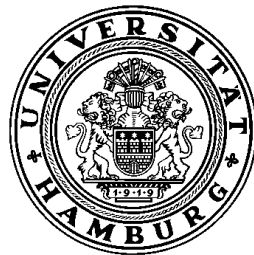


**Creating Value by Sharing Values – Pluralistic Stakeholder Management
through Discursive Justification**

Universität Hamburg

Fakultät für Wirtschafts- und Sozialwissenschaften



Kumulative Dissertation

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„Jede Idee wird falsch, sobald man sie zu Ende denkt.“

Hans Magnus Enzensberger

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Writing a dissertation is both a very exhilarating and deeply humbling experience. As a doctoral candidate one immerses oneself in different theories, concepts and arguments gaining a more complex and nuanced view of the world nearly every day. At the same time however one realizes – as the quote from Hans Magnus Enzensberger aptly suggests – that this complexity never dissolves into any unshakeable or eternal insights. During my time as a doctoral student I came to cultivate a reasonable pluralism of theoretical perspectives that aims at avoiding the pitfalls of universalism as well as particularism.

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Overview of Dissertation Papers

Nr.	Title	Authors	Journal/Outlet	Status	Conference Presentations	Acknowledgements
I	Das Shared-Value-Konzept von Porter und Kramer – The Big Idea!?	Schormair, M. J. L., Gilbert, D. U.	Chapter in German in peer reviewed book (2017): Wunder, Thomas (Ed.): CSR und Strategisches Management, Springer, pp. 95-110.	Published		
II	Obfuscating ideology through the notion of sharing – the case of Porter and Kramer’s Shared Value concept	Schormair, M. J. L.	Journal of Business Ethics (JBE)	Submitted (Under Initial Review)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academy of Management (AOM) Annual Meeting, Atlanta, 2017 AOM SIM-Division Research Incubator, Philadelphia, 2014 	
III	Creating Value by Sharing Values – Managing Stakeholder Value Pluralism through Discursive Justification	Schormair, M. J. L., Gilbert, D. U.	Business Ethics Quarterly (BEQ)	Under Review, 2nd round	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic Management Society Annual Meeting, Berlin, 2016 European Business Ethics Network Annual Meeting, Copenhagen, 2015 Society of Business Ethics (SBE) Annual Meeting, Philadelphia, 2014 Philosophy of Management Conference, Chicago, 2014 	
IV	From progressive to conservative and back: constructing political CSR identities in multi-stakeholder initiatives – the case of the “Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh”	Huber, K., Schormair, M. J. L.	Business & Society (BaS)	Under Review, 2nd round	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> European Group for Organizational Studies (EGOS) Annual Conference, Naples, 2016 Workshop at Cass Business School on Political CSR, London, 2016 SBE Annual Meeting, Atlanta, 2017 	Finalist for best conference paper award at the annual meeting of the SBE in Atlanta 2017

Synopsis

Introduction

The concept of value creation represents one of the fundamental concepts for economists, managers and business ethicists alike. Exploring which kind of value a company should create and how a company should manage its stakeholders to create said value has sparked an intense debate particularly among business ethics scholars over the past decades. On the one hand several business ethicists and most (neo-)classical economists tend to agree with Friedman's (1970) famous dictum that corporations should maximize the creation of financial value for its shareholders. This position has permeated management and CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) research suggesting that maximizing profits for shareholders ultimately also benefits society writ large (Jensen, 2002; Sundaram & Inkpen, 2004). However, in the face of business-related societal challenges such as climate change, environmental degradation, unemployment or enduring financial instability an alternative management paradigm has emerged arguing for companies to create value for all its stakeholders not just for shareholders alone (Freeman, 1984; Freeman, Harrison, Wicks, Parmar, & De Colle, Simone de, 2010).

Recently, this by now classical debate has received new vigor (Donaldson & Walsh, 2015; Jones, Donaldson, Freeman, Harrison, Leana, Mahoney, & Pearce, 2016). Porter and Kramer (2011) for example suggest that by creating so called "shared value" companies can achieve "a higher form of capitalism" that realigns business and society. Jones and Felps (2013a, 2013b) in turn argue on neo-utilitarian grounds for corporations to focus on the creation of "stakeholder happiness". Other stakeholder theorists criticize the aforementioned propositions for being overly reductive and one-dimensional suggesting instead to adopt a pluralistic approach to stakeholder value creation (Mitchell, van Buren, Greenwood, & Freeman, 2015; Mitchell, Weaver, Agle, Bailey, & Carlson, 2016; van der Linden & Freeman, 2017). In this vein,

Harrison and Wicks (2013) suggest a pluralistic notion of stakeholder utility that companies should aim to create.

Recent stakeholder value creation theory describes stakeholder management “as a sequential risk-*sharing* [emphasis added] process of stakeholder organization (...) toward the end of value creation” (Mitchell et al., 2015: 858). The advent of the so called “sharing economy” (Stephany, 2015; Sundararajan, 2016) brought the potential of ‘sharing’ for stakeholder value creation to the attention of a growing body of management and CSR scholars. Accordingly, recent research started to investigate the notion of sharing more closely suggesting that sharing “incorporates a wide range of distributive and communicative practices, while also carrying a set of positive connotations to do with our relations with others and a more just allocation of resources” (John, 2012: 176). An intense debate has emerged within the literature discussing the “true nature” of the notion of sharing in the light of its current proliferation in research and practice (Belk, 2014a, 2014b; Eckhardt & Bardhi, 2015).

Concurrently with this reinvigorated discussion concerning the concepts of stakeholder value creation and the notion of sharing, scholars within the so called “political CSR” research stream debate ways and means to enhance social welfare and the societal legitimacy of the firm under the conditions of stakeholder value pluralism (Marti & Scherer, 2016; Scherer, 2017, 2017; Scherer, Rasche, Palazzo, & Spicer, 2016). Several political CSR scholars argue on the basis of Habermas’ theory of deliberative democracy (1996, 1999) that different stakeholder perspectives can be accommodated through stakeholder deliberations between different stakeholder groups in so called multi-stakeholder initiatives (MSIs) (Gilbert, Rasche, Waddock, & Arnold, 2011; Mena & Palazzo, 2012; Scherer & Palazzo, 2007; Scherer & Palazzo, 2011). Other scholars however raise serious doubts regarding consensus-oriented approaches such as deliberative democracy arguing that dealing with stakeholder value pluralism warrants “dissensual” (Whelan, 2013) as well as “agonistic” (Dawkins, 2015) approaches.

This dissertation takes these recent debates as its starting point aiming to advance theory on both pluralistic stakeholder value creation and political CSR by exploring the potential of the notion of sharing as act of communication from a normative-conceptual as well as qualitative-empirical perspective. The first paper of this cumulative dissertation critically examines the shared value concept suggesting that Porter and Kramer developed a promising idea without providing sufficient conceptual means to meet its aspirations. The second paper investigates the notion of sharing more closely developing an analytical framework outlining its denotative and connotative dimensions as well as introducing a set of assessment criteria indicating the risk of ideological obfuscation associated with the notion of sharing. The third paper theorizes the notion of sharing as act of communication in more detail by conceptualizing a discursive sharing process guided by multidimensional criteria of justification assisting managers and stakeholders to create pluralistic stakeholder value. The fourth and final paper of this dissertation explores the political dimension of this discursive sharing process in practice by conducting an in-depth case study of the Accord uncovering the underlying processes of political CSR identity construction in MSIs.

The introductory chapter of this cumulative dissertation proceeds as follows: the next section introduces the central theoretical concepts on which the four research papers of this dissertation are based. The following section elaborates on the research agenda that the four papers aim to address. Then, the methodological approach of this dissertation is outlined before providing a summary of the key substance and central line of argumentation of each paper. This chapter concludes by stressing the central contributions to theory of this dissertation as well as by discussing avenues for further research.

Theoretical background

This chapter outlines the main literature streams on which the research conducted in this cumulative dissertation is build. After introducing the main elements of value creation stakeholder theory, I elaborate on the recent debate between monistic and pluralistic conceptions of stakeholder management. I then proceed by elucidating the discussion concerning the notion of sharing within the management and CSR literature before describing the basic tenets of the Habermasian political CSR research stream that focuses on developing deliberative approaches to pluralistic stakeholder inclusion.

Value-creation stakeholder theory and the recent debate between monistic and pluralistic conceptions of stakeholder management

Since its inception stakeholder theory has grown into a large and diverse research stream encompassing nearly all management sub-disciplines (Freeman et al., 2010). The term stakeholder is defined as “any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization’s objectives” (Freeman, 1984: 46). A company’s so called “primary” stakeholders comprise customers, employees, communities, suppliers and financiers. A company’s “secondary” stakeholders in turn consist of those groups that affect its primary stakeholders such as e.g. competitors, the government or activist groups (Freeman et al., 2010). Based on the seminal stakeholder definition a variety of stakeholder theories have been developed. The founding father of stakeholder theory welcomes and encourages this plurality of theoretical perspectives within stakeholder theory arguing that “surely there is more than one vision for creating value or for what consequences count as valuable” (Freeman, 1999: 235). Based on this pluralist view, Freeman (1994: 413) argues that each stakeholder approach has its own normative core specifying how “corporations should be governed and the way that managers should act”. Phillips (2003) conceptualizes his influential normative concept of stakeholder legitimacy on the basis of a Rawlsian theory of fairness suggesting that legitimate

stakeholders are those stakeholders to whom the firm has moral obligations of fairness stemming from their continued participation in a cooperative scheme. From the beginning, Freeman’s take on stakeholder theory aims at overcoming the separation between business and ethics arguing instead for the deep entanglement of both spheres (Harris & Freeman, 2008; Wicks & Freeman, 1998). Accordingly, Freeman’s formulation of stakeholder theory is particularly relevant for business ethics and CSR research.

Currently, there exists a controversial debate within the literature on stakeholder value creation between proponents of a monistic and a pluralistic conception of stakeholder management (see table 1).

Table 1: Overview of Conceptions of Monistic and Pluralistic Stakeholder Management

Title	Monistic Stakeholder Management			Pluralistic Stakeholder Management
Approach	Financial Value Maximization	Shared Value Creation	Stakeholder Happiness Enhancement	Stakeholder Utility
Proponents	Jensen (2002); Sundaram and Inkpen (2004);	Porter and Kramer (2006, 2011)	Jones & Felps 2013 a, b	Harrison and Wicks (2013); Mitchell et al. (2015)
Value Creation Focus	Financial value	Primacy of financial value	Aggregate happiness of legitimate stakeholders over the foreseeable future	Sum of utility created for legitimate stakeholders
Value Definition	Total long-run market value of the firm	Maximizing profit in a way that also yields societal benefits	Sum of positive net of negative feelings	Anything that has the potential to be of worth to stakeholders

Source: own table

Monistic stakeholder theorists claim that corporations should be managed to create only one specific type of value. Mirroring Friedman's (1970) famous position that firms ought to focus on maximizing profits several scholars propose financial value as the single value that stakeholders should seek to create (Boatright, 2006; Sundaram & Inkpen, 2004). This claim is justified on the grounds of (neo-)classical economics suggesting that "200 year's worth of work in economics and finance indicate that social welfare is maximized when all firms in an economy maximize total firm value" (Jensen, 2002: 239). On this basis, it is argued that "multiple objectives is no objective" stressing the "confusion and lack of purpose" (Jensen, 2002: 238) that would prevail if managers were to pursue multiple values at the same time. More recently, Porter and Kramer introduced the notion of creating shared value into this debate advocating that corporations "pursue financial success in a way that also yields societal benefits" (Kramer & Pfitzer, 2016: 82). Arguing that creating shared value is "integral to profit maximization" without encompassing personal or moral values (Porter & Kramer, 2006, 2011) the shared value concept arguably represents a slightly altered version of financial value maximization as single stakeholder value to be created by firms.

These conceptions have been criticized recently from other scholars within monistic stakeholder value creation theory (Jones & Felps, 2013a, 2013b). These scholars accept Jensen's argument that a single value avoids confusing managers and ensures more efficient and effective corporate governance. However, they part ways with proponents of financial value maximization in rejecting the neoclassical background assumptions on which their argument rests. Jones and Felps (2013a) argue that if maximizing social welfare is an important part of the justification of financial value maximization then a direct focus on social welfare by corporations would be even more effective. Hence, they criticize the connection between maximizing profits and maximizing social welfare as indirect and only scarcely supported by empirical evidence. Instead, Jones and Felps (2013b) propose a new kind of single value that managers and stakeholders should aim creating: stakeholder happiness. Based on neo-utilitarian

theory it is argued that corporations should “enhance the aggregate happiness of its normatively legitimate stakeholders over the foreseeable future“ (Jones & Felps, 2013b: 358). Happiness in turn is defined as “as the sum of positive feelings (e.g., contentment, satisfaction, pleasure, joy) net of negative feelings (e.g., agitation, anxiety, fear, anger, pain)” (Jones & Felps, 2013b: 355). Accordingly, the creation of financial value remains a necessary but no longer sufficient condition for stakeholder management.

However, pluralistic stakeholder theorists have taken issue with all previously outlined monistic conceptions of stakeholder value creation. Stakeholder value pluralists assume that a plurality of values and world views can co-exist without values being reducible to one single value that could than uniformly guide managerial decision-making (Mitchell et al., 2016; van der Linden & Freeman, 2017). Hence, stakeholder value pluralists criticize both aforementioned single values, financial value, shared value as well as happiness, for “arbitrarily truncat[ing] the potential range of factors” (Mitchell et al., 2016: 263) that stakeholders might consider important. Hence, pluralistic stakeholder value theorists suggest moving beyond one-dimensional and reductionist notions of value creation proposing a pluralist conception of stakeholder value creation. Consequently, Harrison and Wicks (2013: 100–101) suggest that managers and stakeholders should create utility for a firms legitimate stakeholders defining utility as “anything that has the potential to be of worth to stakeholders”. In this vein, Freeman and colleagues (Freeman et al., 2010; Mitchell et al., 2015) have conceptualized a pluralistic concept of stakeholder management outlining the basic principles of what they call “value-creation stakeholder theory” (VCST). They suggest the following four basic premises of VCST (Mitchell et al., 2015: 856–859): First, value for stakeholders is created or destroyed through exchanges between primary stakeholders within enduring stakeholder relationships. Second, optimal value for stakeholder is created through the alignment of stakeholder interests aiming at making each stakeholder better off. Third, tensions between conflicting stakeholder interests “can be reconciled through common purposes shaped by innovation and guided by moral

norms” (Mitchell et al., 2015: 857). Fourth, value creation for stakeholders occurs in a stakeholder network implying mutual dependency and reciprocity among stakeholders. Considering these four principles together reveals stakeholder value creation “as a sequential risk-sharing process of stakeholder organization (...) toward the end of value creation” (Mitchell et al., 2015: 858).

