based on a hierarchical cluster analysis of the 25 items according to Spearman’s and Kendall’s rank correlation. In the second and third parts, the results of the hierarchical cluster analysis were used to identify respondents holding opposing views according to Quazi and O’Brien’s CR typology. The content of the essays of these individuals was analyzed based on a Content Configuration Analysis (Bergman, 2011; Bergman, Bergman, & Gravett, 2011). Finally, we applied Multidimensional Scaling to analyze the association between the location of the selected respondents based on Quazi and O’Brien’s CR typology and the corresponding essay content on corporate responsibility expectations.

4 Results

Step 1: Hierarchical cluster analysis

A hierarchical cluster analysis of the 25 statements from the Quazi and O’Brien CR typology revealed two main clusters: The first consists of statements relating to the broad view on CR, such as “Business has a definite responsibility to society apart from making a profit” and “Business should realize that it is a part of the larger society and therefore it should respond to social issues”, as well as statements emphasizing the benefits of CR, such as “Contributing to the solution of social problems can be profitable for business” and “Social responsibility is an effective basis for competing in the market.” The second cluster includes statements relating to the narrow view on CR, such as “Asking business to be involved in any activity other than making profit is likely to make society worse off rather than better off” and “It is unfair to ask business to be involved in social responsibility programs as it is already doing so by complying with social regulations,” as well as statements referring to the cost of social involvement, such as “It is unwise to ask business to fix social problems created by others and which have no profit potential” and “A business that ignores social responsibility may have a cost advantage over a business that does not”. These two clusters correspond with the classical and modern view as described by Quazi and O’Brien. Accordingly, the cluster analysis reveals a similar structuring of responses in China, compared to the one found in Australia and Bangladesh. A quantitative study would have concluded that there are two opposing views on CR in China: the classical view versus the modern view.

Steps 2 & 3: Identification of respondents holding opposing views/Content Configuration Analysis

In the next analysis step, we identified the respondents who scored highest on the questions of each of the two clusters to examine their CR position in relation to Quazi and O’Brien’s modern and classical views. Contrary to what we would expect based on the Quazi and O’Brien CR typology (respondents holding the classical view focus on profit generation, while those holding a modern view have a broader CR view), we find that both groups emphasize both economic and social responsibilities, such as enhancing social wealth, social benefits, public welfare, employment generation, and giving to society. Nevertheless, they concurrently emphasize responsibilities associated with increasing market share and value creation. In contrast, environmental responsibilities are nearly absent in both groups. When mentioned, they tend to be subordinated to socioeconomic issues. For example, respondents holding the modern view wrote:

> The first responsibility is innovation, which can promote the progress of science and technology and escalate labor productivity. The second responsibility is creating economic value, which can promote the growth of social wealth. The third responsibility is to solve the employment problem in order to maintain social stability; the fourth responsibility is to change people’s lifestyle to make it more convenient and efficient. […] Large corporations occupy much more social resources, so they should take on relevant social responsibilities; large corporations are one of the important driving forces to promote social development. (No.16, high on cluster 1)
>
> Business responsibilities: develop the company to the largest corporation in that area. Responsibilities to staff: pay more attention to staff. Build up a close relationship between company and employees, make them believe they can benefit only when the company benefits. Social responsibilities: pay more attention to society; be active and participate in public welfare activities; gain more recognition from the public, build up trust from society; make the public realize the social responsibilities of the corporation. (No.61, high on cluster 1)

In comparison, respondents holding the classical view wrote, for example:

> In my opinion, large corporations’ higher responsibility is social responsibility. Large corporations have significant influence on social operations, some of them even control the distribution of state resources. Therefore, besides economic benefit, large corporations should

> also consider social benefit when making decisions. Because large corporations have significant influence on social operations. I think that the government should encourage corporations, which actively perform social responsibility, thus corporations will act even better in taking on more responsibilities. (No.14, high on cluster 2)
>
> Undertake social responsibility, large corporations should create more job opportunities and wealth for society; create more value for shareholders and employees; under the circumstances in China, corporations should act as the leaders in the development of industry, inspire more people to make their own business. Corporation's profit comes from people, so people should absolutely benefit from that. Corporations are difficult to develop without the support from the nation and people. The corporation's main mission is to create value for its shareholders. If corporations lack the support from employees, it will be hard for them to achieve sustainable development. The policy from China's economic reform states: "to allow some people to get rich first, the rich will have to support the poor, at the end to achieve common prosperity." The nation has provided large corporations many favorable policies to support their development, which is why corporations should be held up as a model to fulfill social responsibility, as they return to society. (No.79, high on cluster 2)

Overall, the comparison of the essays reveals great similarities in content between the classical and the modern view. Respondents combine both economic and social responsibilities on CR, even when they score high on the classical view. This finding contradicts Quazi and O'Brien's model, specifically because these two views are theorized to be located at opposite ends of the two dimensions. Generally, advanced Chinese management and economics students display a wide socioeconomic horizon such that they emphasize indirectly the interdependence between economic and social responsibilities of corporations, and they recognize the pivotal role corporations play in relation to economic and social development of the nation.

Step 4: Mapping the Quazi and O'Brien CR typology onto corporate responsibility expectations

To better understand the content and relations between the classical and the modern view from a Chinese perspective, we projected them onto the mental map of themes associated with corporate responsibility expectations. This was accomplished by Hermeneutic Content Analysis (HCA, Bergman, 2010), which includes an extraction of themes from the essays based on a Content Configuration Analysis and a subsequent Multidimensional Scaling of the themes in geometric space (see Figure 1).

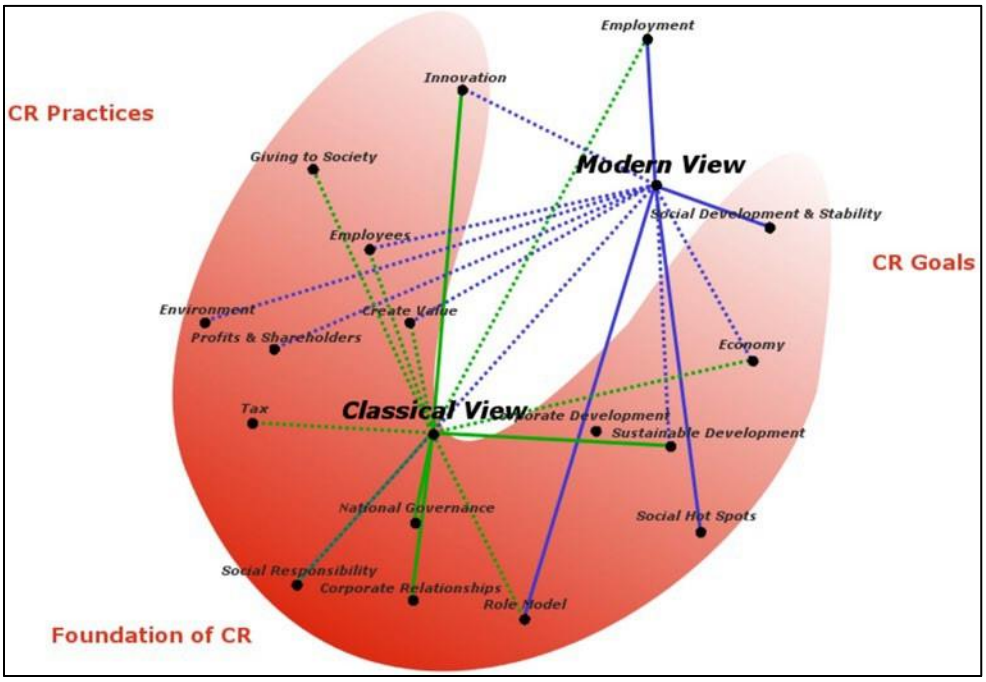

Figure 1. Mapping corporate responsibility expectations—classical and the modern views of CR

Overall, the map reveals three perspectives within the essays on CR, namely CR goals, CR practices, and theoretical foundations of CR. CR goals include overarching societal goals such as achieving social development and stability, improving and sustaining the economy, fostering sustainable development, including working on social problems (i.e. societal hot spots such as corruption). Corporations ought to be responsible by engaging in specific CR practices, such as innovating, giving to society, creating values, taking care of their employees, protecting the environment, and generating wealth for society. Accordingly, economic development is strongly connected to social development in our Chinese data, such that even shareholder profits and value creation are connected to employee wellbeing and giving to society. Environmental concerns play a marginal role, mainly referring to current air and water pollution levels generated by large corporations. In other words, environmental pollution plays a subordinate role to socioeconomic development in current practices and none in CR goals. The CR goals and practices are connected through the foundations of CR, which refer to the understanding that corporations are part of a broad meta-system (i.e., the nation), which is essentially guided and managed by the Chinese government, and which is expected to foster both economic and social development.

The blue and green lines link thematic dimensions of corporate responsibility expectations based on the essays with the modern and the classical views according to Quazi and O'Brien (2000). By projecting the classical and the modern views based on the Quazi and O'Brien items onto this map, we find that they connect to CR practices and CR goals, as well as to economic and social development issues. To a lesser extent, they each lean toward a specific CR perspective: The modern view leans slightly toward CR goals, where CR is understood in terms of social development and stability, overarching goals, especially related to employment, societal hot spots, such corruption, and the national economy. Here, achieving these goals is in the interest of society as well as the corporation. Consequently, corporations benefit from their societal contribution. Here some examples from our essays:

> […] being responsible to society can improve a corporation's image and reputation, which can help them gain social recognition and promote profit. (No.75)

> Meanwhile, large corporations push forward the economy, technology, and people's livelihood, which will raise corporations' social identity, and bring benefit to corporations' development. (No.6)

To a lesser extent, the modern view also connects to CR practices such as employees and value creation, innovation, the environment, and shareholder profits. Overall, the modern view represents the notion that corporations should be involved in CR programs aiming to achieve overarching societal goals through specific practices because these goals are also in their best interest. Notable here is the distance to the governmental meta-system that is expected to regulate or present incentives to maintain the interdependence between economic and social development.