The notion of sharing in the management and CSR literature

The notion of sharing has not only been invoked in stakeholder theory but also within other management and CSR research streams. Belk (2007: 127) defines sharing as “the act and process of distributing what is ours to others for their use as well as the act and process of receiving something from others for our use“. He conceptualizes sharing as distinct from exchange distinct from gift giving as well as market transactions (Belk, 2010). From this perspective, the proliferation of commercial sharing services such as Airbnb or Zipcar within the sharing economy constitutes what Belk calls “pseudo-sharing” (Belk, 2014a) arguing that as soon as money is involved in an exchange, this exchange can no longer be sharing. Other scholars approach the notion of sharing from a very pragmatic perspective basically suggesting that as long as a sufficient amount of people call an exchange ‘sharing’, then this exchange should be considered as such (Stephany, 2015; Sundararajan, 2016). John (2012, 2013, 2016) in turn provides a non-prescriptive and analytical perspective on the notion of sharing distinguishing between sharing as both an act of distribution and an act of communication. Furthermore, John (2014) shows that both meanings of sharing incorporated new practices with the advent of computing and the internet like for example online practices such as file-sharing or sharing on social media. His research emphasizes in particular the importance of communicative sharing practices for contemporary society.

Habermasian approaches to pluralistic stakeholder inclusion: political CSR

Jürgen Habermas is arguably the most important and influential philosopher exploring the significance of processes of communication for society. His communicative approach to ethics, politics and society (Habermas 1984, 1987, 1990, 1993, 1996, 1999) – commonly referred to as discourse ethics and deliberative democracy – has been fruitfully applied to various problems and phenomena in the context of CSR and business ethics (Gilbert & Behnam, 2009; Gilbert & Rasche, 2007; Goodman & Arenas, 2015; Reynolds & Yuthas, 2008; Scherer, 2015; Scherer et al., 2016; Stansbury, 2009; Ulrich, 2008). Interestingly, it already becomes clear on the terminological level why Habermas’s comprehensive theory is particularly suited for an application to CSR and business ethics: corporate responsibility expresses the corporation’s ability to *respond*. By linking (corporate) responsibility to the discursive process of argumentation as outlined above it follows that corporations must *respond* to valid claims of stakeholders (Reed, 1999): A responsible corporation tries to carefully consider the reasons for its actions and can justify them.

Discourse ethics and deliberative democracy have at their core the “Discourse Principle” (D) which states: “Only those norms can claim validity that could meet with the acceptance of all concerned in practical discourse” (Habermas, 1999: 41). Accordingly, normative validity is the result of a process of argumentation that is exclusively driven by the “force of the better argument” (Habermas, 1990). At this point, Habermas’s crucial theoretical finding is that the process of argumentation itself entails the criteria for establishing the conditions that support this rational force. The most important conditions are inclusivity, equality of communicative rights and absence of deception and coercion, commonly referred to as the “discourse guidelines” of the “ideal speech situation” (Habermas, 1999). Habermas’s underlying assumption is that all humans, as competent social actors, share in principle the capacity of mutual understanding and of convincing one another of a norm in question only by the rational force of the better argument. Habermas calls the discourse guidelines unavoidable but

“counterfactual assumptions” which means that their general significance for reaching a rational agreement is undisputable and yet these ideal conditions can never be fully realized. Instead, he understands these guidelines as “critical thorn [that] sticks in the flesh” (Habermas, 1992: 47), so that continuous mutual learning processes through communication and steady advancements of the human condition are required.

On this basis Habermas distinguishes between three different forms of practical discourse: moral, ethical, and pragmatic discourses (Habermas, 1993, 1996). Moral discourses occur when the rightness of a norm or action is questioned. In this case, Habermas suggests the second important principle of his theory– the “Principle of Universalization” (U) – as a rule of argumentation, which states as follows: “(U) A norm is valid when the foreseeable consequences and side effects of its general observance for the interests and value-orientations of each individual could be jointly accepted by all concerned without coercion” (Habermas, 1999: 42). U is introduced to guarantee the universal validity of moral norms by preventing “the marginalization of worldviews” and by highlighting the importance of “reciprocal perspective-taking” of the participants (Habermas, 1999). By contrast, ethical discourses occur when individuals or groups try to come to an understanding about their personal values, evaluations, beliefs and identities. The participants of an ethical discourse assess how they want to conduct their life as individuals and as a community. Therefore ethical discourses address questions of goodness (Habermas, 1996). Finally, in pragmatic discourses questions of the rational selection of means for given ends are discussed. Consequently, it is the effectiveness of a given issue that are at the core of pragmatic discourses (Habermas, 1996).

To make sure that the rational force of good moral, ethical and pragmatic reasons prevails also in complex societies Habermas underlines the role of democratically established law and the corresponding institutions and processes of lawmaking: “(...) the problem of agreement among parties whose wills and interests clash is shifted to the plane of institutionalized procedures and communicative presuppositions of processes of argumentation and negotiation

that must be actually carried out”(Habermas, 1993: 16). He states that D “(...) can thus be brought to bear only indirectly” (Habermas, 1996: 166) by establishing procedures and institutions for fair bargaining and compromise formation.

Starting from this common ground scholars have chosen two different paths for applying the Habermasian approach to ethics, politics and society to the realm of CSR and business ethics: part of them has applied its basic principles D and U directly to the micro and meso-level of economic activity (Gilbert & Behnam, 2009; Gilbert & Rasche, 2007; Goodman & Arenas, 2015; Stansbury, 2009; Ulrich, 2008) advocating “(...) a process of critically reflecting on the normative preconditions of the legitimate value creation of firms *within* the economic system” (Gilbert & Rasche, 2007: 192). More recently scholars have referred to the political writings of Habermas and have established a new stream of research called political CSR (Palazzo & Scherer, 2006; Scherer et al., 2016; Scherer & Palazzo, 2007; Scherer & Palazzo, 2011) acknowledging that not “(...) all coordination problems in the context of economic activities can be solved in processes of argumentation that are oriented towards mutual understanding and agreement” (Scherer & Palazzo, 2007: 1105) they demand a “less idealistic and more pragmatic approach” (2007: 1107) through “(...) a corporate move into the political processes of public policy making (...)” (2007: 1110). Aiming at a discursive alignment of business and society through processes of deliberation they argue that “(...) complying with the normative standards of society has less to do with the habitualization of existing norms or the engineering of corporate image than with participating in public discourse and providing good reasons and accepting better reasons” (Palazzo & Scherer, 2006: 79). Accordingly, they have shifted the focus to the macro level of economic activity by applying D and U indirectly.

Habermasian political CSR research accepts value pluralism in business and society (Marti & Scherer, 2016; Scherer et al., 2016; Scherer, 2017) arguing that “common ground (...) can only be found through joint communicative processes between different actors” (Marti & Scherer, 2016; Scherer & Palazzo, 2007: 1097). Multi-stakeholder initiatives have been

theorized as particularly viable global governance instruments to accommodate different stakeholder perspectives through deliberative processes. MSIs are defined as private regulatory initiatives involving “at least two of the three following actors: governments, corporations, and civil society (generally represented by NGOs and humanitarian organizations)” (Mena & Palazzo, 2012: 535–536). The Forrest Stewardship Council (FSC) for example aims at fostering sustainable timber production involving international corporations as well as global civil society organizations. For Habermasian political CSR scholars MSIs should be structured in a way that fosters mutual understanding through deliberative communicative exchanges between affected stakeholders to “facilitat[e] positive and emped[e] negative business contributions to society” (Scherer, 2017: 8).

However, this approach has received ample criticism in the literature over the past years. A recent study on the FSC for example raises serious doubts about the efficacy of MSIs as an approach to democratic global self-regulation of business pointing to the co-optation of sustainability goals by corporate financial interests (Moog, Spicer, & Böhm, 2015). Levy et al. (2015) contend that private regulatory regimes such as MSIs evolve through dynamics of contestation and accommodation between its stakeholders that are driven by political power dynamics that reach way beyond the conceptual boundaries of consensus-oriented deliberations. In this vein, Whelan (2013) stresses the need to theorize not only consensual but also dissensual CSR practices. Other scholars criticize Habermasian political CSR research from an agonistic perspective (Dawkins, 2015) arguing that Habermas’ consensual approach “will serve to effectively silence dissent, making it easier for dominant groups to claim others are being *unreasonable*” (Brown & Dillard, 2013: 181). More recently, Sabadoz and Singer (2017: 196) contend that the concept of deliberative democracy is “ill-suited” for corporations since in their view “even if pursued genuinely, corporations themselves are poor venues for deliberation, due to how they are situated in, and structured by, the market system”.

Against this background, this dissertation sets out to conceptualize a discursive sharing process aimed at assisting managers and stakeholders to create pluralistic stakeholder value based on the theory of justification of the philosopher Rainer Forst (2002, 2012, 2014) – a member of the third generation of German critical theorists in the Habermasian tradition. As I will show in what follows, Rainer Forst’s theory provides a fruitful theoretical grounding for such an endeavor – particularly in the light of the aforementioned criticisms brought forward against the current state of Habermasian business ethics theory.

Research agenda

This brief review of the current state of the debate within the literature indicates that scholars have advanced theory on stakeholder value creation and political CSR in substantial ways over the past years. However, the following chapter shows that important research gaps remain that this cumulative dissertation aims to address.

First, Porter and Kramer’s shared value concept calls for further scrutiny since it stands out within the wider academic discussion on stakeholder value creation because of both the scale of its aspiration and the level of controversy it caused within the business ethics community over the past few years. In Porter and Kramer’s view the implementation of their concept “will drive the next wave of innovation and productivity growth in the global economy. It will also reshape capitalism and its relationship to society. Perhaps most important of all, learning how to create shared value is our best chance to legitimize business again” (2011: 64). However, this high aspiration has been met with considerable skepticism from established business ethics scholars. At the same time shared value’s practical implementation generated a controversy of its own with Nestlé – which is the self-declared poster child for the implementation of Porter and Kramer’s concept – being criticized for e.g. privatizing the supply of drinking water, child labor in cocoa-sourcing countries or negative environmental impacts of products like bottled

water or coffee capsules. Therefore, several scholars solicit further research into the conceptual foundations and practical implementation of Porter and Kramer's concept arguing that the development of shared value theory is still in its early stages (Crane, Palazzo, Spence, & Matten, 2014; Dembek, Singh, & Bhakoo, 2015). Hence, paper I of this dissertation pursues the following research question:

Does Porter and Kramer's shared value concept meet its own aspirations?

Second, further research is needed that explores the meaning of the notion of shared value itself (Dembek et al., 2015). While the notion of value has received growing attention within the literature over the past years (Harrison & Wicks, 2013; Jones et al., 2016; Lankoski, Smith, & van Wassenhove, 2016), research on the notion of sharing has only recently gained traction with the advent of the so called "sharing economy" (Stephany, 2015; Sundararajan, 2016). Intriguingly, the notion of sharing is not only controversially invoked within the shared value literature but is also involved in a debate about the true meaning of sharing within the sharing economy literature. Both research streams converge in the view that the current state of the literature is characterized by confusion concerning the meaning of the term sharing. Both terms, sharing and shared value, have spread quickly within the corresponding research streams contributing to a puzzling state of the literature where these terms are used along a continuum ranging from colloquial and pragmatic to very specific and systematic (Belk, 2010, 2014a; John, 2012, 2016). This situation warrants further research given the importance of construct clarity and analytical precision for management research (Baden & Harwood, 2013). Accordingly, paper II of this dissertation addresses the following interrelated research questions:

What does the notion of sharing mean and how can its use in management theory and practice be assessed? How is the notion of sharing used in Porter and Kramer's shared value concept?

Third, recent research on pluralistic stakeholder value creation stresses the need to investigate “processes for engaging stakeholders and understanding value creation from their perspective” (Harrison & Wicks, 2013: 118). Acknowledging that a pluralistic conception of stakeholder value creation leaves managers and stakeholders with the challenging task to accommodate a plurality of stakeholder value perspectives, these scholars call for additional research focusing on processes to “better match corporate objectives to the preferences of stakeholders and managers” (Mitchell et al., 2016: 260). While stakeholder deliberations have been proposed as a means to include and moderate conflicting stakeholder perspectives within the political CSR literature (Marti & Scherer, 2016; Scherer et al., 2016; Scherer, 2017; Scherer & Palazzo, 2011), this deliberative approach to transnational business governance has received considerable criticism over the past years suggesting the need for further research into adequate communicative processes for stakeholder inclusion (Dawkins, 2015; Sabadoz & Singer, 2017; Whelan, 2012, 2013). Therefore, to address the need to “further investigate the creation of processes and valid norms among stakeholders (...) that are both normatively sound and instrumentally viable” (Harrison & Wicks, 2013: 117) paper III poses the following research question:

How should managers engage with stakeholders to create value that includes a plurality of stakeholder value perspectives?

Fourth, this dissertation addresses a research gap within the literature regarding the “modes of operationalization” (Scherer, Palazzo, & Matten, 2013: 151) of political CSR. The increased engagement of corporations with other stakeholder groups such as NGOs, unions or governments in so called multi-stakeholder initiatives has sparked a controversial debate in the literature. On the one hand, political CSR optimists see the increased corporate engagement in MSIs as a reflection of corporations developing a self-understanding as democratic global

governance actors that seek common solutions for global problems with affected stakeholders. On the other hand, political CSR critics argue that corporations continue to understand themselves as mainly economic actors that participate in MSIs to advance their own narrow financial interests instead of the wider interests of society. This controversy points to the need for further research exploring the “underlying processes” (Mena & Waeger, 2014: 1111) of corporate political engagement in MSIs. Although the concept of a distinct self-understanding of companies has been theorized within the organizational identity literature (Gioia, Price, Hamilton, & Thomas, 2010), research on specific political identities of corporations in MSIs is missing in the literature so far. Moreover, additional research is needed that unpacks businesses as a participant group in MSIs focusing on the investigation of business-to-business-interactions (Scherer et al., 2016). Furthermore, the emerging integrative perspective suggesting a “synthesis between ideal and critical views” (Levy et al., 2015: 32) of political CSR calls for additional research “to reveal differences in PCSR processes, associated with different sets of actors and institutional templates” (Levy et al., 2015: 33). Thus, paper IV pursues the following research question:

How do corporations construct political CSR identities in MSIs?

Overall, this dissertation aims at advancing theory on both pluralistic stakeholder value creation and political CSR by exploring the potential of the notion of sharing as act of communication from a normative-conceptual as well as qualitative-empirical perspective. In the following the methods employed within these two perspectives are outlined in more detail.

Methodology

Management research can be characterized as an applied, trans-disciplinary and pluralistic scientific endeavor (Myers, 2013; Tranfield & Starkey, 1998). Management scholars are not limited to inquiring the “know what” of management but are also exploring the “know how” of managing organizations. This applied nature of management research implies that “its problem foci, its methods and its knowledge stock (...) needs to be framed, produced and disseminated within a context of application” (Tranfield & Starkey, 1998: 346). Hence, management scholars need to draw on insights from different scientific disciplines in order gain a comprehensive understanding of their research object. Furthermore, management research exhibits an epistemological pluralism. This means that the way management science generates knowledge is not limited to one specific research paradigm.

At least three paradigms can be distinguished for qualitative management research (Myers, 2013). First, positivist research is based on the assumption that reality can be objectively and independently observed and measured in order to identify generalizable constructs and theories that can be empirically tested. Interpretive research by contrast assumes that reality is not objectively given but subjectively constructed. Therefore, data is assumed to be context-dependent and collecting as well as analyzing data are subject to processes of interpretation by the researcher. Hence, for interpretive researchers theories are reconstructions of meanings that are always socially constructed. Critical research builds upon many insights from the interpretive paradigm suggesting that social reality is produced and reproduced by people. However, the critical research paradigm emphasizes transformative social critique by invoking normative concepts such as democracy, freedom or justice to contribute to an improvement of the human condition in contemporary capitalist societies.

Within business ethics and CSR research these paradigms have been reflected in Scherer and Palazzo’s (2007) distinction between positivist and post-positivist CSR research. While positivist CSR research aims at uncovering cause-effect relationships and correlations by

applying mainly quantitative methods inspired by the natural sciences, post-positivist CSR research adopts a more interpretive, critical and explicitly normative approach incorporating methods from the humanities as well as the social sciences. Positivist CSR research is criticized for promoting an instrumental perspective on CSR that neglects normative issues by concentrating on the identification of means to increase the financial performance of the firm instead of questioning the ends of corporate business conduct itself. By contrast, Scherer and Palazzo (2007: 1097) propose to adopt a discursive approach in post-positivist CSR research suggesting that “in pluralistic societies, a common ground on questions of right and wrong or fair and unfair can only be found through joint communicative processes between different actors”.

Against this background, this dissertation adopts an interpretive-critical research approach within the discursive post-positivist CSR research paradigm. As outlined in table 2, the research papers of this cumulative dissertation adopt conceptual as well as qualitative-empirical methods. Conceptual research aims at the development of new theory as well as the advancement of existing theory through reinterpretation or recombination of theoretical concepts or constructs (Kothari & Garg, 2014). Qualitative-empirical research that follows the interpretive-critical paradigm on the other hand aims at advancing theory by understanding the meaning of phenomena through interpretive reconstruction of meanings in context (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014; Myers, 2013).

Table 2: Overview of Research Questions and Methodological Approach

Paper	Research Question(s)	Method	Theoretical Grounding
I.	Does Porter and Kramer’s shared value concept meet its own aspirations?	Conceptual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Shared value theory (Kramer & Pfitzer, 2016; Porter & Kramer, 2006, 2011)
II.	What does the notion of sharing mean and how can its use in management theory and practice be assessed? How is the notion of sharing used in Porter and Kramer’s shared value concept?	Conceptual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sharing research (Belk, 2010, 2014a, 2014b; John, 2012, 2013, 2016) ▪ Research on CSR terminology (Baden & Harwood, 2013; Ferraro, Pfeffer, & Sutton, 2005) ▪ Shared value theory (Kramer & Pfitzer, 2016; Porter & Kramer, 2006, 2011)
III:	How should managers engage with stakeholders to create value that includes a plurality of stakeholder value perspectives?	Conceptual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pluralistic stakeholder value creation theory (Freeman et al., 2010; Harrison & Wicks, 2013; Mitchell et al., 2015; Mitchell et al., 2016) ▪ Rainer Forst’s theory of justification (Forst, 2002, 2012, 2014) ▪ Habermasian political CSR research (Marti & Scherer, 2016; Scherer et al., 2016; Scherer & Palazzo, 2007; Scherer & Palazzo, 2011)
IV.	How do corporations construct political CSR identities in MSIs?	Qualitative, Empirical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Research on political CSR and MSIs (Levy et al., 2015; Mena & Palazzo, 2012; Moog et al., 2015; Scherer et al., 2016; Scherer & Palazzo, 2011) ▪ Research on case studies and qualitative, inductive theory-building methods (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013; Yin, 2013) ▪ Identity research (Gioia et al., 2010; Wilts, 2006; Wright, Nyberg, & Grant, 2012)

Source: own table

The first paper of this dissertation is conceptual in nature and aims at a critical examination of Porter and Kramer's shared value concept. Hence, this paper draws on shared value theory (Kramer & Pfitzer, 2016; Porter & Kramer, 2006, 2011) and the related literature reconstructing shared value's basic assumptions and constructs. The critical analysis of shared value in paper I ultimately follows an immanent approach to critique since shared value is evaluated on the basis of its own normative aspirations. The second conceptual paper scrutinizes the notion of sharing by drawing on recent sharing research (Belk, 2010, 2014a, 2014b; John, 2012, 2013, 2016). In this paper an analytical framework is developed that integrates insights from different sharing research streams with recent research on CSR terminology (Baden & Harwood, 2013; Ferraro, Pfeffer, & Sutton, 2005). On this basis, paper II distinguishes between a connotative and a denotative dimension of the notion of sharing and derives several assessment criteria to evaluate the risk of ideological obfuscation associated with the notion of sharing. The analytical value of this framework is then illustrated by applying its assessment criteria to the analysis of Porter and Kramer's use of the notion of sharing. The third paper is the last conceptual paper of this cumulative dissertation and conceptualizes the notion of sharing as communicative process oriented towards discursive justification by reconstructing the communicative aspect of sharing (John, 2012, 2016) from the perspective of Rainer Forst's theory of justification (2002, 2012, 2014). This discursive notion of sharing represents the core of a multidimensional procedural framework developed to facilitate the creation of pluralistic stakeholder value creation (Freeman et al., 2010; Harrison & Wicks, 2013; Mitchell et al., 2015; Mitchell et al., 2016) though dimension-specific criteria of justification. This paper relates these findings to the Habermasian political CSR literature (Marti & Scherer, 2016; Scherer et al., 2016; Scherer & Palazzo, 2007; Scherer & Palazzo, 2011) elucidating several important advancements.

The fourth paper of this dissertation is based on a qualitative-empirical approach investigating the underlying processes of political CSR identity construction in MSIs. This paper conducts an in-depth case study of the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh

(Accord) – a recent MSI established after the collapse of the Rana Plaza garment factory complex in 2013 to improve working conditions in the Bangladeshi garment industry. Empirical case study research generally aims at exploring phenomena in real-life contexts (Yin, 2013). Paper IV follows a single-case design with the Accord representing a critical case for exploring political CSR identities in MSIs (Yin, 2013: 51). The Accord is a critical case for political CSR research because companies, global trade unions and civil society organizations jointly established the initiative to fill a governance gap in Bangladesh as well as a legitimacy gap concerning the global textile industry by setting up a detailed factory inspection and remediation program.

Data for this case study were collected over a period of half a year, between September 2015 and April 2016 following a theoretical sampling rationale (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Hence, the collection of data continued until a point of “theoretical saturation” was reached where further data input fails to add new insights to the emerging theory. We conducted 24 semi-structured interviews with 29 persons involved with the Accord conducting interviews with 16 signatory companies ranging from small to medium sized companies and to large multinational corporations in the garment industry. To put these corporate views into perspective further interviews were conducted with union representatives that were active within the Accord as well as external experts. The transcription of 26h and 33 minutes in total of recorded material resulted in 522 pages of single spaced transcript. In addition, archival data were collected including Accord documents and other external types of documentation such as newspaper articles as well as corporate communication documents such as press releases and sustainability reports (for a more detailed list of the data sources please refer to Appendix A8). This data was analyzed employing an inductive, grounded theory oriented approach (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Gioia et al., 2013). Accordingly, both authors discussed emerging themes after each interview and entered into formal coding after the transcription and import of all data into the data analysis software MAXQDA. First, both authors coded openly generating in-vivo as

well as descriptive codes that formed the basis for initial first-order concepts. Second, the authors discussed these emerging codes and first-order concepts and their relationships identifying second order themes under which first-order concepts could be grouped. Third, the authors constantly compared the emerging theory with the data to iteratively refine the emerging data structure. This step included also the triangulation with other secondary sources of data to mitigate retrospective bias (Miles et al., 2014). Fourth, the authors focused on identifying relationships between the second order themes aggregating these themes into more abstract dimensions. A detailed overview of the coding structure including sample quotations for each first order concept can be found in Appendix A9.

Summary of Papers

Paper I: Das Shared-Value-Konzept von Porter und Kramer – The Big Idea!?

The first paper of this dissertation provides a comprehensive overview of both the substance and the state of the debate within the literature concerning the shared value concept of Porter and Kramer. After a brief introduction the paper starts off with a short reconstruction of the genesis of the shared value concept. We show that the conceptual roots of shared value can be traced back to publications on strategic philanthropy (Porter & Kramer, 1999, 2002), strategic CSR (Porter & Kramer, 2006) as well as a report about Nestlé’s CSR activities in Latin America (Nestlé, 2006). We then proceed by outlining the basic tenets of shared value as developed in Porter and Kramer’s seminal paper on “creating shared value” (2011). We show that shared value consists of two components - social and economic value - both of which have to be increased simultaneously in order to create shared value. In addition, we elucidate Porter and Kramer’s “three ways” for creating shared value as are reconceiving products and markets, redefining productivity in the value chain and enabling local cluster development.

Then we provide a detailed review of the shared value literature differentiating between studies that largely agree with Porter and Kramer (Bertini & Gourville, 2012; Michelini & Fiorentino, 2012; Pfitzer, Bockstette, & Stamp, 2013; Schmitt & Renken, 2012) and those studies that take a more critical stance (Beschoner, 2013; Crane et al., 2014; Dembek et al., 2015; Hartmann & Werhane, 2013; Pirson, 2012). This literature review reveals that the shared value concept is exposed to manifold criticisms, particularly within the CSR literature. We identify the following main criticisms: First, Porter and Kramer are criticized for resorting to exuberant rhetoric in that their claim to “redefine capitalism” is not matched by the corresponding theoretical substance. Instead several CSR scholars raise doubts about the conceptual novelty of shared value. Moreover, shared value is criticized for advocating a primarily economic approach to the solution of societal problems that severely constrains firms’ potential to contribute to the solution of pressing challenges such as climate change, poverty or environmental degradation. In addition, several studies argue that Porter and Kramer largely ignore rather than confront the difficult trade-offs associated with CSR-initiatives aiming at the creation of social and economic value. Furthermore, several CSR scholars point to a lack of independent empirical research on shared value arguing that so far shared value is backed mainly by short practical examples stemming from consulting projects associated with Porter and Kramer’s own strategy consultancy. Finally, the shared value concept is criticized for encouraging companies to only implement selective shared value projects without reorienting a firm’s CSR policies and practices as a whole.

On this basis, we identify the neglect for both the process of sharing and non-financial aspects of value creation as key conceptual shortcomings that taken together constitute a paradox: the assumption that *shared value* can be created without a preceding process of *sharing values*. Hence, we criticize that Porter and Kramer not only base their concept on a one-dimensional, purely financial notion of value creation but that they also ignore the processes through which firms can take different value perspectives of stakeholders into account.

Although their concept focuses on the creation of value that is supposedly shared, they do not elaborate on the sharing processes between stakeholders involved in the creation of shared value. Accordingly, we argue that shared value theory has to move beyond this paradox in order to provide a substantial contribution to the CSR literature. Hence, scholars should neither adopt Porter and Kramer's concept without further scrutiny nor should they reject the shared value idea in its entirety. This paper rather sets out a research agenda for advancing shared value suggesting the investigation of sharing processes as well as comprehensive accounts of the notion of value. Hence, we conclude that Porter and Kramer put forward a promising idea but provide only insufficient conceptual means for its realization.

Paper II: Obfuscating ideology through the notion of sharing – the case of Porter and Kramer's Shared Value concept

The second paper of this dissertation picks up on the idea to explore sharing processes and the notion of sharing in more detail as set out in the concluding remarks of the first paper. Accordingly, the second paper aims at exploring the meaning of the notion of sharing by drawing on recent sharing research (Belk, 2007, 2010, 2014a; John, 2012, 2013, 2016) as well as research on CSR terminology (Baden & Harwood, 2013; Ferraro et al., 2005). This paper begins with the observation that the notion of sharing is involved in controversies within two recent research streams: On the one hand, scholars debate the true meaning of sharing within the emerging literature on the so called "sharing economy" which encompasses a variety of contemporary practices commonly referred to as sharing such as updating one's status on Facebook, renting a car with Zipcar or a flat with Airbnb. On the other hand, as outlined in the first paper, CSR scholars discuss the merits and drawbacks of Porter and Kramer's proposition to re-legitimize business through the creation of value that is shared between business and society.

Although scholars of both streams concur in that terminological ambiguity concerning the notion of sharing constitutes an important factor in these controversies (Dembek et al., 2015; Stephany, 2015; Sundararajan, 2016), research investigating the notion of sharing from a balanced and analytical perspective is rather scarce so far. The second paper addresses this gap by developing an analytical framework that unpacks the denotative as well as connotative dimensions of the notion of sharing and conceptualizes several assessment criteria to evaluate its use in the management and CSR literature. The denotative dimension of sharing consists of two components: The first component is called “specificity of the sharing process” and entails assessment criteria that capture the meaning of sharing as act of both distribution and communication. The second component is called “commerciality of the sharing process” and contains criteria enabling the assessment of the degree to which the notion of sharing denotes a commercial interaction. The connotative dimension describes the largely non-commercial and pro-social connotations of sharing as act of both distribution and communication. I argue in this paper that these dimensions can be used to assess the risk of ideological obfuscation associated with the notion of sharing. I define ideological obfuscation as obscuring the background assumptions of a concept or practice by making use of the notion of sharing in a way that places the term in a context at odds with its established connotative meaning while remaining vague on the specifics of the denotative meaning of sharing. This enables the promotion of a concept or practice through its connotative appeal rather than its denotative substance.

This framework then allows for the differentiation between four types of making use of the notion of sharing each associated with a specific risk of ideological obfuscation: Explicit as well as implicit forms of non-commercial sharing are both exposed to a low risk of ideological obfuscation since in these types the denotative dimension is in consonance with the largely non-commercial connotations of sharing. Accordingly, explicit and implicit forms of commercial-sharing bear a higher risk of ideological obfuscation because the commercial denotation of sharing is at odds with the mainly non-commercial connotations of sharing. This dissonance

between the denotative and connotative dimensions of sharing then introduces the possibility to promote a concept or practice on the basis of its connotative appeal rather than its denotative substance. I proceed in this paper by applying this framework to the analysis of how Porter and Kramer make use of the notion of sharing in their shared value concept. This analysis reveals that Porter and Kramer use a very unspecific and highly commercial notion of sharing bearing a high risk of obfuscating the ideology of shareholder value maximization that lies at the core of shared value. This analysis shows that the current state of shared value theory risks propagating the controversial shareholder value ideology disguised in pro-social sharing rhetoric. Overall, this paper highlights the importance of making use of precise terminology when theorizing contemporary concepts such as the sharing economy or shared value. Since obfuscating ideology through the notion of sharing is not necessarily an intentional process scholars should choose their words with caution when developing theory in order to avoid both the development of weak management theories and the corresponding ill-advised management practices (Ferraro et al., 2005; Ghoshal, 2005). In addition, this paper opens avenues for further research concerning the notion of sharing and its associated risk of ideological obfuscation as well as the notion of shared value.