In contrast, the classical view is located in the area of corporate foundations and equidistant between CR practices and CR goals. Respondents holding this view regard corporations as part of a bigger, interdependent societal/governmental system. They understand responsibilities of corporations in relation to this governmental meta-system. Here, large corporations are understood as an important national component, and they therefore have a responsibility to ensure the proper functioning of the nation as a whole. As the central member of this system, the state initiates, facilitates, and directs corporate engagement. Regulations do not play the role of restrictions and minimal standards but rather are guidelines designed to achieve overarching societal goals, which are in the best interest of all members of society. Furthermore, corporations, as part of a national system, have the duty to not only follow the state's guidelines but also to take on the responsibilities resulting from their privileged position in the system, even if this comes at a cost. Here some examples from the essays:

> […] fulfill its obligations as a legal entity. (No.28)

> By 'responsibility', it means responsible to society, staff, suppliers, and purchasing agents. In my opinion, these responsibilities should be provided by legislation rather than corporations. The duty of corporations is to satisfy the requirements of regulators under the framework of legislation. (No.2)

> For state-owned large corporations: represent the macroeconomics of the nation; practice the economic planning of the country; be the instrument of the government to adjust the economy; optimize the allocation of state-owned resources. (No.63)

Because the CR foundations connect CR goals and CR practices, the classical view also connects to more than just economic goals and practices without giving preference to either. Overall, in the classical view, corporations are regarded as an essential part of the societal/governmental meta-system, which is guided by state regulations and laws, and which must fulfill their role within this system in order to achieve broader societal goals, even if this is related to costs and limitations in the short term.

5 Discussion and conclusion

Based on our analyses, we are able to draw three main conclusions. First, environmental concerns are mostly absent, appearing marginally only in association with current corporate pollution. They do not feature in CR-relevant goals. When they appear, they are clearly subordinated to national socioeconomic development. Second, the division of CR into a fourfold model of disparate and contrasting views as proposed by Quazi and O'Brien is inadequate for the Chinese context. Instead of opposing and incompatible views, we find different but highly integrated perspectives on CR. While those holding a modern view focus on overarching societal goals and the role of corporations in achieving them, those holding the classical view adopt a systemic approach in that corporations are an integral part of the societal/governmental system. Even though different, the modern view and the classical view both stress the interdependence between economic and social development. Third, socioeconomic development is expected to be managed and regulated by a meta-system associated with government regulation, intervention, and incentive, which, incidentally, is very much in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development on the role of corporations.

According to our analyses, culture and context play a fundamental role in the understanding of CR in China. Culture-specific and context-sensitive nuances are difficult to capture in standardized questionnaires because, on the one hand, questionnaire items often reflect specific assumptions and contexts of (Western) researchers, and, on the other hand, the analyses of data and the interpretation of results are usually guided by context and culture-specific assumptions themselves, usually leading to misinterpretations and incorrect conclusions. In order to provide relevant and applicable frameworks for culture, context, and sector-specific CR-related issues, we need to develop research instruments and techniques of analyses, which allow us to identify and describe more carefully the understandings of stakeholder positions across different cultures, contexts, industry sectors, and stakeholder groups. We are confident that with such an approach, a corridor of responsible corporate practices may be developed, one that is embedded in a specific cultural and sociohistorical setting and yet compatible with international norms such as those upon which the United Nations Global Compact is based. What is of utmost importance is to identify one group of corporate practices that cannot be condoned under any circumstance in any cultural context because of its unsustainability or unethicality, another group of practices that is culture-specific but irrelevant to sustainability or fundamental ethics, and it should thus not be interfered with, and a third group, which requires careful culture and business-relevant stakeholder negotiations in order to define such a corridor.

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F. The relationship between socioeconomic developments and corporate responsibility expectations in Switzerland

Summary

In this article, we explore the relationship between socioeconomic developments and corporate responsibility expectations (CRE) in Switzerland. The current economic landscape of Switzerland is characterized by tensions between liberal ideals and corporate crises. The liberal ideals of the 1990s, especially competitive capitalism and self-regulation, are in an interdependent, antagonistic relationship with the failures of Swiss-based corporations and the resulting government interventions taking place at the beginning of the 21st century. This article contributes to understanding the role of context on CRE and, more specifically, how corporate crises and the tensions resulting from them manifest in expectations towards corporations.

To explore the relationship between socioeconomic developments and CRE, we studied advanced (i.e., post-BA) economics students. We collected written responses from 45 students of first-tier Swiss universities regarding their expectations of large corporations. The data was analyzed using Content Configuration Analysis and Multidimensional Scaling within a Hermeneutic Content Analysis (HCA) framework.

Our analysis shows that, while the overall shape of the students' CRE follows theoretical conceptualizations of corporate responsibility, the specific compositions reflect the socioeconomic conditions of Switzerland. More specifically, the CRE indicate attempts to integrate the lessons from corporate crises into the existing socioeconomic system by balancing economic and noneconomic (i.e., social and environmental) responsibilities and emphasizing their interdependencies.

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Contribution

I was responsible for the analysis, conceptualization, and write-up.

1 Introduction

> *The world is drowning in corporate fraud, and the problems are probably greatest in rich countries—those with supposedly "good governance." Poor-country governments probably accept more bribes and commit more offenses, but it is rich countries that host the global companies that carry out the largest offenses. (Sachs, 2011)*
>
> *I believe a thriving private sector is the lifeblood of our economy. I think there are outdated regulations that need to be changed. There is red tape that needs to be cut. (APPLAUSE.) There you go! Yes! (APPLAUSE.) See? But after years now of record corporate profits, working families won't get more opportunity or bigger paychecks just by letting big banks or big oil or hedge funds make their own rules at everybody else's expense. (APPLAUSE.) (Obama, 2016)*

At the beginning of the 21st century, multiple corporate scandals, such as Enron (2001), WorldCom (2002), Tyco (2002), Lehman Brothers (2008), Bernie Madoff (2008), and Volkswagen (2015), disturbed the markets, and the real estate bubble created by the financial sector caused the severest financial crisis since the Wall Street Crash of 1929. These events not only had serious consequences for economies around the world but also for the social systems related to them. People in many countries faced job insecurities, loss of savings, loss of housing, and loss of social securities. The financial assistance governments provided to corporations in an attempt to stabilize the economic system aggravated their own financial situation, thus limiting their capacities to deal with social problems and worsening their citizens' situation. As a result of these socioeconomic developments, the roles corporations play, or should play, in society became a prominent and controversially discussed topic, especially in the Western countries where most of the crises originated.

Previous studies found that the roles corporations are expected to fulfill, also referred to as corporate responsibility expectations (CRE), are moderated by contextual characteristics (see Berger, Bergman, Bergman, Leisinger, & Ojo, 2014; Bergman, Berger, Leisinger, Zhang, Baocheng, & Bergman, 2015; Idemudia, 2007). Chen and Bouvain (2009), for example, compared the corporate social responsibility (CSR) reporting of large corporations from the United States (US), the United Kingdom, Australia, and Germany and found that the extent of CSR promotion and the issues presented in the reports vary significantly across these countries. In a multicountry study, Maignan (2001) found that US consumers give priority to economic responsibilities, while French and German consumers put more emphasis on legal and ethical responsibilities. Western countries are well represented in this literature, with numerous studies investigating the perspectives of managers (e.g., Orpen, 1987; Woodwards, Edwards, & Birkin, 2001), students (e.g., Kim & Choi, 2013; Wong, Long, & Elankumaran, 2010), consumers (e.g., Golob, Lah, & Jančič, 2008), and the public (e.g., Furrer, Weiss Sampietro, & Seidler, 2006; Furrer & Weiss Sampietro, 2007; Podnar & Golob, 2007). However, little attention was paid to how the recent socioeconomic events manifest in the mindsets of key stakeholders. In this paper, we aim to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by investigating the mindsets of advanced Swiss economics students—the future economic elite of Switzerland.

Advanced Swiss economics students present an excellent case for investigating how the socioeconomic developments related to corporate crises manifest in the mindset of future economic leaders. First, over the past two decades, Switzerland has experienced several corporate scandals and, due to its strong financial sector, had to deal intensively with the consequences of the financial crisis. Second, advanced Swiss economics students are of particular interest because they were raised in a state of socioeconomic friction created by the coexistence of neoliberal ideals and corporate criticism. The way these students make sense of the antithetical impulses will be decisive for the future development of Switzerland.

This paper consists of four parts. After giving an overview of the socioeconomic developments in Switzerland since the 1990s, we show how corporate responsibility (CR) is presented in the academic literature. We then introduce our methodical approach before discussing our findings and their implications.

2 Socioeconomic developments in Switzerland since the 1990s

Liberal trends of the 1990s

At the end of the 20th century, Switzerland experienced a wave of liberalization (Mach & Trampusch, 2011; Papadopoulos, 2011). Liberalizing reforms encompassed many spheres and included a stepwise privatization of the public monopolies in telecom, electricity, and post; "more transparent rules in public procurement, a reinforcement of anti-trust laws, the opening of the labor market to EU workers" (Magetti, Afonso, & Fontana, 2011, p.208); and "reinforcement of competition policy, abolition of certain protectionist measures, [and] introduction of a value-added tax" (Mach & Trampusch, 2011, p.21). As Switzerland was not a member of the European Economic Area, many of these reforms aimed at adjusting Swiss legislation to the norms of the European Union to improve access to the European market (Mach & Trampusch, 2011). The interventions were guided by the maxim "competitiveness abroad through increasing competition on domestic markets" (ibid, p.21).

Liberal ideals were also evident in the role of the state. Following the tradition of the self-regulation of corporations, the state played a limited role in regulating corporate behavior (Mach & Trampusch, 2012; Magetti, Afonso, & Fontana, 2011; Papadopoulos, 2011). Instead, the primary task of the state in the socioeconomic sphere consisted of location promotion. The liberalization of the markets, in combination with the internationalization of trade, made location promotion a central factor in the pursuit of the social welfare granted by jobs and taxes. The Swiss state was highly engaged in providing ideal conditions for businesses to retain existing corporations and attract new ones (Avernir Suisse, 2015; Rufer & Wagner, 2015). Over the years, the authorities succeeded in creating and marketing excellent conditions regarding economic factors, political and legal securities, infrastructure, the tax system, education, labor, business clusters, the support of interested investors, export securities, and so on (Osec, 2010). At the beginning of the 21st century, Switzerland was one of the most attractive business locations worldwide, reaching the number one position on the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Index in 2006 (Schwab, Porter, López-Claros, & World Economic Forum, 2007).

The increasing liberalization of the market and Switzerland's positioning as an attractive business location went hand in hand with a shift from an insider-oriented form of corporate governance towards a more shareholder-focused system of corporate governance (Mark & Trampusch, 2011; Schnyder & Widmer, 2011). Before the 1990s, capital markets played an insignificant role in the Swiss economy because corporations were mainly controlled by owner families (Schnyder & Widmer, 2011). However, at the beginning of the 21st century, shareholders' interests became a central point of reference for corporate decision-making (ibid). In addition to legislative modifications, a main reason for this was the change in managerial compensation (ibid). Managers were increasingly compensated with shares to align their interests with those of shareholders (ibid). This led to a new type of manager, one who "supports so-called 'value-based management' (VBM) strategies and, thus, is open to shareholder-oriented management practices that 'traditional managers' had strongly opposed" (ibid, p.116).

In sum, the transformations of the 1990s created an economy characterized by a liberal market order, the self-regulation of corporations, an extensive location promotion program by the state, and a strong shareholder focus; or, as Schnyder and Widmer (2011) put it:

> By the early 2000s, the stage had thus been set for a fundamental change in the system of corporate governance in Switzerland through the emergence of a new dominant logic—that of competitive, rather than collaborative capitalism. (p.119)

Corporate crises at the beginning of the 21st century

The beginning of the 21st century was characterized by intensive turmoil in the socioeconomic sphere. The privatized monopolies could not keep up with the high expectations raised by competitive capitalism (Schranz, 2007). Some services were cut, while the quality of others either diminished or did not significantly improve (ibid). Meanwhile, corporate crises shook the socioeconomic sphere. Several Swiss-based corporations, such as Swissair, Wegelin, and Martin Ebner BZ-Bank, collapsed; while the existence of others, such as Credit Suisse, UBS, ABB, and Zurich, was severely threatened and could only be ensured with the interventions of third parties or significant restructuring. The most prominent corporate crises were those of Swissair and UBS, which we will briefly discuss in more detail.

In the 1990s, the management of Switzerland's biggest airline, Swissair, launched an aggressive expansion strategy in an attempt to become the fourth biggest carrier in Europe after British Airways, Lufthansa, and Air France ("In den Untergang," 2011; Minimarisk, not specified). This strategy led to immense losses and, eventually, Swissair's financial situation became critical. Swissair management and the major Swiss banks worked on a rescue plan but, due to risk considerations, Swissair did not receive crucial financial means in time. Consequently, the whole Swissair aircraft fleet was grounded on October 2, 2001 (for more details, see Steiger, 2006; Zumstein, 2011). Thirty-eight thousand passengers were unable to continue their trips ("Der Tag, an dem," 2011). Forty thousand jobs were at risk (Leuenberger, 2010) and employees' savings of 110 million Swiss Francs managed by the Swissair house bank were in danger (Steiger, 2006). The image of Switzerland as a service provider was severely damaged (ibid). To prevent the worsening of the situation, the Swiss government provided Swissair with financial means, ensuring its operations until the following year ("Der Tag, an dem," 2011).

The case of UBS likewise started with an ambitious goal. After the bank became the largest private wealth manager in 2004, the board of directors declared that UBS also strived to become number one in investment banking (Malik, 2012; Müller-Stevens & Shivacheve, 2006; Zumstein, 2008). In the following years, UBS invested heavily in the US subprime mortgage market. When the subprime crisis hit in 2007, UBS possessed subprime papers worth approximately 60 billion Swiss Francs (Malik, 2012; Zumstein, 2008). Suffering from the crisis, the bank lost its entire capital and turned to the state for help (Zumstein, 2008). The government realized that a UBS bankruptcy would have detrimental consequences for the Swiss national economy because the bank managed the assets of millions of corporations and private persons, provided loans to numerous small- and medium-sized enterprises, and played a central role in interbanking business[22] (Zumstein, 2009; see also Menoud & Tilmanns, 2013). To avoid the bank's insolvency, the Swiss government, in cooperation with the national bank, launched an aid packet worth 60 billion dollars (Gallarotti, 2011). The state, the Swiss National Bank, and, thus, the taxpayers adopted the risk of the illiquid subprime papers (Vimentis, 2009).

Corporate crises such as these, combined with the lack of performance of privatized monopolies, created awareness of the important functions large corporations fulfill in the socioeconomic sphere. The public realized that large corporations are not only essential for the health of the national economy but that the wellbeing of Swiss society depends on their operation. This increased awareness led to intensive reconsiderations of corporate roles and responsibilities, which happened in three ways. First, attempts to explain the lack of performance delineated the picture of the irresponsible corporation. Behaviors identified as irresponsible included aggressive growth strategies ("Grob fahrlässig. Ernst," 2003; Meier, 2010; UBS, 2010), insufficient risk management (Ernst & Young, 2003; Meier, 2010; Speiser, 2010), problematic compensation and bonus systems (Speiser, 2010; UBS, 2010), lack of corporate governance ("Grob fahrlässig. Ernst," 2003), lack of necessary expertise ("Grob fahrlässig. Ernst," 2003), arrogance (Speiser, 2010), ignorance (Bonsu, 2001), and megalomania (Dittli, 2003). Second, public demands for punishment demonstrated the unacceptability of irresponsibility. In the case of Swissair, the decisions made by the former management were analyzed in numerous trials ("Der Tag an dem," 2011). Finally, discussions about legislative interventions defined the minimum standards that the government and the public expected large corporations to fulfill. For example, the Swiss "too-big-to-fail" legislation forced large banks to comply with certain capital requirements and to implement emergency plans to minimize the likelihood that the state and taxpayers would have to provide support during financially difficult times (Finma, 2014).

Determining the boundaries and definitions of corporate roles involves attempting to identify and manage the limits of competitive capitalism. This is not to say that the ideals of liberalization, self-regulation, location promotion, and shareholder value were replaced. Instead, the discussions are a sign of uncertainty regarding the roles corporations are supposed to fulfill and whether the ideals prevalent at the turn of the century are suitable and sufficient for guaranteeing these roles are taken on.

In sum, the socioeconomic developments of Switzerland since the 1990s made CR a central topic and, at the same time, created an atmosphere of tension regarding the parameters relevant for defining corporate roles. Liberal ideals, competitive capitalism, self-regulation, corporate failure, and

[22] The evaluation of the systems relevancy of UBS is based on an interview with Bundesrat Merz. The interview was conducted in regards to the tax evasion controversy. Despite this statement not being directly related to the financial crisis, it nevertheless captures the meaning of UBS from the perspective of the Swiss government.

government intervention are in an interdependent, antagonistic relationship. The ways in which future economic leaders resolve these tensions will be decisive for the development of Switzerland as a business location.

3 Conceptualizations of corporate responsibility

Before we explore the CRE of future economic leaders of Switzerland, we briefly lay out how CR is conceptualized in the academic literature. We focus on three approaches: the traditional shareholder model, the stakeholder framework, and the concept of shared value.

Traditional shareholder model

The traditional shareholder model restricts the responsibilities of large corporations to the economic domain. The concept is based on a clear separation of the roles of corporations and states. Corporations are responsible for maximizing profits in a way that adheres to the law and recognizes minimum ethical standards, or as Friedman and Friedman (1982, p.133) put it, "There is one and only one social responsibility of business—to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits so long as it stays within the rules of the game, which is to say, engages in open and free competition without deception or fraud." Governments are expected to take care of all issues relating to the social and environmental domains. This includes, amongst other things, providing services preconditioned to corporate action, such as basic education and social securities, and absorbing the negative externalities of corporate operations, such as pollution or health issues (see Friedman, 1970; Friedman & Friedman, 1982). To fulfill these functions, governments can obtain financial means from corporations in the form of taxes and create legal frameworks that control corporate action. Put simply, according to the traditional shareholder model, CR consists of generating profits, respecting the law, and providing taxes to the government.

Stakeholder framework

The stakeholder framework describes corporations as responsible for satisfying the needs of the actor groups who can affect or are affected by corporate operations (i.e., the corporate stakeholders; Freeman, 1984). Stakeholders commonly include shareholders, employees, suppliers, customers, and communities (e.g., Phillips, Freeman, & Wicks, 2003). Each of these actor groups is regarded as a separate entity with particular interests and needs, such as high revenues, fair pay, social securities, and high-quality products, and the corporation is the node where these diverging and often incompatible interests meet and must be balanced. There are diverse stances regarding the balancing processes, as some concepts emphasize the equality of the demands of different groups (e.g., Gibson, 2000), while others regard the interests of one particular group, usually shareholders, as superior to the interests of other groups (e.g., Jensen, 2002). Although stakeholder models differ regarding certain parameters, in general, they agree that integrating a broad array of stakeholders in decision-making processes and aiming to satisfy a maximum amount of needs are the essence of responsible business practice.

Concept of shared value

The concept of shared value emphasizes the interdependence of society and business. A corporation depends on a successful community "to create demand for its products [and] […] to provide critical public assets and a supportive environment," while a community depends on a successful corporation "to provide jobs and wealth creation opportunities for its citizens" (Porter & Kramer, 2011, p.6). Therefore, corporations should attempt to create "economic value in a way that also creates value for society by addressing its needs and challenges" (ibid, p.4). The key is to understand social problems not as externalities or obstacles but as business opportunities and to align corporate strategies with social needs. In contrast to Friedman's model, the shared value concept does not understand corporations and governments as antagonistic players but rather as a powerful team pursuing the goal of social and economic prosperity. Governments can support corporate efforts by providing legislative frameworks that further competitiveness and economic growth, and corporations can support governments by providing wealth for citizens (ibid, 2011).

If we compare the three conceptualizations of CR—the traditional shareholder model, the stakeholder framework, and the concept of shared value—we find that they differ along two dimensions. The first dimension is concerned with the conceptualization of the relationship between entities in the social and economic spheres. The traditional shareholder model and the stakeholder framework present sets of separated entities, such as corporations and the state or single stakeholder groups. In contrast, the concept of shared value refers to an environment consisting of interdependent factors. The second dimension relates to the beneficiaries of corporate action. The traditional shareholder model focuses on the benefits of one single group (i.e., shareholders), while the stakeholder framework and the concept of shared value aim at mutual benefits, such as a maximum number of stakeholders, or economy and society at large.