Paper III: Creating Value by Sharing Values – Managing Stakeholder Value Pluralism through Discursive Justification

The third paper of this dissertation continues the path set out in the preceding two papers regarding a deeper exploration of the notion of sharing in the context of value creation stakeholder theory and the recent discussion on the corporate normative objective. In this paper we focus on the notion of sharing as act of communication and conceptualize sharing as a communicative process oriented towards discursive justification based on elements of Rainer Forst's theory of justification (Forst, 2002, 2012, 2014). Rainer Forst's concept of discursive justification represents an important advancement of Habermas' discourse theory (1996, 1999)

since Forst loosens Habermas' controversial focus on reaching consensus by introducing criteria of justification that assist actors to evaluate justifications before, during and after a discourse without relying exclusively on consensus.

We begin this paper by reviewing two fundamental approaches to stakeholder value creation in the literature: On the one hand monistic approaches advocate a single value such as happiness or profit that companies should seek to create (Jensen, 2002; Jones & Felps, 2013b; Sundaram & Inkpen, 2004). Pluralistic approaches on the other hand criticize this perspective as unfeasible oversimplification of the notion of value in business claiming instead that corporations ought to create multiple values at the same time (Harrison & Wicks, 2013; Mitchell et al., 2016; van der Linden & Freeman, 2017). While this discussion is still ongoing in the literature many business ethics scholars agree that accepting stakeholder value pluralism points to the need to explore processes that assist managers to create value that includes this plurality of stakeholder value perspectives (Harrison & Wicks, 2013; Mitchell et al., 2016; van der Linden & Freeman, 2017).

We address this issue by developing a procedural framework showing that managers can include different stakeholder value perspectives through a discursive sharing process guided by multi-dimensional criteria of justification. This discursive sharing process involves two steps: Managers and stakeholders first need to assess moral, political, legal and ethical dimensions of value creation under the guidance of corresponding criteria of justification as are reciprocity and generality, justifiability to all political community members, lawfulness and anchoring in individual/collective self-understanding. Second, to create pluralistic stakeholder value managers and stakeholders proceed by connecting these dimensions and justifications with one another without either ignoring, limiting or absolutizing relevant dimensions of value creation.

We discuss each step of this framework in detail and illustrate its multiple dimensions and criteria through practical examples. Furthermore, we operationalize the aforementioned criteria of justification by providing guiding questions for each dimension that facilitate the application

of our procedural framework in practice. In line with research positing an integrated perspective on the relationship between business and society (Gilbert & Rasche, 2007; Harris & Freeman, 2008; Smith, 2004) we conceptualize communicative processes of justification as a constitutive element of the stakeholder value creation process. We conclude this paper by discussing several limitations of our procedural framework arguing that creating value through discursive sharing does not urge managers to engage in processes of discursive justification all the time. The discursive sharing process rather makes the implicit dimensions of pluralistic value creation explicit and provides criteria that can facilitate the moderation of different stakeholder value perspectives in the case of conflicts stemming from weak democratic institutions or legitimate criticisms of corporate practices by stakeholders.

Paper IV: From progressive to conservative and back: constructing political CSR identities in multi-stakeholder initiatives – the case of the “Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh”

The fourth and final paper of this dissertation explores the political dimension of the aforementioned discursive sharing process in practice by conducting an in-depth case study of the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh (Accord) – a recent multi-stakeholder initiative (MSI) established after the collapse of the Rana Plaza garment factory complex in 2013 to improve working conditions in the Bangladeshi garment industry. MSIs as an instrument to address regulatory voids in global governance through the discursive involvement of affected stakeholders have received growing attention particularly within the political CSR literature. While political CSR scholars are engaged in a controversial debate concerning the merits (Mena & Palazzo, 2012; Scherer et al., 2016; Scherer & Palazzo, 2007; Scherer & Palazzo, 2011) and drawbacks (Fooks, Gilmore, Collin, Holden, & Lee, 2013; Levy et al., 2015; Moog et al., 2015) of MSIs we lack research focusing on the underlying processes of corporate political engagement in MSIs (Levy et al., 2015; Mena & Waeger, 2014).

Employing a qualitative, inductive theory-building method (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Gioia et al., 2013) we analyze both interview and archival data to explore how corporations construct political CSR identities in MSIs. Our findings suggest that corporations develop distinct political CSR identities (PCSRI) when participating in MSIs. We define this identity as a corporation's self-understanding as an actor that seeks to enact its CSR policies through political means. We find that corporations construct either a more progressive or a more conservative PCSRI. On one side progressive companies develop a self-understanding as co-responsible governance actors that proactively seek long term solutions to global CSR challenges along their supply chains through collaborating with multiple affected parties. Conservative companies on the other side construct a PCSRI as primarily economic actors that perceive engaging with affected parties of global CSR challenges along their supply chains as exceeding both their core business responsibilities and their financial as well as managerial capacities. Furthermore, we develop a framework showing that corporations construct these PCSRI by enacting specific political strategies along four different trajectories.

We find that the progressive PCSRI is constructed either through affirmation of an already existing progressive orientation (Trajectory 1) or through transformation of a previously conservative orientation towards a more progressive identity (Trajectory 2). The conservative PCSRI on the other hand is constructed either through transformation of a previously progressive identity orientation towards a more conservative identity (Trajectory 3) or through affirmation of an already existing conservative orientation (Trajectory 4). Hence this paper provides a nuanced perspective on corporations as participant group in MSIs showing that the discursive interactions within MSIs are shaped by a dynamic tension between conservative and progressive companies each resorting to specific political strategies.

Contributions

Having summarized the content as well as the main line of argumentation of the four research papers of this cumulative dissertation, in the following I elucidate its contributions to theory. I proceed by outlining the key contributions of each paper.

Paper I contributes to the literature on pluralistic stakeholder value creation (Harrison & Wicks, 2013; Mitchell et al., 2016; van der Linden & Freeman, 2017) by providing both a systematic overview of the central elements of the shared value concept as well as a review of the current debate on the strengths and shortcomings of Porter and Kramer's proposition to redefine the corporate objective around creating shared value. This paper shows that in its current formulation shared value theory contains two main problems: First, Porter and Kramer primarily draw on the financial aspects of value creation leaving aside other important values involved in the value creation process, such as e.g., moral or personal values. Therefore, such an one-dimensional understanding of value means that the shared value concept lacks a conceptual framework to identify qualitative differences in social value. Second, Porter and Kramer leave managers without any process which could inform or guide their decision-making since they missed to scrutinize the process of sharing which necessarily precedes the creation of value that is supposedly shared. Thus, instead of allegedly increasing the alignment of business and society shared value actually ends up severely constraining the identification of mutually beneficial value creation possibilities between business and society. Hence, this paper contributes to the emerging shared value literature (Crane et al., 2014; Dembek et al., 2015; Høvring, 2017; los Reyes Jr., Scholz, & Smith, 2017) by outlining a future research agenda aimed at addressing these key conceptual problems. Accordingly, paper I shows that for shared value to meet its self-set aspirations both the notion of value as well as the notion of sharing have to receive further academic scrutiny.

Paper II contributes to the literature on CSR (Baden & Harwood, 2013; Ferraro et al., 2005) and sharing (Belk, 2010, 2014a; John, 2012, 2013) terminology by unpacking the denotative

and connotative dimensions of the notion of sharing. By developing an analytical framework for assessing the use of the notion of sharing in the management and CSR literature this paper provides a nuanced and balanced perspective on the notion of sharing. Thus, this framework is neither overly prescriptive nor overly agnostic acknowledging that the meaning of words is neither eternally static nor completely fluid. Therefore, this framework incorporates the dynamic and reflexive nature of the notion of sharing (John, 2016). This paper introduces the concept of ideological obfuscation into the controversial debate concerning the notion of sharing suggesting that scholars and practitioners alike need to be mindful of using only vaguely specified notions of sharing in a highly commercial context. In these cases, the mainly non-commercial connotations of sharing are at odds with the denotative dimension which introduces the possibility to hide background assumptions of a concept or practice behind the prosocial and predominantly non-commercial connotations of sharing. By analyzing Porter and Kramer's use of the notion of sharing with this analytical framework this paper heeds the call to scrutinize the meaning of shared value (Dembek et al., 2015). This analysis reveals that Porter and Kramer resort to a very unspecific and commercial notion of value that bears a high risk of obfuscating the ideology of shareholder value maximization that represents the normative core of the shared value concept in its original formulation. Overall, this paper stresses the challenges associated with theorizing contemporary concepts such as the sharing economy or shared value that make use of the notion of sharing in very different ways and contexts.

Paper III contributes to the literature on pluralistic stakeholder value creation (Harrison & Wicks, 2013; Mitchell et al., 2016; van der Linden & Freeman, 2017) by conceptualizing a discursive sharing process that assists managers to create value that integrates a plurality of stakeholder value perspectives. Based on insights from Rainer Forst's theory of justification this paper develops a procedural framework understanding value creation as a multidimensional process involving the discursive engagement with affected stakeholders concerning moral, political, legal and ethical dimensions of value creation. This discursive sharing process is

facilitated by dimension-specific criteria of justification that managers and stakeholders can resort to in order to include differing stakeholder value perspectives. These dimensions and criteria ensure that managers and stakeholders remain responsive to additional stakeholder value creation possibilities (Mitchell et al., 2015). In addition, the discursive sharing process as developed in this paper expands on the recently advocated “formal approach” (van der Linden & Freeman, 2017: 365) within the literature on pluralistic stakeholder value creation: The discursive sharing framework conceptualizes a procedure that managers and stakeholders can follow without prescribing the outcome in advance. Moreover, the third paper of this dissertation contributes to recent research on the democratic inclusion of different stakeholder perspectives within the Habermasian political CSR literature (Marti & Scherer, 2016; Scherer, 2015; Scherer et al., 2016; Scherer, 2017). The discursive sharing process guided by multi-dimensional criteria of justification extends the deliberative framework of political CSR in two important ways: First, the criteria of justification provide guidance for managers also in the case of disagreements or conflict since the process of discursive justification does not rely predominantly on consensus. Second, the criteria of justification can be used before, during and after the discursive sharing process providing a more material guidance to stakeholder deliberations than Habermas’ discourse criteria alone. Hence, the discursive sharing process is less susceptible to critics of political CSR who argue that consensus-oriented deliberations are a too idealistic concept to be applied to the spheres of business and transnational business governance (Dawkins, 2015; Sabadoz & Singer, 2017; Whelan, 2012, 2013).

Paper IV contributes to the political CSR literature (Mena & Waeger, 2014; Scherer et al., 2013; Scherer et al., 2016) by introducing the notion of a distinct political CSR identity that corporations develop when participating in MSIs. While the progressive PCSRI resonates with political CSR scholars advocating that companies adopt a deliberative approach to multi-stakeholder governance (Mena & Palazzo, 2012; Scherer & Palazzo, 2011), the conservative PCSRI mirrors the view from more skeptical political CSR scholars viewing MSIs as self-

interested extension rather than self-imposed limitation of corporate power in global governance issues (Banerjee, 2014; Edward & Willmott, 2008; Fleming & Jones, 2013; Fooks et al., 2013; Moog et al., 2015). In addition, this paper unpacks corporations as a participant group in MSIs suggesting that there exists considerable variation of how companies approach their political role in MSIs. Furthermore, this paper contributes to the emerging integrative perspective within political CSR research (Levy et al., 2015) by revealing that companies construct these identities by enacting specific political strategies along different trajectories. This emphasizes that MSIs are driven by political tensions between conservative and progressive companies on the one hand and other governance actors such as unions or NGOs on the other hand. Hence, MSIs can neither be understood as mere expansion of corporate power to the detriment of society nor can MSIs be described as completely democratic governance institutions that orient all participants towards the common good through stakeholder deliberations. This paper rather stresses the ambiguous and complex nature of MSIs. As much as participating in MSIs can strengthen an already existing progressive PCSRI or set in motion a progressive transformation of a previously more conservative PCSRI, MSIs can have also the opposite effect. Companies can also reaffirm a preexisting conservative PCSRI as well as develop a more conservative PCSRI despite having entered the initiative with a more progressive PCSRI.

Directions for further research

This dissertation explored the idea to create pluralistic stakeholder value through a discursive process of sharing values among affected stakeholders by resorting to both conceptual and qualitative-empirical methods. While paper I critically examined the shared value concept of Porter and Kramer, paper II explored the notion of sharing in more detail developing an analytical framework indicating the risk of ideological obfuscation associated with the notion

of sharing. Paper III conceptualized a discursive sharing process guided by multidimensional criteria of justification assisting managers and stakeholders to create pluralistic stakeholder value. Paper IV investigated the political dimension of this discursive sharing process in practice by conducting an in-depth case study of the Accord revealing specific political strategies that companies enacted to construct either a more progressive or a more conservative political CSR identity. As outlined in the previous chapter each paper offers valuable contributions to the literature. At the same time, the research conducted in this cumulative dissertation indicates manifold avenues for further research as will be outlined in the following.

First, the multidimensional discursive sharing process as conceptualized in paper III calls for further empirical research. Valuable insights into the practical value and operationalization of the criteria of justification could be gained by conducting qualitative research on discursive sharing processes within MSIs or stakeholder dialogues. An ethnographic approach seems particularly promising to explore the underlying mechanisms of discursive sharing since processes of discursive justification are highly situational and difficult to reconstruct on the basis of ex post interviews alone (Reinecke & Ansari, 2015). In addition, the claim brought forward in paper III that discursive sharing processes make managers and stakeholders aware of additional value creation possibilities should be subject to an empirical examination. By employing a comparative multiple case-study design (Yin, 2013) future research could ascertain whether companies engaging in discursive sharing processes with their stakeholders create more pluralistic stakeholder value than companies that are not resorting to discursive sharing.

Second, this dissertation stresses several avenues for further research concerning the notion of sharing. Paper II developed the concept of ideological obfuscation that the notion of sharing is exposed to under specific circumstances. The underlying processes of ideological obfuscation however remain largely unclear so far. Hence, future research should explore the cognitive processes involved in ideological obfuscation. Furthermore, the analytical framework as developed in paper II could be applied to the analysis of other management theories and

concepts that make use of the notion of sharing to foster construct clarity in sharing-related research as well as to uncover new avenues for theory development. Moreover, future research should explore how scholars as well as practitioners deal with terminology in dynamic contexts where a term assumes new meanings very quickly such as the term sharing within the emerging sharing economy literature.

Third, this dissertation suggest that future shared value research should concentrate on substantially revising Porter and Kramer's shared value concept. The notion of value as well as the sharing processes involved in creating shared value merit further conceptual research. As outlined in paper II, the notion of sharing provides multiple dimensions which future research could explore. In order to substantially advance shared value theory, scholars need to move beyond the selective integration of existing CSR frameworks into the shared value concept. Reyes de los, Gastón, Scholz, and Smith (2016) for example recently developed a so called "CSV+ framework" suggesting that managers need additional norm-taking and norm-making frameworks in cases where shared value creation seems not immediately feasible. They extend Porter and Kramer's conception by applying insights from Donaldson and Dunfee's ISCT (1999) in the case of norm-taking and the so called "Pelican Gambits framework" from Donaldson and Schoemaker (2013) in the case of norm-making. While extending shared value in this way has certainly merit, this dissertation points to the need to further scrutinize shared value's theoretical core. Therefore, future research should attempt to re-conceptualize shared value from the ground up generating new theoretical insights for the CSR discourse writ large.