Corporate responsibility and context

Although the stakeholder framework and the concept of shared value, in principle, contain elements that directly relate to the context they are applied within—stakeholder demands are likely to differ across contexts, as are the needs that the shared value approach aims to tackle—only a few studies have addressed the role contextual elements play. Orij (2010) investigated the relationship between corporate social disclosure, stakeholder salience, and national cultures. He found a relationship between corporate disclosure and cultural dimensions that can be explained by country-specific stakeholder orientation (ibid). Veser (2004, p.426) explored stakeholder dialogues across different cultures and found that "cultural dimensions affect the international diffusion of stakeholder related policies." Other research indicates that contextual and cultural characteristics systematically shape people's CRE and that this influence is especially pronounced in expectations relating to the social domain (Berger, Bergman, Bergman, Leisinger, & Ojo, 2014).

In sum, different conceptualizations of CR exist in the academic literature, representing diverging understandings of the relations between different entities of the social and economic spheres and proposing different beneficiaries of corporate action. None of these approaches systematically investigated the relationship between CR and the socioeconomic context. In this article, we explore the dimensionality of CRE in Switzerland and the extent to which it reflects the socioeconomic developments of Switzerland.

4 Methods

We used exploratory essay writing as the method of data collection. This approach allowed us to collect data in a context-sensitive manner, as participants expressed their ideas in their own language and along their own socioeconomic lines of thought (for a detailed discussion, see Berger, Bergman, Bergman, Leisinger, & Ojo, 2014). In 2013, we collected 45 written responses from advanced (post-BA) economics students of first-tier universities in Switzerland. The students wrote essays ranging from 38 to 170 words on the questions: "In your opinion, what are the responsibilities of large corporations?" and "Why do large corporations have these responsibilities?" The data were collected in German.

We analyzed the essays using Hermeneutic Content Analysis (HCA; Bergman, 2010). HCA is a three-step mixed methods approach. In the first step, we applied Content Configuration Analysis (CCA, Bergman, 2011) to explore the thematic dimensionality of CRE evident in our data. There were 360 responsibilities identified in the essays, which related to 18 dimensions and four overarching categories. In the second step, we used Multidimensional Scaling (MDS) to explore the relationships between 13 of the dimensions. The dimensions were chosen based on their frequency of occurrence.[23] MDS is a quantitative approach for visualizing the relationships between objects based on their co-occurrence within units of analysis. We used MDS to generate a graphical representation of the co-occurrence of the 13 dimensions in the students' essays. Co-occurrence was computed using Association Strength Index (Van Eck & Waltman, 2009). The MDS solution was computed using the R package smacof (De Leeuw & Mair, 2009) and applying a nonmetric model and a primary approach to

[23] One subdimension, i.e., stakeholders, has been excluded despite high frequency due to its thematic breadth, which during the modeling process interfered with the overall structure. However, when respondents referred to specific stakeholders, such as employees, customers, or shareholders, these have been included in the respective dimensions.

ties.[24] The final solution had a Stress of 0.16, compared to 0.24 of comparable random data (Spence, 1982). In the third step of HCA, we conducted a recontextualizing qualitative analysis to enhance our interpretation of the patterns discovered with MDS. More specifically, we returned to the results of the CCA and the raw data (the essays) to confirm and further elaborate on the structures discovered during the second step of HCA.

5 Results and discussion

Results 1: Dimensionality of the corporate responsibility expectations

The CRE mentioned in the narratives revealed 18 dimensions belonging to four overarching categories. Table 1 gives an overview of these dimensions. Economic responsibilities represent the most elaborated category, encompassing dimensions on the levels of micro-, meso-, and macro-economy. The responsibilities mentioned include stimulating the national economy (E40), contributing to the GDP (E12), job security (E21), providing jobs (E19), fair contracts (E33), adequate pay (E27), responsibilities towards customers (E2), generating profits (E13), sustainable management (E11), and ensuring long-term operation of the corporation (E37). The second most prevalent category is social responsibilities. Even though this category contains specific responsibilities referring to state and politics, laws, norms, and taxes, and ethics, such as playing according to ethical rules (E23), respecting the law (E17), paying taxes (E33), and responsibilities towards the state (E3), approximately half of the responsibilities mentioned are vague, referring to responsibilities towards society or social responsibilities in a generic manner. Similar to social responsibilities, environmental responsibilities are common but ill-defined, with respondents stating that corporations have a responsibility towards the environment (E15), must operate in an environmentally friendly (E7) or sustainable way (E31), must respect ecological standards (E34), and must protect the environment (E40) without further elaborating on the details. The final category, role in a meta-system, captures the interrelations between the different types of responsibilities.

[24] Similar results were obtained using more restrictive parameters, i.e., metric MDS.

Table 1. Dimensions of corporate responsibility expectations

Economic responsibilities		
Microeconomic Profits & shareholders Strategic management Sustainable corporate development Innovation	**Mesoeconomic** Employment Workers Products & customers Stakeholders Image	**Macroeconomic** Economy Relationship to other economic players
Social responsibilities Society Ethics Laws, norms, & taxes State & politics	**Environmental responsibilities** Environment & sustainability	**Role in a meta-system** Part of a meta-system Role model

Interesting about this typology is the discrepancy between a well-elaborated economic dimension and ambiguous social and environmental dimensions. Switzerland's recent socioeconomic developments offer two interlinked explanations for this. First, in competitive capitalism, there is a clear distinction between the role of corporations, which mainly consists of fulfilling economic tasks, and the role of the state, which includes providing optimal socioeconomic conditions for businesses. This differentiation of roles is reflected in the high degree of elaboration on the economic dimension. However, at the beginning of the 21st century, the relevance of corporate action for the social domain became evident, and the traditional role allocation was shattered because the state had to intervene in the economic sphere. The debates following the events centered on corporations' responsibilities in domains other than the economic sphere but failed to clearly define these roles. This is mirrored in the high prevalence of, but at the same time pronounced, vagueness of social and environmental responsibilities.

Second, Switzerland has established itself as a highly competitive business location, and due to the wealth created by corporations it does not have any prevailing social or environmental problems. In accordance with this, the economic domain is highly elaborated while responsibilities related to the social and environmental domains remain ambiguous.

Results 2: State and politics as a central dimension

In the second step of our analysis, we calculated an MDS representation of the 13 dimensions, as follows: profits and shareholders; strategic management; sustainable corporate development; employment; employees; products and customers; economy; society; ethics; state and politics; environment and sustainability; part of a meta-system; and laws, norms, and taxes. Figure 1 shows the resulting MDS map. The spatial relations between the dimensions represent their relationship in the narratives. The more systematically two dimensions co-occur in the essays, the closer they are located to each other in the MDS map. The less systematically two dimensions co-occur in the essays, the larger the spatial distance between them. By integrating the different dimensions and their interrelatedness, the MDS output represents a form of a collective mental map, which displays the different perspectives towards large corporations evident in our data.

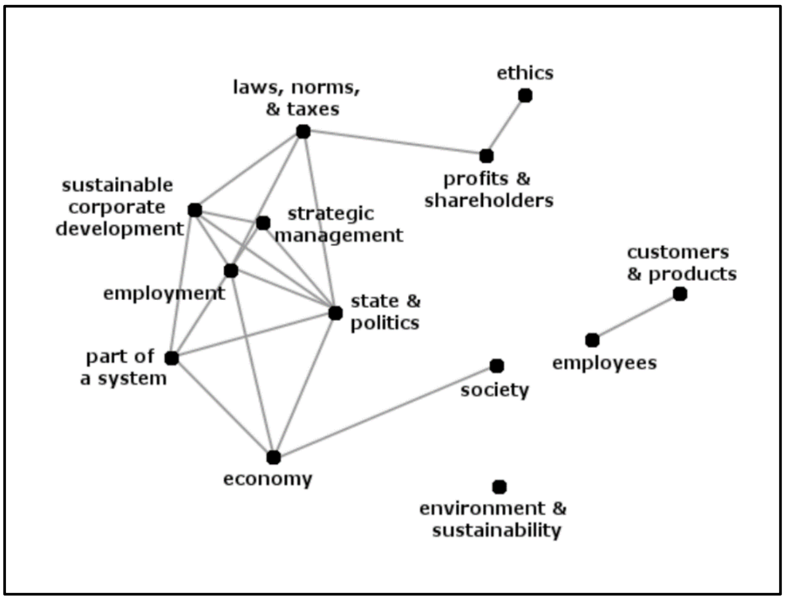

Figure 1. MDS representation of the 13 dimensions of corporate responsibilities, including ties between the 19 most frequent co-occurrences

In the MDS map, the dimension state and politics is in the center and shows systematic co-occurrences with many other dimensions. This indicates that, for Swiss economics students, the state plays a central role when defining the responsibilities of large corporations. A detailed analysis of the narratives revealed three interrelated arguments. First, the state creates a good business environment and, in turn, corporations must be responsible towards the state by fulfilling their responsibilities, especially paying taxes (E22). Respondents, for example, wrote:

> In my opinion, a corporation, first and foremost, has a responsibility towards the state because the state provides infrastructure and thus gives it the possibility to operate successfully. In my opinion, this responsibility does not consist of creating unnecessary jobs but rather in paying taxes in the country where the corporation benefits. (E22)

> They are part of society and benefit a lot, for example, from political and social stability, legal security, etc. (E15)

Second, due to their size (E34), financial power (E27), and importance for the (national) economy (E27) and the state (E6), large corporations can exhibit political power. They have a voice in politics (E27) or have a lobby that influences politics (E34). Corporations have a responsibility to use this political power wisely. Beyond that, political power is also a reason for responsible behavior in a more general sense. Respondents, for example, explained:

> Eventually, they can also have a positive impact on the politics of a country (depending on the region in which they operate, the possibility to exert power). […] In some cases, large corporations have more options than states (regarding political influence) and using means such as economic embargoes can achieve more. (E31)

> Because large corporations are large employers and taxpayers, they also play a central role in the political area. Here yet again, they must not exploit this position of power irresponsibly but manage it in consideration of the whole—certainly with a certain focus on their own interests. (E6)

> [Large corporations have the responsibilities mentioned] because corporations, especially large corporations, have a huge amount of power and contemporary politics benefit too much from corporations to make them discharge their duties. (E8)

Third, the state provides a safety net for corporations in times of crisis. Corporations are primarily responsible for preventing any use of this insurance by proactive decision-making (E1). If nevertheless a state intervention becomes necessary, corporations are obliged to adjust their business model such that it corresponds with the interests of the people (E7). Respondents, for example, wrote:

> A corporation should reflect the effects of its action on the environment (e.g., […] effects on the state (bail-out of banks)); corporations need to better embed this process and the resulting action. […] Because otherwise, the public must pay for wrong decisions made by the company. (E1)

> Essentially, they are mostly responsible towards the shareholders. However, if a large corporation, such as UBS, must be saved by the state and, thus, by the people, from the moment when the money of the people is given and risked, it [referring to the people] has a legitimate right to a say. In this moment, the large corporation should not only act according to economic criteria but as it has a duty toward the people. It is not acceptable that such corporations then act against the interests of the people. (E7)

These arguments reflect the liberal model characteristic of Switzerland and the effect of the government interventions at the beginning of the 21st century. More specifically, they mirror the location promotion program; the dependence of Switzerland on large corporations, which is a result of the country's liberal orientation; and the state's readiness to save large corporations from insolvency. The relationship between the state and private wealth in this argumentation is interesting. The state is seen as responsible for facilitating private wealth generation through the creation of ideal conditions for businesses and for protecting private wealth by paying the costs of corporate failure in times of crisis. Accordingly, the state is regarded as an instrument serving the accumulation of private wealth, i.e., wealth is privatized, and costs are socialized.

Results 3: Three perspectives on large corporations

Further analysis of the MDS map and the highest co-occurrences revealed three perspectives on large corporations evident in our data. Figure 2 gives an overview of these perspectives. The first perspective (Figure 2, red) defines large corporations as responsible for generating a profit within the legal and ethical rules of the game. Respondents, for example, wrote:

> [The responsibilities of large corporations are the] creation of long-term and sustainable shareholder value. Because as Mary Poppins said correctly, "Money makes the world go round." Shareholder value is the central factor because corporations depend on investment. […] "Desired social behavior," which does not contribute to shareholder value in any way, in the end, is only a cost factor, which distorts competition. Here, not corporations but politics are responsible. (E21)

> Large corporations are responsible for generating economic success and ensuring long-term operation. Depending on whether they are listed at the stock market or not, they must ensure a stable-to-growing stock price. Responsibility to make a good choice—or optimize the choice—with regards to the country where they build their headquarters. (E37)

This perspective corresponds with the traditional shareholder model and the ideals of competitive capitalism. Corporations' responsibilities are limited to day-to-day business with a strong focus on economic success, while the state takes care of all other spheres through location promotion. Accordingly, we find a clear distinction between the duties of the corporation and those of the state. However, as outlined above, the events at the beginning of the 21st century put this model up for discussion, and it is not surprising that the first perspective is the least common in our data.

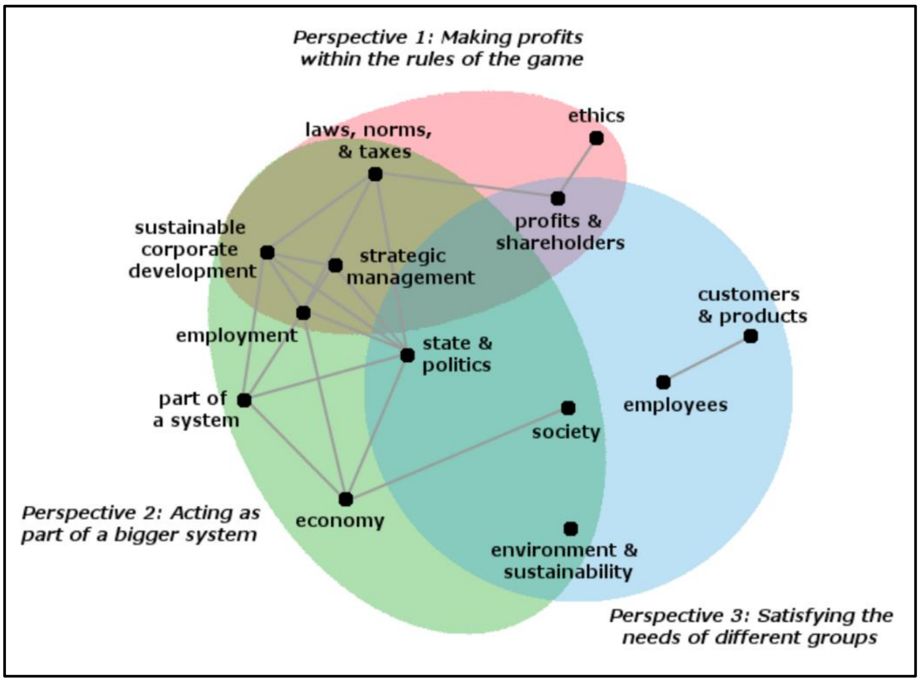

Figure 2. MDS representation with the three perspectives superimposed

The second perspective (Figure 2, green) describes the responsibilities of corporations in relation to the systemic environment within which they operate. Corporations are regarded as essential in the broader societal system, as different constituents, such as employment, wealth, the health of the national economy, and politics, directly or indirectly depend on corporate actions. Therefore, corporations are regarded as responsible for considering the different environmental components in their decision-making and actions. Respondents, for example, explained:

> Large corporations, as the employers of several thousand employees, have, first and foremost, a responsibility towards their employees, second towards society. Large corporations are important employers for many regions, and therefore they are responsible for generating and securing jobs. Furthermore, they have an important responsibility towards our society. Industrial companies, for example, need to keep their emissions as low as possible in order to avoid polluting the environment. Large corporations have these responsibilities due to their size and the important role they play in the economy. Large corporations need to consider that, for many large corporations, there is a certain dependence from the state and society. For this reason, both parties need to contribute to ensure long-term, successful existence. (E19)

> Due to their substantial size, large corporations have certain tasks and duties. On the one hand, this is evident in the number of employed people, sustainable operation, and contribution to the national economy. In addition, they can promote important innovations. When the

> corporation grows, it contributes more and more to employment, wealth, and GDP [gross domestic product]. Because of that, it has the responsibility to be aware of this. (E12)

In addition to the thematic orientation of the dimensions, the systemic nature of this perspective is evident in the structure. In Figure 2, numerous links connect the different dimensions, which indicates the high interrelatedness of the different components. In their essays, the students explicitly name the relations between components. They, for example, explain that employment is connected to social wealth (E6); sustainable management relates to long-term job security (E11); and the setting of corporate goals is linked to employment, environmental standards, laws, and politics (E34).

This perspective shares commonalities with the shared value approach. However, the manifestation of the concept bears the markings of the socioeconomic context of Switzerland. While the literature on shared value does not specify the factors of the system, the dimensions evident in our data reflect the ingredients of the corporate crises. Sustainable corporate development, strategic management, employment, state and politics, and economy are essential components of the system evident in our data. The links between these components, as described by the respondents, are in accordance with the socioeconomic events at the beginning of the 21st century. Respondents, for example, explain that short-term profit maximization does not correspond with social and economic responsibilities and that corporations not fulfilling their role within the system can endanger the national economy:

> Economic and social responsibility relates to sustainable action, which generates value that is not oriented towards short-term profits. Closely related to this is a social responsibility. Society depends on a healthy economy. (E38)

> They have many small up- and downstream companies in their value chain. Also, whole economies can perish (see the UBS case, too big to fail) and because of their size, they have a large lobby, which can influence politics and society. As mentioned above, in this case, one cannot think corporate-specific, but rather needs to think holistically. (E34)

The third perspective (Figure 2, blue) is an actor-centered approach. Corporations are regarded as responsible for satisfying the needs of different actor groups, especially employees, customers, investors, the state, society, and the environment. Students wrote, for example:

> In my opinion, large corporations have, first and foremost, a responsibility towards their employees, who must be numerous, as otherwise, it would not be a large corporation. In addition, there is a responsibility towards the suppliers and customers, as well as a responsibility towards society, depending on what is produced. […] In addition, there is a responsibility towards the environment; neglecting this responsibility, or the exploitation or

uneconomic management of the resources would be revealed one day, and this, in turn, would harm the image. Large corporations are highly dependent on their image. (E2)

> Large corporations have a responsibility towards the different stakeholder groups. I think of employees, the owners, the customers, and society. The large corporation needs to possess a certain quality as a working environment, must give something back to its workers (without whom it would not be a large corporation). It has to be profitable, needs to make good products, but also needs to operate in a way that there is no harm to society. (E26)

In contrast to the systemic components of the second perspective, there is little interrelation between the different stakeholder groups in the third. Rather, they are independent entities with disparate interests. This is evident in the absence of connecting lines in Figure 2. The corporation represents the node where the separate interests meet and must be balanced.

This perspective corresponds with the stakeholder framework. Both emphasize the goal of mutual benefits for a set of disparate actors. When writing about the responsibilities corporations have towards stakeholders, respondents criticize the narrow focus on the interests of particular groups. For example, the respondents disapprove of the idea that corporations are most responsible towards investors, somewhat responsible towards customers, but tend to neglect other groups (E43); or that corporations focus on the interests of some stakeholders while ignoring the needs of others (E5):

> Desirable would be a social responsibility. On the one hand, towards the customer to provide good products, towards the owner to provide a good return on investment, and towards the employees to provide fair, humane work. In the end, as all of these, customers, employees, investors, are only humans; this must not come at a cost for the environment. The responsibility towards the investors is taken very seriously; corporations are also responsible towards customers, but often the other two groups are neglected a bit. Here, one must find the balance. (E43)

> […] Often the interests of a few stakeholders are in the center and the responsibility towards the other parties is neglected or even shuffled off. (E5)

In sum, the socioeconomic developments in Switzerland since the 1990s relate to the perspectives of advanced Swiss economics students towards large corporations in specific ways. First, due to the state's central role in creating a good business environment and maintaining this environment even in times of crises, it is an important point of reference for the students' understanding of the role of large corporations. Second, we found three perspectives towards the role of large corporations: making profits within the rule of the game, acting as part of a bigger system, and satisfying the needs of different groups. Third, these perspectives show similarities to the academic conceptualizations of CR, i.e., the traditional shareholder model, the concept of shared value, and the stakeholder framework. Fourth, the manifestations of these models are linked to the socioeconomic developments in Switzerland. The use of the traditional shareholder model is in line with the liberal ideals of the 1990s. The applications of the shared value approach and the stakeholder framework reflect the knowledge gained or reinforced through the corporate crises, which is evident in the focus on mutual benefits and the adjustment of the models to specific socioeconomic characteristics.