Fourth, this dissertation shows that considerable more work is necessary to fully understand the underlying processes and pathways of political CSR identity construction in MSIs. Since paper IV is based on the analysis of one specific MSI, future research is necessary that explores processes of PCSRI-construction in a comparative setting involving multiple MSIs from different industries. Additional research is also required concerning the cultural aspect of PCSRI-construction. Furthermore, scholars might explore the determinants for companies

constructing their PCSRI on specific trajectories by conducting qualitative and quantitative research with bigger and more diverse samples. In addition, the concept of PCSRI itself calls for further research investigating its relationship with the concepts of both organizational and professional identity. It would be interesting to study how a progressive or conservative PCSRI relates to a companies' overall organizational identity as well as to the professional identity of managers within its CSR department as well as within the wider organization.

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Paper I:

Das Shared Value Konzept von Porter und Kramer – The Big Idea!?

Maximilian J. L. Schormair & Dirk Ulrich Gilbert

Abstract:

Das Shared Value (SV) Konzept hat in der Diskussion über die Verbindung von strategischem Management und CSR in Theorie und Praxis stetig an Bedeutung gewonnen. Im Kern verbinden Michael Porter und Mark Kramer als Entwickler des Konzepts damit die Forderung, das klassische Gewinnziel von Unternehmen durch die Generierung von SV als obersten Unternehmenszweck zu ersetzen. In diesem Beitrag gehen wir zunächst auf die Entstehungsgeschichte des SV-Konzepts ein. Im Anschluss erläutern wir, dass SV aus Sicht von Porter und Kramer in der gleichzeitigen Steigerung von sozialem und ökonomischem Wert besteht und durch das Überdenken von Produkten und Märkten, die Neubewertung der Wertschöpfungskette und den Aufbau lokaler Cluster geschaffen werden kann. Im Anschluss zeigen wir auf, dass das SV Konzept auf breite und stetig zunehmende Resonanz in Wissenschaft wie Praxis stößt und beleuchten dessen kontroverse wissenschaftliche Bewertung: Während die normative Grundintention und die Praxisnähe von SV durchweg positiv beurteilt werden, wird das Konzept v.a. von CSR-Forschern als rhetorisch überladen und inhaltlich unterbestimmt kritisiert. Abschließend zeigen wir auf, dass SV sich nur in dem Maße als zukunftsweisendes Konzept für Theorie und Praxis erweisen wird, in dem es gelingt, die konzeptionellen Schwächen des Konzepts zu beheben und dessen Wirkungen auf Basis methodisch fundierter Studien zu belegen.

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Einführung: Shared Value – The Big Idea!

Eine glanzvolle Begrifflichkeit hat in den letzten Jahren die Diskussion über die Verbindung von strategischem Management und CSR in Theorie und Praxis erobert: „Shared Value“ (SV). Eine wachsende Zahl von multinationalen Unternehmen, wie Nestlé, Coca Cola oder Verizon, verschreiben sich öffentlichkeitswirksam dem Ziel, SV zu schaffen. Das zugrundeliegende Konzept geht auf eine vielbeachtete Veröffentlichung von Michael Porter und Mark Kramer in der Harvard Business Review (HBR) aus dem Jahr 2011 zurück, in der die Autoren die Forderung erheben, das klassische Gewinnziel von Unternehmen durch die Generierung von SV als obersten Unternehmenszweck zu ersetzen. SV wird von Porter und Kramer (PK) dabei verstanden als „creating economic value by creating societal value“ (Porter & Kramer, 2011: 77). Mit der Implementierung des SV-Konzepts verbinden die Autoren nichts Geringeres als den Anspruch „(...) to reinvent capitalism and unleash a wave of innovation and growth“ (Porter & Kramer, 2011: 63), sowie letztlich die Wiederannäherung von Unternehmen und Gesellschaft. Angesichts dieser Rhetorik erscheint es nicht überraschend, dass das SV-Konzept – gerade in Zeiten, in denen der Wirtschaft von Seiten der Gesellschaft nur geringes Vertrauen entgegengebracht wird (Edelman, 2015) – vielfach aufgegriffen und in Theorie (Crane, Palazzo, Spence, & Matten, 2014; Dembek, Singh, & Bhakoo, 2015) und Praxis (The Economist, 2011; Visser, 2013) lebhaft diskutiert wird.

In dem vorliegenden Beitrag stellen wir das SV-Konzept zunächst ausführlich vor, indem wir nach einem kurzen Blick auf die Entstehungsgeschichte darlegen, was unter SV genau zu verstehen ist. Dazu arbeiten wir zunächst die zwei Komponenten von SV – social und economic value – heraus und legen anhand von praktischen Beispielen die drei Wege dar, wie dieser geteilte Mehrwert PK zu Folge geschaffen werden kann. Nach der Darstellung der konzeptionellen Abgrenzung von CSR und SV beleuchten wir anschließend den aktuellen Stand der wissenschaftlichen Diskussion des SV-Konzepts. Der Beitrag schließt mit einem Ausblick auf die künftige Entwicklung des SV-Konzepts in Theorie und Praxis.

Eine kurze Entstehungsgeschichte von Shared Value

Die konzeptionellen Wurzeln des SV-Konzepts lassen sich auf zwei Publikationen von PK in der HBR aus den Jahren 1999 und 2002 zum Thema „Strategische Philanthropie“ zurückverfolgen. Darin fordern sie von Stiftungen ein „commitment to creating value“ (Porter & Kramer, 1999) ein und empfehlen diesen die Übernahme einer ökonomischen Wertschöpfungslogik, um über einen effizienteren und stärker auf Effektivität ausgerichteten Ressourceneinsatz eine größere soziale Wirkung zu erzielen: „A foundation creates value when it achieves an equivalent social benefit with fewer dollars or creates greater social benefit for comparable cost“ (Ebd., S. 126). Außerdem raten Sie Unternehmen dazu, ihr philanthropisches Engagement stärker auf den Wettbewerbskontext (das lokale Umfeld der Unternehmenstätigkeit) zu fokussieren: „Using philanthropy to enhance context brings social and economic goals into alignment and improves a company’s long-term business prospects (...). In the long run, then, social and economic goals are not inherently conflicting but integrally connected“ (Porter & Kramer, 2002: 58–59). Die Betonung der gesellschaftlichen Vorteile einer ökonomischen Wertschöpfungsperspektive und die Identifizierung einer positiven Schnittmenge zwischen ökonomischen und sozialen Zielen werden sich als zwei wesentliche Grundbausteine des SV-Konzepts erweisen.

Der Begriff SV und klarere Konturen des SV-Konzepts treten dann im Jahr 2006 in Erscheinung. Zum einen veröffentlichten PK in diesem Jahr einen Artikel in der HBR, in dem Sie für eine stärker strategieorientierte Herangehensweise an CSR („Strategic CSR“) eintreten: „CSR can be much more than a cost, a constraint, or a charitable deed – it can be a source of opportunity, innovation, and competitive advantage“ (Porter & Kramer, 2006: 80). Der Begriff SV fällt in diesem Beitrag gleichwohl nur sporadisch, eher beiläufig und steht somit noch nicht im Zentrum der Argumentation: „The mutual dependence of corporations and society implies that both business decisions and social policies must follow the principle of *shared value*. That is, choices must benefit both sides“ (Porter & Kramer, 2006: 84). Zum anderen veröffentlicht

Nestlé im gleichen Jahr einen von der von Michael Porter mitgegründeten internationalen Strategieberatung Foundation Strategy Group (FSG) erarbeiteten Bericht über die CSR-Aktivitäten in Lateinamerika. Darin wird der Begriff SV bereits öfter verwendet und mit Bezug auf Nestlé detaillierter konzeptualisiert. Ausgehend von der Feststellung einer Interdependenz zwischen Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft, werden „value chain impacts“ und „contextual investments“ als wesentliche Voraussetzungen zur Erzeugung von SV bezeichnet und es wird zwischen geschaffenem Wert für Nestlé und für die Gesellschaft unterschieden. Der damalige CEO von Nestlé Peter Brabeck-Letmathe verbindet mit dem Bericht die folgende Hoffnung: „(...) the degree to which this report develops and quantifies the concept of shared value creation will help distinguish us in the broader debate on corporate responsibility and stimulate further discussion in this particular area“ (Nestlé, 2006: 4). Aus seiner Sicht geht der Auftrag zur Erstellung dieser Studie auf seine Teilnahme am World Economic Forum in Davos im Jahre 2005 zurück. Die dort vielfach geäußerte Forderung, Unternehmen sollten der Gesellschaft etwas zurückgeben, stieß bei ihm auf Unverständnis: „Nestlé and myself, I don't feel that we have to give back to society, because we have not been stealing from society (...) it is not enough for a company just to create value for the shareholder (...) you also have to create value for the society at large which allows you to act“ (Brabeck-Letmathe, 2011). Daraufhin wurde bei Nestlé ein SV-Advisory-Board eingerichtet, dem u.a. auch Michael Porter angehörte. In den darauffolgenden Jahren wurde SV zum bestimmenden Konzept für die Übernahme gesellschaftlicher Verantwortung bei Nestlé.

Im Jahr 2011 erschien schließlich der bereits erwähnte Artikel von PK, der das Konzept in die bis heute gültige Form brachte, mit zahlreichen praktischen Beispielen – über den alleinigen Bezug zu Nestlé hinaus – unterlegte und weiter operationalisierte. In der Folge dieser Publikation entstand nicht nur eine lebhafte akademische Diskussion um das SV-Konzept, sondern die FSG veröffentlichte ihrerseits eine Reihe von praxisorientierten Berichten zur Umsetzung (How-to-Guide to SV, Measuring SV, SV in Emerging Markets, SV in India, SV

in Chile) und Schaffung von SV in verschiedenen Branchen (Health Care, Banking, Extractive Industries, Education).

Das Shared Value Konzept von Porter und Kramer

Die zwei Komponenten von Shared Value

SV wird von PK definiert als “(...) policies and operating practices that enhance the competitiveness of a company while simultaneously advancing the economic and social conditions in the communities in which it operates” (Porter & Kramer, 2011: 66). Zudem wird SV umschrieben mit „creating economic value in a way, that also creates value for society by addressing its needs and challenges” (Ebd. S. 64). Nach PK impliziert SV, gesellschaftliche Aspekte von einer Wertperspektive aus zu betrachten. In dieser Perspektive wird Wert als eine Kosten/Nutzen-Relation verstanden und explizit von einer Wertperspektive abgegrenzt, die ausschließlich auf den Nutzen fokussiert ohne die anfallenden Kosten zu berücksichtigen. Darüber hinaus wird von PK betont, dass die angesprochene Wertperspektive keine persönlichen Werte oder moralischen Verpflichtungen beinhaltet. Auf dieser Basis lässt sich SV in zwei Komponenten aufteilen, wie in Fig. 1 veranschaulicht und im Weiteren erläutert wird: (a) Economic Value, (b) Social Value und der sich aus der Schnittmenge der beiden Werte ergebende SV (c).

Figure 1: Die zwei Komponenten von Shared Value nach Porter und Kramer



Quelle: Darstellung in Anlehnung an: (Bockstette & Stamp, 2011: 4).

(a) Economic Value: Die ökonomische Komponente bezieht sich auf das in Theorie und Praxis allgemein akzeptierte Verständnis, wonach Unternehmen Wert schaffen, wenn sie langfristig positive Gewinne in ihrer Bilanz aufweisen (Bowman & Ambrosini, 2000). Der Ausdruck Wert bezieht sich also auf einen möglichst hohen Zahlenwert in der GuV eines Unternehmens. International wird dieser Wert v.a. in Bezug auf börsennotierte Unternehmen als „shareholder value“ bezeichnet und meint – vereinfacht ausgedrückt – die Residualgewinne, die nach Abzug aller Ausgaben von den Einnahmen an die Anteilseigner ausgeschüttet werden können (Sundaram & Inkpen, 2004).

(b) Social Value: Die soziale Komponente bezieht sich auf die Befriedigung von Bedürfnissen durch die Kerngeschäftstätigkeit von Unternehmen. PK geht es hierbei um “societal needs, not just conventional economic needs”, “societal harms or weaknesses” (Porter & Kramer, 2011: 65) und noch ungelöste gesellschaftliche Herausforderungen und Probleme, die durch die Aktivitäten des Kerngeschäfts eines Unternehmens direkt adressiert werden können.

(c) Shared Value: Die Schnittmenge aus economic und social value bezeichnet schließlich das zentrale Konstrukt des Konzepts. Diese Zone beschreibt eine *gleichzeitige Steigerung* von ökonomischem und sozialem Wert. SV wird also immer dann geschaffen, wenn eine Erhöhung des finanziellen Gewinns mit einer sozialen Verbesserung einhergeht. Geteilt werden folglich zusätzlich generierte Vorteile für Unternehmen und Gesellschaft, im Gegensatz zu einer Umverteilung von bereits generierten Werten über z.B. philanthropische Maßnahmen (Porter & Kramer, 2011). Genau darin liegt für Michael Porter die „Magie von SV“: Durch die zusätzlichen Gewinne kann der soziale Nutzen dauerhaft finanziert werden und bei entsprechendem Erfolg am Markt stetig weiter zunehmen. Soziale Vorteile werden damit skalierbar und bleiben dauerhaft bestehen (Kramer & Tallant, 2014). Das SV-Konzept ist folglich für PK jenseits des Trade-Off-Denkens zwischen sozialem und ökonomischem Wert angesiedelt und fokussiert auf die positive Schnittmenge beider Werte, ohne dass es einer

Gewichtung und Balancierung weiterer Werte bedarf (Porter & Kramer, 2014). SV ist für PK insofern „integral to profit maximization“ (Porter & Kramer, 2011: 76) und beinhaltet “(...) compliance with the law and ethical standards, as well as mitigating any harm caused by the business” (Ebd., S. 75).

Die drei Wege zur Schaffung von Shared Value

PK unterscheiden drei Wege, wie Unternehmen SV schaffen können: (1) Produkte und Märkte neu begreifen, (2) Die Wertschöpfungskette neu bewerten und (3) Lokale Cluster aufbauen. Diese Wege werden im Folgenden anhand praktischer Beispiele erläutert und in Fig. 2 zusammenfassend veranschaulicht.

Figure 2: Die drei Wege zur Schaffung von Shared Value nach Porter und Kramer

Produkte und Märkte neu begreifen	Die Wertschöpfungskette neu bewerten	Lokale Cluster aufbauen
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Ausgangsfrage:</u> Welche sozialen Bedürfnisse oder Vorteile können mit dem Produktangebot des Unternehmens adressiert bzw. realisiert werden, um den Gewinn langfristig zu steigern? • Gewinnsteigernde Anpassung von bestehenden bzw. Entwicklung von neuen Produkten für entwickelte Märkte und/oder Base of the Pyramid (BoP)-Märkte 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Ausgangsfrage:</u> Welche sozialen Aspekte entlang der Wertkette erhöhen auch die Kosten? • Erhöhte Produktivität durch Einsparungen und verbesserte Effizienz entlang der Wertkette 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Ausgangsfrage:</u> Welche sozialen Defizite im lokalen Umfeld wirken sich auch negativ auf die Produktivität aus? • Aufbau lokaler Cluster zur Verbesserung der Produktivität und Beseitigung von sozialen Defiziten im lokalen Umfeld des Clusters

Quelle: Eigene Darstellung.