6 Conclusions

This paper explored the CRE of advanced economics students from first-tier Swiss universities and investigated how they relate to the socioeconomic developments in Switzerland since the 1990s. With this study, we made several contributions.

First, we identified and described three distinct perspectives towards large corporations. The first perspective restricts corporate roles to economic responsibilities and puts emphasis on corporate success. The second perspective regards corporations as part of the socioeconomic system and defines their responsibilities in relation to this system. Finally, the third perspective describes corporations as responsible for satisfying the interest of a set of actors that directly or indirectly depend on corporate operations.

Second, the three perspectives show similarities to how CR is conceptualized in the academic literature. More specifically, the three perspectives reflect the traditional shareholder model, the concept of shared value, and the stakeholder framework. This indicates that academic conceptualizations are relevant for understanding the perspectives of future economic leaders in Switzerland.

Third, the manifestations of the theoretical concepts are related to the socioeconomic context in two ways. First, the events in the socioeconomic sphere correspond with the prevalence of concepts. Many of the views expressed in the essays relate to the shared value approach and the stakeholder framework, both of which emphasize mutual benefit—an important demand in the discussions about corporate crises of the beginning 21st century. Only a few of the respondents' perspectives relate to the traditional shareholder model, which, since the turn of the century, has received a great deal of criticism. Second, the concepts are adjusted such that they fit the socioeconomic context within which they are applied. Our results reinforce the findings of previous studies indicating that contextual characteristics play a central role for the CRE. However, our results expand these findings by showing that context is relevant even in cases where the CRE relate to academic conceptualizations of CR in that the specific application of these concepts depends on the contextual characteristics.

Fourth, our study shows that, in Switzerland, the state plays a central role for the CRE of the students. Even though our study focused on the respondents' CRE, our analyses show that the students count on the state to provide optimal conditions for businesses and support in economically difficult times. In doing so, the state enables the accumulation of private wealth and protects accumulated wealth. From a CR perspective, the notion of privatizing wealth and socializing costs is problematic because it describes a situation of unlimited state guarantees, wherein corporations can benefit from their achievements but do not have to pay for their failures.

Finally, for Switzerland, our analysis indicates a process of rethinking corporate roles within the existing socioeconomic system. The socioeconomic developments of Switzerland since the 1990s are characterized by antagonistic, interdependent tendencies. The corporate crises of the new century put some of competitive capitalism's ideals, developed in the 1990s, up for discussion without rejecting them. Our results reveal attempts to redefine corporate roles within the framework of liberalism and competitive capitalism such that the lessons learned from the crises are integrated. These attempts manifest in the emphasis on mutual benefits and the high prevalence, and at the same time pronounced vagueness, of social and economic responsibilities.

In sum, we showed how CRE systematically relate to the socioeconomic context and, in doing so, reinforced the findings of previous studies. For the context of Switzerland, we found evidence that a new area of corporate governance is evolving. It still needs to take shape, but our research indicates that it is likely to be based on an integration of liberal, capitalist, competitive, social, and environmental elements and that the state will play a central role in furthering and protecting private wealth.

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PART II: TOOLS FOR HERMENEUTIC CONTENT ANALYSIS IN R

A. Introduction and overview
B. Data preparation tools
C. Modelling tools
D. Interpretation tools
E. References

A. Introduction and overview

This section gives an overview of the R tools developed as part of my dissertation to perform the second step of Hermeneutic Content Analysis (HCA; Bergman, 2010)[25]. The tools assist with implementing Multidimensional Scaling (MDS) within an HCA framework by assisting with data preparation, modelling, and interpretation of MDS maps. The data preparation tools help users create similarity matrices based on co-occurrence or sorting data. The modelling tools allow users to optimize the modelling process by systematically calculating Stress values for a set of *p* points out of *n* points. The tools assisting interpretation allow users to highlight the highest similarities, either per point or overall, in an MDS representation. Many of the tools depend on the package *smacof* (Mair, De Leeuw, Borg, & Groenen, 2009; Mair, De Leeuw, Borg, & Groenen, 2017).

[25] These tools are part of the unpublished R package *thectar*. I am aware that some of the functions presented in the following sections could be improved in terms of computational cost and modularity. Here, I would like to emphasize that *thectar* is, as most R packages are, a work in progress. Wickham (2015) was used as guideline for development.

B. Data preparation tools

simi	*Compute a similarity matrix*

Description

simi calculates a similarity matrix for co-occurrence data.

Arguments

data Dataset; the first column must be the ID of the unit of comparison and all other columns must be categories.

method Specifies the output; choose between "*sort*" (sorted version of the data), "*aggregate*" (aggregated version of the data), "*dichotomize*" (dichotomized version of the data), "as" (similarity matrix using Association Strength Index), "*jaccard*" (similarity matrix using Jaccard Index), "*cosine*" (similarity matrix using Cosine Index), "*inclusion*" (similarity matrix using Inclusion Index), and "*correlation*" (similarity matrix using correlation).

single If *TRUE*, single mentionings (i.e., persons mentioning elements of only one category) are included. Default is *TRUE*.

comments If *TRUE*, comments relating to exclusion or possible exclusion of categories and respondents are displayed. Default is *TRUE*.

Value

Sorted, aggregated, or dichotomized dataset or similarity matrix.

Details

This function applies to co-occurrence data. It calculates a similarity matrix using one of the following indices: Association Strength, Jaccard, Cosine, Inclusion (calculation of these are based on Van Eck & Waltman, 2009), or Correlation. Additionally, the function can also generate a sorted, aggregated, and dichotomized version of the input data table. The first column should contain the ID of the unit of comparison, and the following columns the categories for which the similarity is calculated. Lines belonging to the same unit of comparison (i.e., same ID) will be combined. *simi* is particularly suitable for not sorted, not aggregated, or not dichotomized datasets. For datasets already sorted, aggregated, and dichotomized, the package *proxy* of Meyer and Buchta (2018) offers an alternative for calculating similarity matrices.

Usage

simi(data, method = c("sort", "aggregate", "dichotomize", "as", "jaccard", "cosine", "inclusion", "correlation"), single = TRUE, comments = TRUE)

Dependencies

None.

See also

dist for alternative ways to calculate similarity matrices; the package *proxy* of Meyer and Buchta (2018) for an alternative for calculating similarity matrices; Van Eck & Waltman (2009) for a detailed discussion on similarity measures.