(1) Produkte und Märkte neu begreifen

PK schlagen zunächst vor, das Produktangebot eines Unternehmens daraufhin zu überprüfen, welche sozialen Bedürfnisse, Vorteile und gesellschaftlichen Schäden mit den Produkten

verbunden sind oder sein könnten. Dadurch lassen sich noch nicht befriedigte Bedürfnisse und Veränderungsmöglichkeiten an bestehenden Produkten mit positivem sozialem Nutzen identifizieren. Auszuwählen sind dann diejenigen Optionen, die das größte Potential zur langfristigen Steigerung des bilanziellen Gewinns aufweisen. Die Ergebnisse dieser Analyse können sowohl zur Veränderung bereits am Markt etablierter Produkte als auch zur Einführung neuer Produkte führen und/oder den Eintritt in bisher für das Unternehmen noch unerschlossener Märkte bedeuten (Porter & Kramer, 2011). Coca-Cola führte z.B. sowohl neue Produkte mit gesundheitsfördernder Wirkung als auch zuckerreduzierte Versionen ihrer etablierten Produkte ein, um dem Bedürfnis nach gesünderer Ernährung Rechnung zu tragen (Coca-Cola, 2014). Ein weiteres Beispiel ist der indische Lebensmittelhersteller Britannia, der seine bereits am indischen Markt etablierten Kekse für Kinder der Marke Tiger mit zusätzlichen wachstumsrelevanten und gesundheitsfördernden Vitaminen und Mineralien anreicherte (Britannia, 2015). Die Einführung neuer Fahrzeuge der BMWi-Reihe wiederum wird von PK als ein Beispiel für die Entwicklung neuer Produkte in entwickelten Märkten angeführt, durch die das Bedürfnis nach Mobilität mit einem geringeren ökologischen Fußabdruck adressiert wird (Porter & Kramer, 2012). Bezüglich der Suche nach noch nicht befriedigten Bedürfnissen sind für PK schließlich die sog. „Base of the Pyramid (BoP-)“ Märkte von besonderer Bedeutung. Darunter werden die unteren Gruppen der globalen Einkommenspyramide verstanden, die überwiegend in Entwicklungs- und Schwellenländern leben und nur über ein sehr geringes Einkommen verfügen (London & Hart, 2011; Prahalad & Hart, 2002). Hier identifizieren PK (2011) ein besonderes Potential zur Schaffung von SV, indem bestehende Produkte für diese Kundengruppe spezifisch angepasst und/oder gänzlich neue Produkte für die BoP entwickelt werden.

(2) Die Wertschöpfungskette neu bewerten

Der zweite Weg zur Schaffung von SV konzentriert sich auf das Identifizieren und Realisieren von Steigerungspotentialen der Produktivität in der Wertschöpfungskette des

Unternehmens. SV kann an allen Stellen der Wertschöpfungskette geschaffen werden, an denen soziale Probleme auch ökonomische Kosten verursachen. Dies umfasst Bereiche wie z.B. Ressourcenverbrauch, Gesundheit, Sicherheit und Fähigkeiten der Mitarbeiter, Austausch mit den Zulieferern oder Logistik (Porter & Kramer, 2011). Die Intercontinental Hotel Group (IHG) bspw. hat mit dem sog. „Green Engage System“ ein onlinebasiertes Monitoring- und Reporting-Tool entwickelt, mit dem die Filialen ihren Energie- und Ressourcenverbrauch systematisch erfassen, praktische Hinweise zur Verbrauchsreduzierung erhalten und mit anderen Filialen vergleichen können. Nach Angaben der IHG konnten dadurch sowohl signifikante Energiekosteneinsparungen erzielt als auch der ökologische Fußabdruck der Hotels reduziert werden (Intercontinental Hotel Group, 2014).

(3) Lokale Cluster aufbauen

Der dritte Weg zur Schaffung von SV bezieht sich schließlich auf den gezielten Aufbau und die kontinuierliche Verbesserung von sog. lokalen Clustern. Die geographische Konzentration von Zulieferern, logistischer und technischer Infrastruktur, regionalen Dienstleistern und Bildungsinstitutionen wirkt sich nach PK positiv auf die Produktivität eines Unternehmens aus. Durch die gezielte Beseitigung derjenigen sozialen Defizite im lokalen Umfeld des Clusters, die auch ein signifikantes Kostensenkungspotential für das Unternehmen aufweisen, kann die Produktivität des Unternehmens weiter erhöht und gleichzeitig der Zustand des Clusters insgesamt verbessert werden. Darüber hinaus können weitere externe Partner mit einbezogen werden, um den lokalen Kontext des Clusters insgesamt weiter zu verbessern (Porter & Kramer, 2011). PK führen hier z.B. den Aufbau des Insulingeschäfts von Novo Nordisk in China an. Über einen längeren Zeitraum wurde hier in Zusammenarbeit mit der chinesischen Regierung über die in China noch wenig bekannte Krankheit Diabetes aufgeklärt und es wurden lokale Behandlungszentren und Produktionsstätten eingerichtet sowie Ärzte und medizinisches Personal geschult. Dadurch entstanden ein lokales Cluster mit einer lokalen

Infrastruktur und ein mittlerweile lukrativer Markt für die Diabetes-Sparte von Novo Nordisk (Novo Nordisk, 2011).

Intentionalität, Materialität und die Abgrenzung zu CSR

In den praxisorientierten Publikationen der FSG, wie auch in öffentlichen Äußerungen von PK werden zwei zentrale Eigenschaften von SV-Maßnahmen betont: Intentionalität und Materialität. Intentionalität bedeutet, dass konkrete und messbare Zielvorgaben in Bezug auf die zu erreichenden sozialen und ökonomischen Werte einer SV-Maßnahme durch das Management gesetzt und diese durch geeignete Kennzahlen erfasst und regelmäßig auf den Zielerreichungsgrad hin überprüft werden. Materialität hingegen bezieht sich auf die Bedeutung einer SV-Maßnahme für die Profitabilität einer Geschäftseinheit oder des gesamten Unternehmens (Hills, Russell, Borgonovi, Doty, & Iyer, 2012: 41–44). Eine idealtypische SV-Maßnahme zeichnet sich demnach durch eine hohe Intentionalität und Materialität aus. In einer hohen Materialität und Intentionalität kommt auch nochmals eine Kernforderung des SV-Konzepts zum Ausdruck: Die Verankerung im und die direkte Verbindung zum Kerngeschäft. In der Betonung der direkten Verbindung von SV zum Kerngeschäft liegt auch eines der zentralen Elemente der konzeptionellen Grenzlinie, die PK zwischen CSR und dem SV-Konzept ziehen. Den beiden Autoren zufolge, zeichnen sich CSR-Maßnahmen durch eine zumeist nur geringe Verbindung zum Kerngeschäft aus. Sie folgen oft einer nur lose an das Kerngeschäft gekoppelten Strategie und resultieren vielmehr aus den persönlichen Präferenzen des Managements, externem Druck oder gar zufälligen Gegebenheiten (Porter & Kramer, 2011). CSR-Maßnahmen sind für PK in erster Linie reputationsgetrieben und auf die Erzielung kurzfristiger, positiver ökonomischer Nebeneffekte ausgerichtet, während SV aufgrund der angestrebten Materialität integraler Bestandteil der Strategie zur langfristigen Maximierung des Unternehmensgewinns ist. Schließlich verbinden PK mit CSR-Maßnahmen auch eine Trade-Off-Mentalität, die nur auf die Gegensätze zwischen Gewinnerzielung und gesellschaftlichen

Vorteilen abstellt und außer einiger vager Prinzipien oder absolut gesetzter moralischer Regeln keine Lösung für diese Trade-Offs bereitstellt. Wie oben bereits dargelegt, impliziert SV nach PK hingegen das Denken jenseits von Trade Offs und fokussiert auf den Win-Win-Bereich zwischen Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft.

Shared Value in der wissenschaftlichen Diskussion

Die inhaltliche Bewertung des Shared Value Konzepts

Inhaltlich wird das SV-Konzept in der Wissenschaft sehr kontrovers diskutiert. Während Autoren aus den Bereichen Strategisches Management (Moon, Parc, Yim, & Park, 2011; Pfitzer, Bockstette, & Stamp, 2013; Schmitt & Renken, 2012; Spitzeck & Chapman, 2012), Marketing (Bertini & Gourville, 2012) und Social Innovation bzw. Social Entrepreneurship (Michelini, 2012; Michelini & Fiorentino, 2012) das Konzept überwiegend positiv bewerten, wird SV von der international etablierten CSR-Community eher kritisch gesehen (Beschorner, 2013; Beschorner & Hajduk, 2015; Crane et al., 2014; Dembek et al., 2015; Hartmann & Werhane, 2013; Pirson, 2012; Szmigin & Rutherford, 2013).

Übergreifend wird der normativen Grundintention des SV-Konzepts zugestimmt, dass Unternehmen nicht nur auf die Generierung von finanziellen Werten ausgerichtet sein sollten, sondern sie durch eine aktive Beteiligung an der Lösung gesellschaftlicher Herausforderungen auch Werte für die Gesellschaft als Ganze schaffen sollten. Zudem wird die Betonung der Verankerung von CSR im Kerngeschäft des Unternehmens positiv beurteilt. Darüber hinaus wird anerkannt, dass es PK gelungen ist, eine griffige und praxisorientierte Operationalisierung von SV vorzulegen (Crane et al., 2014; Visser, 2013). Dadurch wird der Adressatenkreis für derartige Themen in der Praxis erweitert und die Aufmerksamkeit bislang weniger in CSR engagierter Manager geweckt: SV könnte so zunehmend als Türöffner für CSR-Themen im Allgemeinen fungieren. Dieser Effekt ist mit Sicherheit auch auf den Bekanntheitsgrad von Michael Porter und sein FSG-Netzwerk zurückzuführen, wird aber aus unserer Sicht durch die

gelungene Begriffswahl und die oben beschriebenen Entstehungshintergründe noch unterstrichen. SV setzt sich schließlich aus zwei sehr positiv besetzten Wörtern zusammen und ergibt sich auf semantischer wie phonetischer Ebene geradezu als konsequente Fortentwicklung bisheriger CSR-Schlagwörter: von Shareholder über Stakeholder zu Shared Value. Diese positiven Konnotationen werden durch die optimistische Rhetorik und Grundstimmung des HBR-Artikels von 2011 zusätzlich unterstützt und tragen zu einer hohen Anschlussfähigkeit des SV-Konzepts an etablierte Sprach- und Denkmuster in vielen Unternehmen bei.

In der Literatur wird allerdings auch eine Kehrseite der starken Rhetorik und Praxisnähe des SV-Konzepts diskutiert. Viele konstatieren in den Ausführungen von PK eine Überdosis an Rhetorik: Das ausgegebene Ziel der „Neuerfindung des Kapitalismus“ wird als zu hoch gesteckt angesehen, da die vorgelegte Konzeption wenig substantiell Neues in die internationale CSR-Diskussion einbringt (Crane et al., 2014; Hartmann & Werhane, 2013; Pirson, 2012): Weder die Empfehlung bislang noch unbefriedigte Bedürfnisse in den Blick zu nehmen und/oder neue Märkte zu erschließen, noch die Forderung nach Effizienzsteigerungspotentialen in der Wertschöpfungskette bzw. dem lokalen Umfeld Ausschau zu halten, können als grundsätzlich neue Erkenntnisse gelten. Man denke nur an die umfangreiche Literatur zum sog. „Business Case“ von CSR (einen guten Überblick hierzu bietet z. B. (Schreck, 2012)) oder der BoP (London & Hart, 2011; Prahalad & Hart, 2002). Auch aus der Praxis lassen sich Stimmen vernehmen, die die Neuheit des SV-Konzepts in Zweifel ziehen: John Fallon, der CEO von Pearson, und der Executive VP von Microsoft Brad Smith stellen bspw. fest: „Shared Value has always been implicit in what Pearson does as a company“ bzw. „(...) shared value is not a new concept“ (Kramer & Tallant, 2014). Peter Brabeck-Letmathe weist gar darauf hin, dass SV weniger auf revolutionär neuen Einsichten basiert als schlicht auf „pragmatic long term business thinking“ (Brabeck-Letmathe, 2013: 3). Darüber hinaus wird PK's Kritik an und ihre Abgrenzung zu den etablierten CSR-Ansätzen als rhetorischer Spielzug eingestuft, um die eigene Konzeption an einem fiktiven Gegner stark zu machen (Beschoner, 2013; Crane et al.,

2014). CSR-Ansätze in Theorie und Praxis fordern schließlich schon seit einiger Zeit eine Verankerung von CSR im Kerngeschäft und die Überwindung rein reputationsgetriebener CSR-Maßnahmen. Auch aus unserer Sicht mag das gezeichnete Bild von CSR auf Einzelfälle schlechter CSR-Praxis zutreffen, bildet aber weder den aktuellen Stand in der Wissenschaft noch der CSR best practices akkurat ab.

Dem rhetorischen Überfluss stehen nach Ansicht vieler CSR-Forscher zahlreiche Mängel auf inhaltlicher Ebene gegenüber. Diesbezüglich wird v.a. eine inhaltlich zu wenig in die Tiefe gehende Ausgestaltung des SV-Ansatzes kritisiert. Insbesondere das Wertverständnis von PK steht diesbezüglich in der Kritik. Ein Verständnis von Wert als Kosten/Nutzen-Relation unter explizitem Ausschluss von persönlichen und moralischen Werten wird von vielen als ökonomische Verkürzung des Wertbegriffs angesehen (Beschoner, 2013; Beschoner & Hajduk, 2015). Daraus resultiert eine primär an der finanziellen Wertsteigerung orientierte Perspektive auf soziale Werte. Demnach soll nur diejenige Bedürfnisbefriedigung, oder soziale Problemlösung realisiert werden, die auch eine langfristige Gewinnsteigerung verspricht. In den Augen einiger Kritiker birgt diese Win-Win-Zone ein nur sehr begrenztes Potential zur Lösung gesellschaftlicher Probleme (Dembek et al., 2015; Pirson, 2012). Folgt man dieser Sicht, dann stellt sich das von PK angekündigte Überwinden des Trade-Off-Denkens zwischen sozialem und ökonomischem Wert vielmehr als das Ignorieren der komplexen Abwägungsprozesse zur Lösung drängender gesellschaftlicher Herausforderungen dar. Das Einhalten von Gesetzen und ethischen Standards sowie der Ausgleich durch die Unternehmenstätigkeit entstandener Schäden können demnach nicht einfach als gleichsam automatisches Ergebnis Win-Win-orientierter Maßnahmen vorausgesetzt werden. Vielmehr sind sie das Ergebnis schwieriger Abwägungsprozesse im kontinuierlichen Austausch mit den betroffenen Stakeholdern (Beschoner, 2013; Crane et al., 2014; Scholz & Reyes de los, Gastón, 2015). Diesbezüglich wird auch die von PK als Kernmerkmal von SV verstandene Priorität der Unternehmensperspektive kritisiert. Den Kritikern zufolge führt diese letztlich zu einer nur

geringen zusätzlichen Übernahme von gesellschaftlicher Verantwortung, da die durch das Management identifizierten sozialen Vorteile einer SV-Maßnahme nicht automatisch auch Vorteile aus Sicht der Betroffenen bzw. der Gesellschaft als Ganze darstellen müssen (Crane et al., 2014; Dembek et al., 2015). Das für den SV-Ansatz konstitutive Grundvertrauen in die positiven gesellschaftlichen Wirkungen unternehmerischer Tätigkeit wird folglich nicht von allen Wissenschaftlern geteilt. Darüber hinaus wird für einige Kritiker nicht hinreichend deutlich, wie sich SV von konventioneller Wertschöpfung und den damit verbundenen gesellschaftlichen Vorteilen unterscheidet bzw. dem eigenen Anspruch nach gar über diese hinausgeht. Insbesondere die soziale Komponente von SV bleibt in ihrem Bezug auf bislang unbefriedigte Bedürfnisse, soziale Vorteile und gesellschaftliche Herausforderungen zu vage und eröffnet dadurch einen erheblichen Interpretationsspielraum. So könnte nahezu jedes Produkt durch geringe Modifikation und/oder das Erschließen bisher nicht mit dem Produkt versorgter Konsumenten SV generieren (Dembek et al., 2015).