R code of function

```
simi <- function(data, method = c("sort", "aggregate", "dichotomize", "as",
"jaccard", "cosine", "inclusion", "correlation"), single = TRUE, comments = TRUE){

  type <- match.arg(method, c("sort", "aggregate", "dichotomize", "as", "jaccard",
  "cosine", "inclusion", "correlation"), several.ok = FALSE)

  data <- as.data.frame(data)

  # Set the desired type to TRUE --------------------------------------------------

  sorted <- FALSE
  aggregate <- FALSE
  dichotomize <- FALSE
  as <- FALSE
  jaccard <- FALSE
  cosine <- FALSE
  inclusion <- FALSE
  correlation <- FALSE


  if(type == "sort"){
    sorted <- TRUE
  }

  if(type == "aggregate"){
    aggregate <- TRUE
```

```
}

if(type == "dichotomize"){
  dichotomize <- TRUE
}

if(type == "as"){
  as <- TRUE
}

if(type == "jaccard"){
  jaccard <- TRUE
}

if(type == "cosine"){
  cosine <- TRUE
}

if(type == "inclusion"){
  inclusion <- TRUE
}

if(type == "correlation"){
  correlation <- TRUE
}

# Prepare basic parameters for the calculations ---------------------------------

line <- data[, 1]
x <- length(unique(line))
y <- length(data)
k = x + 1
j = y + 1

# Order the matrix --------------------------------------------------------------

data <- data[order(data[, 1]), ]

output_sorted <- data

# Aggregate the rows ------------------------------------------------------------

i <- 1
l <- y

empty_line <- rep(0, y)
```

```
data <- rbind(data, empty_line)
while (i < k){
  if
  (data[i, 1] == data[i + 1, 1]) {
    helper_1 <- data[i, 2:l] + data[i + 1, 2:l]
    helper_2 <- cbind(data[i, 1], helper_1)
    data[i, ] <- helper_2
    data <- data[-(i + 1), ]
  }else{
    i <- i + 1}
}
data <- data[-i, ]

output_aggregate <- data

# Check if there is any column with colsum = 0 ---------------------------------
# We delete such columns because they add no value and result in division by 0.

colsums <- colSums(data)
if(any(colsums == 0)){
  notused <- which(colsums %in% c(0))
  notused <- sort(notused, decreasing = TRUE)
  for(i in (1:length(notused))){
    if(comments == TRUE){
      print(paste("Not used category: There are no mentionings in category",
      colnames(data)[notused[i]], ". It will be excluded from analysis." ))
    }
    data <- data[, -notused[i]]
  }
}

input_correlation <- data
### We need this later for the calculation of the correlation

# Recalculate some of the parameters (matrix characteristics may have changed) --

y <- length(data)
j <- y + 1

# Dichotomize matrix ------------------------------------------------------------

n <- 1
m <- 2

while (n < k) {
  while (m < j){
```

```
    if
    (data[n, m] >= 1){
      data[n, m] <- 1
      m <- m + 1
    }else{
      data[n, m] <- 0
      m <- m + 1
    }}
  n <- n + 1
  m <- 2
}

output_dichotomize <- data

# The rest of the code only needs to be executed if "as", "jaccard", "cosine",
# "inclusion", or "correlation" is TRUE.

if(as == TRUE | jaccard == TRUE | cosine == TRUE | inclusion == TRUE |
correlation == TRUE){

  # Check if there are any rows with just one or no mentioning ------------------
  # If SM = TRUE and comments = TRUE give a warning; if SM = FALSE delete rows
  # with just one or no mentioning, give a warning depending on whether comments
  # is TRUE or FALSE.

  rowsums <- rowSums(data[, c(2:ncol(data))])
  if(any(rowsums < 2)){
    notused <- which(rowsums %in% c(0, 1))
    notused <- sort(notused, decreasing = TRUE)
    for(i in (1:length(notused))){
      if(single == FALSE){
        if(comments == TRUE){
          print(paste("Object with only one or no mentioning: There is only one
          or no mentioning in the row with", colnames(data)[1], data[notused[i],
          1], ". This object will be excluded from analysis." ))
        }
        data <- data[-notused[i], ]
      }
      if(single == TRUE){
        if(comments == TRUE){
          print(paste("Warning: Object with only one or no mentioning. There is
          only one or no mentioning in the row with", colnames(data)[1],
          data[notused[i],1], ". " ))
        }
      }
    }
```

```
}

# Extract column names -------------------------------------------------------

labels <- colnames(data)
labels <- labels[-(1)]

# Recalculate some of the parameters (matrix characteristics may have changed)

line <- data[, 1]
x <- length(unique(line))
k <- x + 1

# Calculate similarity indices (dichotomous) ----------------------------------

if(as == TRUE | jaccard == TRUE | cosine == TRUE | inclusion == TRUE){

  output_as <- matrix(rep(0, (y-1)^2), nrow = y - 1)
  output_jaccard <- matrix(rep(0, (y-1)^2), nrow = y - 1)
  output_cosine <- matrix(rep(0, (y-1)^2), nrow = y - 1)
  output_inclusion <- matrix(rep(0, (y-1)^2), nrow = y - 1)

  si <- 0
  sj <- 0
  cij <- 0

  n <- 1
  m <- 2
  w <- m

  while(m < j){
    while(w < j){
      while(n < k){
        if(data[n, m] == 1){
          si <- si + 1
        }
        if(data[n, w] == 1){
          sj <- sj + 1
        }
        if(data[n, m] == data[n, w]){
          if(data[n, m] == 1){
            cij <- cij + 1
          }
        }
        n <- n + 1
        if(n == k){
```

```
          output_as[m-1, w-1] <- c(cij / (si * sj))
          output_as[w-1, m-1] <- c(cij / (si * sj))
          output_jaccard[m-1, w-1] <- c(cij / (si + sj - cij))
          output_jaccard[w-1, m-1] <- c(cij / (si + sj - cij))
          output_cosine[m-1, w-1] <- c(cij / (sqrt(si * sj)))
          output_cosine[w-1, m-1] <- c(cij / (sqrt(si * sj)))
          output_inclusion[m-1, w-1] <- c(cij / (min(si, sj)))
          output_inclusion[w-1, m-1] <- c(cij / (min(si, sj)))
        }
      }
      n <- 1
      w <- w + 1
      si <- 0
      sj <- 0
      cij <- 0
    }
    w <- m + 1
    m <- m + 1
  }

  rownames(output_as) <- labels
  colnames(output_as) <- labels
  rownames(output_jaccard) <- labels
  colnames(output_jaccard) <- labels
  rownames(output_cosine) <- labels
  colnames(output_cosine) <- labels
  rownames(output_inclusion) <- labels
  colnames(output_inclusion) <- labels

} else{
  output_as <- NULL
  output_jaccard <- NULL
  output_cosine <- NULL
  output_inclusion <- NULL
}

# Calculate similarity indices (not dichotomous) ------------------------------

if(correlation == TRUE){
  helper_3 <- input_correlation[, 2:length(input_correlation)]
  output_correlation <- cor(helper_3)

  rownames(output_correlation) <- labels
  colnames(output_correlation) <- labels
} else{
  output_correlation <- NULL
```

```
    }

  }

  # Output ------------------------------------------------------------------------

  if(type == "sort"){
    l <- output_sorted
  }

  if(type == "aggregate"){
    l <- output_aggregate
  }

  if(type == "dichotomize"){
    l <- output_dichotomize
  }

  if(type == "as"){
    l <- output_as
  }

  if(type == "jaccard"){
  l <- output_jaccard
  }

  if(type == "cosine"){
    l <- output_cosine
  }

  if(type == "inclusion"){
    l <- output_inclusion
  }

  if(type == "correlation"){
    l <- output_correlation
  }

  invisible(l)
}
```

Description

simicount calculates a similarity matrix for sorting data.

Arguments

data	Dataset; one row represents one sorting, objects in one pile must have the same number.

Value

Similarity matrix.

Details

This function is applicable to sorting data. It creates a similarity matrix showing how often two objects were in the same pile. Each line of the dataset should refer to one sorting. The first column should contain the ID of the sorting; the following columns refer to the objects that have been sorted. The allocation of objects to piles is indicated with numbers; for each line, the objects that have been sorted into the same pile should have the same number (e.g., all objects with a “1” are in one pile, all objects with a “2” are in one pile, etc.).

Usage

simicount(data)

Dependencies

None.

R code of function

```
simicount <- function(data){

  # Prepare basic parameters ---------------------------------------------

  length <- (ncol(data) - 1) ^ 2

  output <- matrix(rep(0, length), ncol = (ncol(data) - 1))

  labels <- colnames(data)
  labels <- labels[-1]
```

```
  # Compute a similarity matrix by counting co-occurrences ----------------

  i <- 1
  j <- 2
  h <- 2
  k <- ncol(data)
  l <- nrow(data)

  while(i < l + 1){
    while(j < k + 1){
      while(h < k + 1){
        if(data[i, j] == data[i, h]){
          output[j-1, h-1] <- output[j-1, h-1] + 1
        }
        h <- h + 1
      }
      j <- j + 1
      h <- 2
    }
    i <- i + 1
    j <- 2
    h <- 2
  }

  colnames(output) <- labels
  rownames(output) <- labels

  # Output ---------------------------------------------------------------

  invisible(output)
}
```

C. Modelling tools

lscomb	*Lowering Stress by trying combinations (lscomb)*

Description

lscomb calculates Stress levels for all combinations of *p* out of *n* points.

Arguments

data	Dataset; the first column must be the ID of the unit of comparison, the other columns must be categories; see dataset requirements *simi*.
points	Number of categories that should be included in the model ($p < n$, wherein *n* equals the number of categories in the dataset).
method	Specifies the similarity index used to compute the similarity matrix; choose between "*as*" (Association Strength Index), "*jaccard*" (Jaccard Index), "*cosine*" (Cosine Index), "*inclusion*" (Inclusion Index), and "*correlation.*"
single	If *TRUE*, single mentionings (i.e., one person mentioning just one category) are included when calculating the similarity matrix. Default is *TRUE*.
comments	If *TRUE*, comments relating to exclusion or possible exclusion of categories and respondents are displayed. Default is *FALSE*.
type	Specifies the type of MDS model used (for more details see the package *smacof* of Mair, De Leeuw, Borg, & Groenen, 2017).

Value

Table showing the Stress values for all combinations with *p* out of *n* categories. The table is sorted such that the lowest Stress values are at the top.

Details

This function is applicable to co-occurrence data. It shows the resulting Stress values for all combinations of *p* out of *n* categories. The output consists of a table showing which categories have been included and the resulting Stress value. The table is sorted such that the lowest Stress value occurs at the top. The MDS model is computed using the package *smacof* (Mair, De Leeuw, Borg, & Groenen, 2017). The first column should contain the ID of the unit of comparison, and the following columns the categories for which the similarity matrices and

MDS maps are calculated (see also, the description of *simi*). Note that the purpose of this function is to assist modelling by helping to identify potential problems. It is not, however, meant to be used for excluding categories based solely on measures of fit and without substantial justification.

Usage

lscomb(data, points, method = “as”, single = TRUE, comments = FALSE, type = “ordinal”)

Dependencies

Package *smacof* (Mair, De Leeuw, Borg, & Groenen, 2017), function *simi*.

See also

smacofSym for details on calculating MDS representations; *simi* for details on calculating similarity matrices.

R code of function

```
lscomb <- function(data, points, method = "as", single = TRUE, comments = FALSE,
type = "ordinal"){

 # Prepare basic parameters -------------------------------------------------------

  elements <- length(data) - 1 ### all available elements
  list <- c(1:elements) ### list with all possible elements
  comb <- combn(list, points) ### all possible combinations
  combination <- matrix(c(data[, 1]), ncol = 1)
  colnames(combination) <- c(colnames(data[1]))
  output <- matrix(c(rep(0, points + 1)), nrow = 1)
  labels <- c(colnames(data[1]))

  # Inform user that the process may take some time ------------------------------

  ncomb <- ncol(comb) ### number of different combinations
  print(paste("Note: For", points, "out of", elements, "variables, there are",
  ncomb, "different combinations. It will take a while to calculate the Stress
  values for all of them."))

  # Compute the Stress for all possible combinations -----------------------------

  i <- 1
  j <- 1

  while(i < ncol(comb) + 1){
```

```
  while(j < nrow(comb) + 1){
    combination <- cbind(combination,data[, comb[j,i] + 1])
    labels <- cbind(labels, colnames(data[comb[j, i] + 1]))
    j <- j + 1
  }

  colnames(combination) <- labels
  combination <- as.data.frame(combination)
  similarity <- simi(combination, method = method, single = single,
  comments = comments)
  w <- as.numeric(similarity < 1e-8)
  weight = matrix(1 - w, nrow = nrow(similarity), ncol = ncol(similarity))
  dissimilarities <- 1 - similarity
  res <- smacof::smacofSym(dissimilarities, type = type, weightmat = weight)
  C1 <- matrix(c(colnames(combination[2:c(nrow(comb) + 1)])), nrow = 1)
  # what was combined
  C2 <- res$stress # stress of the solution
  C3 <- cbind(C1, C2) # what was combined and the stress of the solution
  output <- rbind(output, C3) # add this to output
  i <- i + 1
  j <- 1
  combination <- data[, 1]
  labels <- c(colnames(data[1]))
}

# Order the matrix such that the lowest Stress value is at the top -------------

output <- output[-1, ]
output <- as.data.frame(output)
output <- output[order(output[, points+1]), ]

# Add labels to output ---------------------------------------------------------

i <- 2
labels <- c("Included object 1")

while(i < points + 1){
  next_label <- paste("Included object", i)
  labels <- cbind(labels, next_label)
  i <- i + 1
}

labels <- cbind(labels, "Resulting Stress value")
colnames(output) <- labels
```

```
  # Output ---------------------------------------------------------------------

  invisible(output)
}
```

Description

lspoints calculates Stress values for all combinations with *n – 1* categories.