Neben den konzeptionellen Schwächen wird auch auf die Defizite der bisher verfügbaren empirischen Belege für SV hingewiesen. Eine aktuelle wissenschaftliche Literaturanalyse zum Thema SV weist u.a. darauf hin, dass nur sehr wenige Studien auf Basis einer unabhängigen und methodisch transparenten Erhebung von Primärdaten vorhanden sind. Die überwiegende Mehrheit der in Theorie und Praxis diskutierten Fallbeispiele geht unmittelbar auf PK und das FSG-Netzwerk zurück und stützt sich auf Daten aus der Selbstauskunft der porträtierten Unternehmen (Dembek, Singh und Bhakoo 2015). Viele der Unternehmen standen oder stehen zudem in direkten Geschäftsbeziehungen zur FSG. Darüber hinaus sind die bisher verfügbaren Fallbeispiele wenig detailliert ausgearbeitet und weisen eine stark unternehmenszentrierte Perspektive auf. Gerade der über SV-Maßnahmen in Aussicht gestellte soziale Zusatznutzen sollte aus der Perspektive möglichst vieler verschiedener Stakeholdergruppen erfasst werden und nicht nur die Sicht des Managements oder einzelner Anspruchsgruppen abbilden (Crane et al., 2014; Dembek et al., 2015). Die kürzlich erschienene Studie von Biswas et al. (2014) über

die Wirkungen des Engagements von Nestlé in der indischen Stadt Moga weist diesbezüglich in die richtige Richtung, bleibt aber aufgrund der Intransparenz der Methodik in Bezug auf die Güte der Ergebnisse schwer einzuschätzen.

Schließlich wird in der Literatur auf das Problem einer nur selektiven Implementierung des SV-Konzepts in Unternehmen hingewiesen. Demnach besteht die Gefahr, dass Unternehmen v.a. leicht zu realisierende Maßnahmen durchführen und diese dann als Generierung von SV nach Außen kommunizieren, ohne das Kerngeschäft insgesamt und den Unternehmenszweck als solchen zu hinterfragen (Crane et al., 2014). Man denke hier z.B. an Coca-Cola, das zwar auf der einen Seite zuckerreduzierte Getränke auf den Markt bringt und öffentlichkeitswirksam Kampagnen für mehr Bewegung unterstützt, auf der anderen Seite aber gleichzeitig seine Marktmacht im Hinblick auf Verkaufsflächen im Einzelhandel vehement gegen gesündere Getränkealternativen verteidigt und sich gegen eine transparentere Kennzeichnung des Zuckergehalts auf Getränken einsetzt. Diese Selektivität widerspricht zwar der eigentlichen Intention von PK, ergibt sich aber aus unserer Sicht geradezu als logische Konsequenz der zahlreichen Defizite des SV-Konzepts.

Das Shared Value Konzept in der Gesamtbetrachtung

In der Gesamtbetrachtung wiegen zwei Defizite des SV-Konzepts unserer Auffassung nach besonders schwer: das eindimensionale Verständnis von *Value* sowie der größtenteils von PK vernachlässigte und ausschließlich auf die langfristige Profitabilitätssteigerung fokussierte Prozess des *Sharing*, der der Schaffung eines sog. *Shared Value* notwendigerweise vorausgehen muss. Wir kommen nach der vorangegangenen Analyse zu dem Schluss, dass die Konzeption von PK zu einem im Kern paradoxen Unterfangen führt – dem Schaffen von *Shared Value* ohne ein vorheriges *Sharing* von *Values*. Es erschließt sich uns nicht, wie die Schaffung von SV ohne den expliziten Einbezug persönlicher und moralischer Werte möglich sein soll. Selbst die rein ökonomische Wertschöpfung – sofern es so etwas überhaupt gibt – basiert bereits auf

zahlreichen moralischen und persönlichen Wertvorstellungen der beteiligten primären Stakeholder (Freeman, Harrison, Wicks, Parmar, & Colle, 2010). Zudem bleibt unklar, wie ethische Standards und Gesetze eingehalten und vom Unternehmen verursachte gesellschaftliche Schäden behoben werden können, ohne den zumindest impliziten Bezug auf moralische und persönliche Werte der betroffenen Stakeholder. Darüber hinaus ist die eindimensionale – da auf die finanzielle Wertsteigerung fokussierte – Wertperspektive von PK gleichgültig gegenüber unterschiedlichen Qualitäten der potentiell durch eine SV-Maßnahme realisierbaren sozialen Vorteile. Wie sollte sich ein Pharmaunternehmen nach PK bspw. entscheiden, wenn es entweder die Gewinne durch eine leichte Variation der Wirkstoffkombination einer bereits am Markt etablierten Kopfschmerztablette weiter steigern kann oder bei geringerer Profitabilität ein neues Medikament für eine lebensbedrohende und bisher vernachlässigte Krankheit entwickeln könnte?

Oben wurde bereits darauf hingewiesen, dass PK SV als gleichsam automatisches Ergebnis der Implementierung der dargestellten drei Wege präsentieren, ohne auf die komplexen Abwägungs- und Austauschprozesse zwischen den betroffenen Stakeholdern einzugehen, die mit derartigen strategischen Entscheidungen verbunden sind. Diese lösen sich unserer Überzeugung nach aber gerade nicht durch den impliziten Primat der finanziellen Wertsteigerung und dem damit verbundenen sozialen Zusatznutzen in allseitiges Wohlgefallen auf. Die Lösung derartig komplexer Probleme erfordert hingegen stets die explizite und verständigungsorientierte Auseinandersetzung mit den verschiedenen Wertvorstellungen der betroffenen Stakeholder (Gilbert & Behnam, 2009; Gilbert & Rasche, 2007). PK geben für diese Austauschprozesse keinerlei Hilfestellung oder Orientierungsmaßstäbe an, sondern vertrauen diesbezüglich offensichtlich allein auf die von ihnen beschworene „Magie“ von SV. Sie verfehlen damit aus unserer Sicht das selbstgesetzte Ziel, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft wieder einander anzunähern und es gelingt ihnen letztlich nicht, die Spannweite ökonomischer und sozialer Wertschöpfung von Unternehmen substantiell zu erweitern. Diese Erweiterung

wird durch die Beschränkung des SV-Konzepts auf die o.g. drei Wege zur Schaffung von SV nach unserer Einschätzung noch zusätzlich behindert, da PK damit viele andere Möglichkeiten zur Generierung von SV, wie z.B. nachhaltige Geschäftsmodelle (Boons & Lüdeke-Freund, 2013) oder Social Business-Ansätze (Pirson, 2012), unberücksichtigt lassen und das Denken über mögliche SV-Maßnahmen dadurch ohne einen hinreichenden Grund begrenzen (Hartmann & Werhane, 2013).

Der soziale Nutzen oder die Lösung gesellschaftlicher Probleme stehen folglich nicht im Zentrum des SV-Konzepts von PK, sondern sie bleiben letztlich der Nebeneffekt der auf langfristige Gewinnsteigerung fokussierten Unternehmenstätigkeit. Ein nur flüchtiger Blick in die jüngere Geschichte der Marktwirtschaft zeigt diesbezüglich zweierlei: Zum einen wird deutlich, dass der als Nebeneffekt generierbare gesellschaftliche Nutzen zweifellos erheblich ist: Unternehmen haben weltweit bedeutende Innovationen hervorgebracht und elementar zum gesellschaftlichen Wohlstand beigetragen. Zum anderen tragen Unternehmen aber auch eine Mitverantwortung an der Entstehung vieler der derzeit drängendsten gesellschaftlichen Probleme, wie dem Klimawandel, der globalen Armut und Unterversorgung oder der großen Ungleichheit in der globalen Einkommens- und Vermögensverteilung. Am Problemlösungspotential eines im Kern auf „business-as-usual“ basierenden Konzepts sind angesichts der Größe dieser Herausforderungen aus unserer Sicht begründete Zweifel angebracht. Der Blick auf die Leistungen und Fehlleistungen von Unternehmen in der Vergangenheit führt für uns aber weder zur Feststellung eines lapidaren „Weiter so!“ noch zur Annahme eines unüberwindbaren Grabens zwischen Unternehmen und Gesellschaft, sondern wirft vielmehr die spannende Frage auf: Was könnten Unternehmen erst erreichen, wenn die Lösung von gesellschaftlichen Herausforderungen von einem Nebeneffekt der Geschäftstätigkeit zu ihrer Hauptaufgabe würde?

Ausblick: Shared Value – The Big Idea?

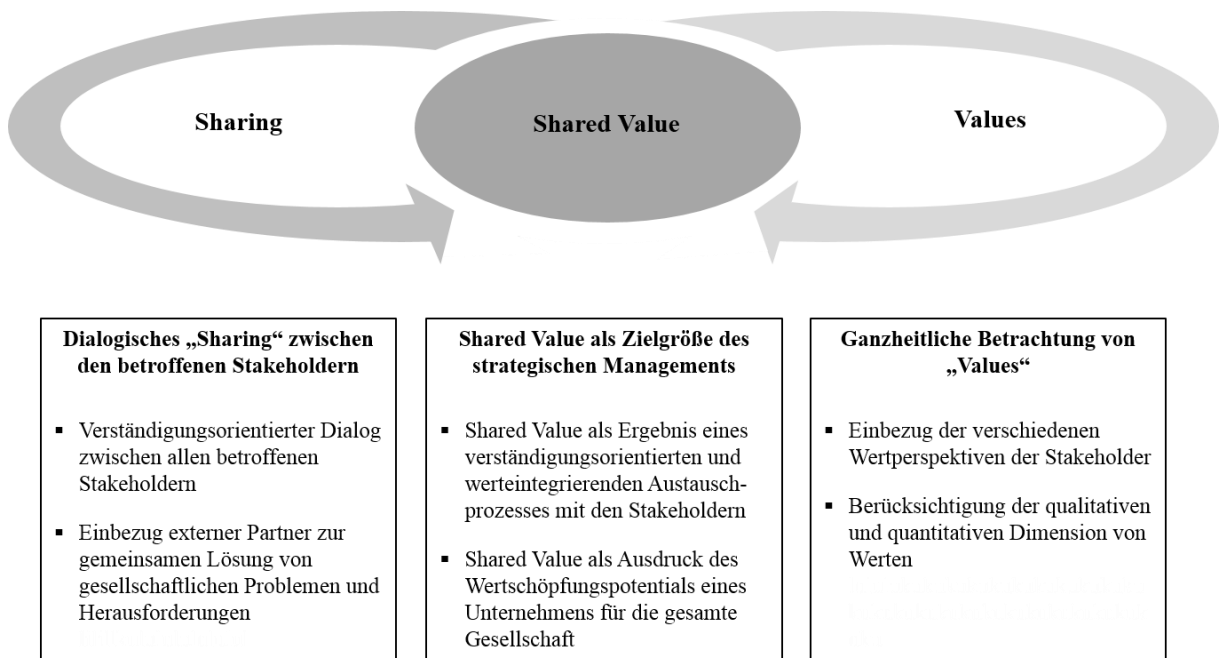
Was lässt sich am Ende dieses Beitrags also mit Blick auf die übergeordnete Thematik dieses Sammelbands – der Verbindung von CSR und dem strategischen Management – festhalten? Handelt es sich bei SV um ein zukunftsweisendes Konzept für Theorie und Praxis oder eher um eine kurzlebige Modeerscheinung? Für letzteres spricht, dass dem glanzvollen SV-Begriff und den damit verbundenen hochgesteckten Ansprüchen aus unserer Sicht wenig inhaltliche Substanz gegenübersteht: Wie unsere Ausführungen zeigen, wird der Kapitalismus nicht neu erfunden, sondern nur in ein neues, dem Zeitgeist entsprechendes Gewand gekleidet. Business as usual erhält lediglich einen neuen Anstrich und einen wohlklingenden neuen Namen. Auf dieser Basis ist zu erwarten, dass SV nur insoweit eine dauerhaft herausgehobene Rolle in der internationalen Diskussion spielen wird, wie das FSG-Netzwerk und der Popularitätseffekt von Michael Porter andere aktuelle konzeptionelle Konkurrenten (z.B. Conscious Capitalism, Blended Value, Sustainability, B-Corporation, Social Business) zu überragen im Stande sind. Im Übrigen wird auch die anhaltende Kritik an SV seitens der wissenschaftlichen CSR-Community der langfristigen Etablierung von SV eher nicht von Nutzen sein.

Aus unserer Sicht sollte das SV-Konzept von PK jedoch weder kritiklos akzeptiert noch gänzlich verworfen werden. Vielmehr birgt es unseres Erachtens erhebliches Potential: Um dieses Potential zu heben, gilt es die o. g. positiven begrifflichen Konnotationen und Stärken des Konzepts mit einem soliden normativen Fundament zu unterlegen, detailliert theoretisch auszuarbeiten und die Wirkungen von SV-Maßnahmen fundiert empirisch zu überprüfen. Die Beantwortung der eingangs gestellten Frage wird also entscheidend davon abhängen, ob es der künftigen Diskussion in Wissenschaft und Praxis gelingt, sich an zentralen Stellen von dem ursprünglichen Vorschlag von PK zu lösen und die angesprochenen konzeptionellen Schwachstellen zu beheben. Erste Ansätze hierzu lassen sich in der Verknüpfung des SV-Begriffs mit der theoretischen Basis der Governanceethik (Wieland & Heck, 2013), der Integration eines „Impartial Spectator“ Tests nach Adam Smith (Szmigin & Rutherford, 2013)

oder der Ergänzung des SV-Konzepts um eine explizite und dem Profitabilitätsziel gleichgestellte Normenanalyse (Scholz & Reyes de los, Gastón, 2015) bereits feststellen. Auch das Begriffsverständnis, das der aktuellen CSR-Strategie der EU Kommission zugrunde liegt, weist bereits über die Konzeption von PK hinaus (European Commission, 2011).