Arguments

data	Dataset; the first column must be the ID of the unit of comparison, the other columns must be categories; see dataset requirements *simi*.
method	Specifies the similarity index used to compute the similarity matrix; choose between "*as" (Association Strength Index),* "*jaccard*" (Jaccard Index), "*cosine*" (Cosine Index), "*inclusion*" (Inclusion Index), and "*correlation.*"
single	If *TRUE*, single mentionings (i.e., one person mentioning just one category) are included when calculating the similarity matrix. Default is *TRUE*.
comments	If *TRUE*, comments relating to exclusion or possible exclusion of categories and respondents are displayed. Default is *FALSE*.
type	Specifies the type of MDS model used (for more details, see the package "*smacof*" of Mair, De Leeuw, Borg, & Groenen, 2017)

Value

Table showing the Stress values for all combinations with *n – 1* categories. The table is sorted such that the lowest Stress values are at the top.

Details

This function is applicable to co-occurrence data. It shows the resulting Stress values when single categories are excluded. The output consists of a table showing which categories have been excluded and the resulting Stress values. The table is sorted such that the lowest Stress level occurs at the top. The MDS model is computed using the package *smacof* (Mair, De Leeuw, Borg, & Groenen, 2017). The first column of the dataset should contain the ID of the unit of comparison, and the following columns the categories for which the similarity matrices and MDS maps are calculated (see also, the description of *simi*). Note that the purpose of this function is to assist modelling by helping to identify potential problems. It is not, however, meant to be used for excluding categories based solely on measures of fit and without substantial justification.

Usage

lspoints(data, method = “as”, single = TRUE, comments = FALSE, type = “ordinal”)

Dependencies

Package *smacof*, function *simi*.

See also

smacofSym (Mair, De Leeuw, Borg, & Groenen, 2017) for details on calculating MDS representations; *simi* for details on calculating similarity matrices.

R code of function

```
lspoints <- function(data, method = "as", single = TRUE, comments = FALSE,
type = "ordinal"){

  # Prepare the basic parameters -----------------------------------------------

  x <- length(data)
  i <- 2
  output <- matrix(c(rep(0,(x - 1) * 2)), ncol = 2)

  # Exclude the points and save the Stress ----------------------------------------

  while(i < x + 1){
    configuration <- data
    configuration <- configuration[, -i]
    similarity <- simi(configuration, method = method, single = single,
    comments = comments)
    w <- as.numeric(similarity < 1e-8)
    weight = matrix(1 - w, nrow = nrow(similarity), ncol = ncol(similarity))
    dissimilarities <- 1 - similarity
    res <- smacof::smacofSym(dissimilarities,  type = type, weightmat = weight)
    output[i -1, 1] <- (colnames(data[i]))
    output[i - 1, 2] <- res$stress
    i <- i + 1
  }

  # Order the resulting vector such that the lowest Stress value is at the top ----

  r <- as.numeric(output[, 2])
  output <- output[order(r), ]

  # Add labels to the columns -----------------------------------------------------
```

```
  labels <- c("Excluded object", "Resulting Stress value")
  colnames(output) <- labels

  # Output ---------------------------------------------------------------------------

  invisible(output)
}
```

D. Interpretation tools

highlall	*Highlight highest similarities overall (highlall)*

Description

highlall draws the highest similarities (overall) into an MDS graph.

Arguments

similarity	Similarity matrix.
results	Results of *smacofSym* or a set of coordinates.
quantile	Percentage of the highest similarities to be drawn.
col	Color of the points in the graph.
coordinates	If *TRUE*, the input results consist of a set of coordinates. Default is *FALSE*.
add	If *TRUE*, the points will be added to the existing plot. Default is *FALSE*.

Details

This function is applicable to an MDS solution computed with the package *smacof* (Mair, De Leeuw, Borg, & Groenen, 2017) or a set of coordinates. It adds the *quantile* percent of highest similarities, as indicated by the similarity matrix *similarity*, to the plot of the respective map.

Usage

highlall(similarity, results, quantile = 30, col = "black", coordinates = FALSE, add = FALSE)

Dependencies

None.

See also

smacofSym (Mair, De Leeuw, Borg, & Groenen, 2017).

R code of function

```
highlall <- function(similarity, results, quantile = 30, col = "black",
coordinates = FALSE, add = FALSE){

  results_smacof <- results
```

```
# Find the cut-off value ----------------------------------------------------

similarity_dual <- similarity[lower.tri(similarity, diag = FALSE)]
quantile <- (100 - quantile) / 100
quantile <- quantile(similarity_dual, quantile)

# Find the values that are above the cut-off value ------------------------------

highest_values <- (similarity >= quantile)
highest_values[upper.tri(highest_values, diag = TRUE)] = FALSE

# Find the points to which the values belong to ---------------------------------

ind <- 1
i <- 1
j <- 1

k <- length(highest_values[, 1])

coordinates_high <- matrix(c(rep(0, length(which(highest_values)) * 2)),
ncol = 2)

while(i < k + 1){
  while(j < k + 1){
    if(highest_values[i, j] == TRUE){
      coordinates_high[ind, 1] <- i
      coordinates_high[ind, 2] <- j
    ind <- ind + 1
    }
    j <- j + 1
  }
  j = 1
  i <- i + 1
}

# Plot the graph and draw the lines ---------------------------------------------

if(coordinates == FALSE){
  coordinates_points <- results_smacof$conf
}else{
  coordinates_points <- results_smacof
}

k <- length(coordinates_high[, 1])
i <- 1
j <- 1
```

```
  if(add == FALSE){
    plot(results_smacof, pch = 19, asp = 1, col = col)
  }else{
    points(coordinates_points, pch = 19, col = col)
  }

  while(i < k + 1){
    segments(coordinates_points[coordinates_high[i, 1], 1],
    coordinates_points[coordinates_high[i, 1], 2],
    coordinates_points[coordinates_high[i, 2], 1],
    coordinates_points[coordinates_high[i, 2], 2], lwd = c(1.9), col = col)
    i <- i + 1
  }

  if(coordinates == TRUE){
    labels<-rownames(results_smacof)
    text(coordinates_points + 0.05, labels, col = col)
  }
}
```

highlpoints	*Highlight highest similarities per point (highlpoints)*

Description

highlpoints draws the highest similarities (per point) into an MDS graph.

Arguments

similarity	Similarity matrix.
results	Results of *smacofSym* or a set of coordinates.
links	Number of similarities that should be drawn per point.
col	Color of the points in the graph.
coordinates	If *TRUE*, the input results consist of a set of coordinates. Default is *FALSE*.
add	If *TRUE*, the points will be added to the existing plot. Default is *FALSE*.

Details

This function is applicable to an MDS solution computed with the package *smacof* (Mair, De Leeuw, Borg, & Groenen, 2017) or a set of coordinates. It adds the *link* highest similarities per point, as indicated by the similarity matrix *similarity*, to the plot of the respective map. The links belonging to one point are displayed in the same color. If there is more than one similarity on the last rank *link*, all will be shown.

Usage

highlpoints(similarity, results, links = 3, col = "black", coordinates = FALSE, add = FALSE)

Dependencies

None.

See also

smacofSym (Mair, De Leeuw, Borg, & Groenen, 2017).

R code of function

```
highlpoints <- function(similarity, results, links = 3, col = "black",
coordinates = FALSE, add = FALSE){

  # Define basic parameters ----------------------------------------------------
```

```
number_max <- links
results_smacof <- results

# Find the values that fit the criteria -----------------------------------------

similarity[row(similarity) == col(similarity)] <- 0
highest_values <- matrix(c(rep(FALSE, c(nrow(similarity) * ncol(similarity)))),
nrow = nrow(similarity), ncol = ncol(similarity))

k <- length(similarity[, 1])
i <- 1
j <- 1
ind <- 1

v <- 0

while(i < k + 1){
  while(ind < number_max + 1){
    max <- which.max(similarity[i, ])
    highest_values[i, max] <- TRUE
    number <- similarity[i, max]
    similarity[i, max] <- c(-1)
    v <- rbind(v, i)

    if(ind == number_max) { ### checking for multiple last ranks
      number_k <- sum(similarity[i, ] == number)
      number_i = 1
      while(number_i < number_k + 1){
        max <- which.max(similarity[i, ])
        highest_values[i, max] <- TRUE
        similarity[i, max] <- c(-1)
        number_i <- number_i + 1
        v <- rbind(v, i)
      }
    }

    ind <- ind + 1

  }
  ind <- 1
  i <- i + 1
}

v <- v[-1]
```

```
# Find the points to which the values belong ----------------------------------

ind <- 1
i <- 1
j <- 1

k <- length(highest_values[, 1])

coordinates_high <- matrix(c(rep(0, length(which(highest_values)) * 2)),
ncol = 2)

while(i < k + 1){
  while(j < k + 1){
    if(highest_values[i, j] == TRUE){
      coordinates_high[ind, 1] <- i
      coordinates_high[ind, 2] <- j
      ind <- ind + 1
    }
    j <- j + 1
  }
  j <- 1
  i <- i + 1
}

# Plot the graph and draw the lines ---------------------------------------------

if(coordinates == FALSE){
  coordinates_points <- results_smacof$conf
}else{
  coordinates_points <- results_smacof
}

k <- length(coordinates_high[, 1])
i <- 1
j <- 1

if(add == FALSE){
  plot(results_smacof, pch = 19, asp = 1, col = col)
}else{
  points(coordinates_points, pch = 19, col = col)
}

while(i < k + 1){
  segments(coordinates_points[coordinates_high[i, 1], 1] +
  c((max(coordinates_points[, 1]) - min(coordinates_points[, 1])) / 186),
  coordinates_points[coordinates_high[i, 1], 2] + c((max(coordinates_points[, 1])
```

```
    - min(coordinates_points[, 1])) / 172),
    coordinates_points[coordinates_high[i, 2], 1],
    coordinates_points[coordinates_high[i, 2], 2], col = v[i], lty = 1)
    i <- i + 1
  }

  if(coordinates == TRUE){
    labels<-rownames(results_smacof)
    text(coordinates_points + 0.05, labels, col = col)
  }
}
```

E. References

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