Den zentralen Ausgangspunkt zur Fortentwicklung von SV bildet aus unserer Sicht gleichwohl die Erkenntnis, dass ein zukunftsweisender strategischer CSR-Ansatz nicht ausschließlich auf der gewinnorientierten Auswahl derjenigen Aspekte der Wertschöpfung basieren kann, die aus Sicht des Unternehmens auch einen sozialen Zusatznutzen darstellen. Der strategische CSR-Ansatz der Zukunft stützt sich vielmehr auf einen problemlösungszentrierten und kontinuierlichen Austausch auf Augenhöhe zwischen Unternehmen und Gesellschaft. Strategische Entscheidungen werden nicht mehr nur monologisch aus der Perspektive des Managements getroffen, sondern eingebettet in einen verständigungsorientierten Dialog zwischen allen betroffenen Stakeholdern. (Calton, Werhane, Hartman, & Bevan, 2013; Gilbert & Behnam, 2009; Gilbert & Rasche, 2007). Die nachfolgende Fig. 3 skizziert die Richtung, in die das SV-Konzept aus unserer Sicht theoretisch weitergedacht und praktisch umgesetzt werden sollte.

Figure 3: Shared Value jenseits der Konzeption von Porter und Kramer



Quelle: Eigene Darstellung

Um das o.g. Paradox der SV-Konzeption von PK aufzulösen, muss SV als das Ergebnis eines verständigungsorientierten und werteintegrierenden Austauschprozesses mit den Stakeholdern verstanden werden. Unternehmen sollten die Schaffung von SV stets als einen Prozess begreifen, der verschiedene qualitative und quantitative Werte („Values“) der Stakeholder berücksichtigt und über einen kontinuierlichen verständigungsorientierten Austausch zwischen den Betroffenen („Sharing“) miteinander in Einklang bringt (Schormair & Gilbert, 2014). Vor dieser zugebenermaßen komplexen Herausforderung können sich Unternehmen zwar kurzfristig in gewohnte – wenn auch mit neuem Glanz versehene – Denkmuster zurückziehen, werden der Notwendigkeit eines grundsätzlichen Umdenkens und der Entwicklung neuer Handlungsmuster jedoch nicht dauerhaft entgehen können – vorausgesetzt sie sind an der Lösung der drängenden gesellschaftlichen Probleme unserer Zeit auch tatsächlich interessiert.

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Paper II:

Obfuscating ideology through the notion of sharing – the case of Porter and Kramer’s Shared Value concept

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Abstract: The notion of sharing is currently discussed controversially within the literature: While sharing economy scholars debate the true meaning of sharing in the light of the proliferation of such diverse sharing services as car-sharing or social media, shared value researchers discuss in how far Porter and Kramer’s concept achieves its aspiration to re-legitimize business through the creation of value that is shared between business and society. So far research enabling a nuanced evaluation of such diverse and controversial use of the notion of sharing is missing in the literature. This paper addresses this gap by developing an analytical framework that unpacks the different denotative and connotative meanings of the notion of sharing and provides assessment criteria indicating the risk of ideological obfuscation associated with its use in management theory and practice. Applying this framework to the analysis of shared value reveals that Porter and Kramer use a very unspecific and highly commercial notion of sharing that is at odds with its largely non-commercial and pro-social connotations. Accordingly, shared value bears a high risk of obfuscating the ideology of shareholder value maximization that constitutes its conceptual core. Hence, this paper stresses the challenge for researchers and practitioners alike to theorize contemporary and highly dynamic concepts like the sharing economy or shared value with sound and precise terminology that illuminates rather than obscures its substance.

Keywords: Sharing, Shared Value, Ideology, CSR Terminology, Semiotics

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Introduction

The notion of sharing permeates the recent management and CSR discourse igniting a controversial debate within the literature. The advent of the so called “sharing economy” led to a growing body of research exploring its conceptual foundations as well as societal implications (Stephany, 2015; Sundararajan, 2016). The sharing economy is mostly associated with an internet-mediated way of consumption called “collaborative” (Botsman & Rogers, 2010) or “access-based” consumption (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012) focusing on the provision of access to goods and services through platforms without consumers gaining ownership rights. While sharing economy advocates (Botsman & Rogers, 2010; Stephany, 2015; Sundararajan, 2016) stress the transformative potential of contemporary sharing-services such as Zipcar, Airbnb, Couchsurfing or Facebook, others criticize commercial sharing economy businesses for jeopardizing the “true spirit” of sharing as well as for falling short of their initial pro-social aspirations (Belk, 2014a, 2014b; John, 2012).

Concurrently with the sharing economy debate the notion of sharing is involved in another controversy within the CSR literature concerning Porter and Kramer’s recent call for a redefinition of the corporate purpose around “creating shared value, not just profits per se” (2011: 64). Suggesting that corporations should “pursue financial success in a way that also yields societal benefits” (Kramer & Pfitzer, 2016: 82) Porter and Kramer argue that “learning how to create shared value is our best chance to legitimize business again” (2011: 64). This high aspiration has been met with considerable skepticism from established business ethics scholars criticizing the concept for its “incomplete mental model” (Hartmann & Werhane, 2013) and “overly narrow economic perspective” (Beschoner, 2013: 108) as well as describing the concept as „reactionary rather than transformational response to the crisis of capitalism” (Crane, Palazzo, Spence, & Matten, 2014: 131, 142). Despite these criticisms, the term itself and the underlying concept have constantly gained awareness in research and practice (Dembek, Singh, & Bhakoo, 2015).

Scholars from both research streams agree that terminological confusion concerning the notion of sharing plays an important role in these controversies. Several sharing economy scholars openly adopt a “pragmatic approach” regarding their use of the sharing terminology justifying its use with the popularity and diffusion of the term sharing amongst practitioners (Stephany, 2015; Sundararajan, 2016). Dembek et al. (2015) in turn call shared value a “buzzword” suggesting that the term lacks a precise meaning and is used in a largely colloquial way within the literature. While such a pragmatic use of terminology might be less problematic from a practitioner’s point of view, it poses significant challenges for the academic discourse (Baden & Harwood, 2013). Since construct clarity and analytical precision are widely accepted standards among management scholars the controversy around the notion of sharing within the sharing economy and shared value literature calls for further scrutiny (Dembek et al., 2015; John, 2013, 2016; John & Sützl, 2016). Otherwise theories built upon vague terminology risk having a negative impact not only on research but also on practice (Ferraro, Pfeffer, & Sutton, 2005; Ghoshal, 2005). Accordingly, I pursue the following interrelated research questions in this paper: What does the notion of sharing mean and how can its use in management theory and practice be assessed? How is the notion of sharing used in Porter and Kramer’s shared value concept?

I address these research questions by developing an analytical framework that unpacks the denotative as well as connotative dimensions of sharing. This framework is based on insights from recent sharing research (Belk, 2010, 2014a; John, 2012, 2013, 2016) and contains assessment criteria indicating the risk of ideological obfuscation associated with the notion of sharing. Ideological obfuscation is understood in this paper as obscuring the background assumptions of a concept or practice by making use of the notion of sharing in a way that places the term in a context at odds with its established connotative meaning while remaining vague on the specifics of the denotative meaning of sharing. This enables the promotion of a concept or practice through its connotative appeal rather than its denotative substance. This framework

differentiates between four different types of making use of the notion of sharing in management research and practice each associated with a specific risk of ideological obfuscation: The explicit and implicit types of *non-commercial sharing* are each associated with a low risk of ideological obfuscation since the denotative dimension is in consonance with the largely non-commercial connotations of sharing. Explicit *commercial sharing* on the other hand bears a medium risk of ideological obfuscation since an explicit notion of commercial sharing at least in part mitigates the dissonance between a commercial denotation and the largely non-commercial connotations of sharing. Accordingly, implicit commercial sharing is exposed to a high risk of ideological obfuscation since the dissonance between a commercial denotation and the non-commercial connotation of sharing is no longer offset by an explicit specification of sharing. To illustrate the analytical value of this framework I apply its assessment criteria to analyze how Porter and Kramer make use of the notion of sharing in their shared value concept. This analysis reveals that Porter and Kramer use a very unspecific and highly commercial notion of sharing bearing a high risk of obfuscating the ideology of shareholder value maximization that lies at the core of the shared value concept. This analysis shows that the current state of shared value theory risks propagating the controversial shareholder value ideology by drawing on the pro-social sharing rhetoric.

This paper contributes to recent research on the importance of terminology for CSR research and practice (Baden & Harwood, 2013; Ferraro et al., 2005) by developing an analytical and non-prescriptive framework for assessing the risk of ideological obfuscation associated with the notion of sharing. This framework provides a balanced and nuanced perspective on the different meanings of sharing and its use in the recent management literature that is neither overly prescriptive nor excessively agnostic (Belk, 2014a; John, 2016). Moreover, this paper heeds the call to further scrutinize the meaning of shared value (Dembek et al., 2015) by assessing how Porter and Kramer use the notion of sharing in their concept. This analysis assists CSR practitioners and scholars to uncover the controversial background

assumptions of shared value and indicates new avenues for shared value research such as exploring through which kind of sharing processes the normative aspirations of shared value can be actually realized. Hence, this paper stresses the challenge for researchers and practitioners alike to theorize contemporary and highly dynamic concepts like the sharing economy or shared value with sound and precise terminology that illuminates rather than obscures its substance.

The paper is organized as follows. In the next section I elucidate the controversies surrounding the notion of sharing within the sharing economy and shared value literature. On this basis I identify the need to develop an analytical framework to understand the meaning of sharing and to assess its use in research and practice as key conceptual research goal of this paper. In the following section I then develop this analytical framework by elaborating on assessment criteria that reflect the denotative as well as connotative dimension of the notion of sharing. These dimensions are then integrated into a comprehensive framework to assess the risk of ideological obfuscation associated with the notion of sharing. This framework enables the distinction between different types of making use of the notion of sharing each associated with a specific risk of ideological obfuscation. In the next section I illustrate the analytical value of this framework by assessing how Porter and Kramer use the notion of sharing in their shared value concept. I then proceed by discussing the findings and contributions of this paper for advancing theory and conclude by highlighting some directions for future research.

The notion of sharing in the sharing economy and shared value literature

The notion of sharing permeates the discourse concerning contemporary internet services such as Facebook, Airbnb, Zipcar or Couchsurfing. A growing number of scholars engage in a controversial debate about the conceptual foundations as well as the merits and drawbacks of this emerging sharing economy. At the same time the notion of sharing is invoked within the

CSR literature igniting another controversial debate around Porter and Kramer's recent proposition to realign business and society through the creation of shared value. Both debates are outlined in more detail in the following.

The sharing economy controversy

With the advent of the so called "sharing economy" the notion of sharing has proliferated recently both in research and practice. While companies like Zipcar, DriveNow or Car2Go established car-*sharing* services in cities all over the world, platforms such as Airbnb or Couchsurfing give users the opportunity to *share* their flat with other people providing an alternative for travelers to traditional accommodation solutions such as hotels. Popular social media services such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter on the other hand invite their users to *share* their thoughts, feelings and experiences with others online. This diversity of sharing-services in practice is reflected in a plurality of approaches in the management literature aiming to make sense of the "age of sharing" as John (2016) puts it. The sharing economy is mostly associated with a set of so called "collaborative consumption" practices such as "sharing, bartering, lending, trading, renting, gifting, and swapping" which "enabl[e] people to realize the enormous benefits of access to products and services over ownership, and at the same time save money, space, and time" (Botsman & Rogers, 2010: xv–xvi). In this vein, Stephany (2015: 9) defines the sharing economy as "the value in taking underutilized assets and making them accessible online to a community, leading to a reduced need for ownership of those assets (emphasis omitted)". Bardhi and Eckhardt (2012) in turn introduce the notion of "access-based consumption" to describe transactions where consumers get consumption time with an item without gaining ownership rights in mostly market-mediated exchanges.

However, this proliferation of the notion of sharing in the management discourse has received considerable criticism over the past years. Kalamar (2013) for example coined the term "sharewashing" in a popular blogpost suggesting that "entrepreneurs and marketing types are

flocking to adopt the new buzzword "sharing" for their products, regardless of whether these involve any actual sharing per se". Similarly, Bardhi and Eckhardt (2015) characterize the term sharing economy as misleading contending that the underlying transactions are less about sharing than about gaining access to products and services via network technologies. John (2012: 178) in turn argues with regard to Facebook's extensive adoption of the sharing rhetoric that "the market-driven exchange of data cannot reasonably be viewed as sharing, and the use of that rhetoric can be seen as mystifying the commercial logic that underlies Facebook and many other[s]". Belk (2014a: 11) captures these commercialization critiques of the notion of sharing in his concept of "pseudo-sharing" that describes "a business relationship masquerading as communal sharing". Accordingly, Belk puts strong emphasis on the distinction between "true sharing" and money-mediated transactions such as short-term rental of cars or accommodation that are marketed as sharing services.

The shared value controversy

Concurrently with this sharing economy discussion the notion of sharing is involved in another controversy within the CSR literature concerning the Shared Value concept of Porter and Kramer. They define shared value as "policies and operating practices that enhance the competitiveness of a company while simultaneously advancing the economic and social conditions in the communities in which it operates" (2011: 66) and suggest that shared value can be created by reconceiving products and markets, redefining productivity in the value chain and by enabling local cluster development. Since its inception Porter and Kramer's concept has sparked a prolific discussion in research and practice (Dembek et al., 2015). Not only is a growing number of multinational corporations such as Nestlé, Coca-Cola or Verizon explicitly referring to shared value in their strategy and CSR reports but the shared value terminology has also entered the regulatory realm as the European Commission defined the aim of CSR for enterprises as "maximizing the creation of shared value for their owners/shareholders and for

their other stakeholders and society at large” in its current CSR Strategy (European Commission, 2011: 6). Porter and Kramer’s concept was received affirmatively in a wide range of research streams such as strategic management (Schmitt & Renken, 2012; Spitzeck & Chapman, 2012), marketing (Bertini & Gourville, 2012) and social innovation (Kramer & Pfitzer, 2016; Michelini, 2012; Michelini & Fiorentino, 2012; Pavlovich & Corner, 2014; Pfitzer, Bockstette, & Stamp, 2013). In these studies the shared value concept has been either completely adopted or seamlessly integrated into existing research contexts without modifications.

However, the critical voices clearly predominate the reception of Porter and Kramer’s concept within the business ethics literature. A literature review reveals five main weaknesses: First, many business ethics scholars disapprove the rhetorical exuberance exercised by Porter and Kramer (2011) in framing their argument in terms of “reinventing capitalism” or “unlocking the next wave of business innovation and growth”. In particular, their depiction of CSR as purely reputation-driven side agenda is discussed as a rhetorical trick to increase the relevance of their own contribution (Beschorner, 2013; Crane et al., 2014). Second and related to the former critique, the shared value concept is criticized for containing only little conceptual novelty since its core logic broadly aligns with the literature on the business case for CSR (Pirson, 2012). Third, scholars criticize that Porter and Kramer bring to bear a corporate-centric perspective on the solution of complex social problems like malnutrition or poverty. In this view, Porter and Kramer’s approach represents a disregard of the systemic root causes for these kinds of problems rather than a deep involvement with the systemic complexities of social problems. According to several studies, this “sweet spot orientation” (Dembek et al., 2015) of shared value severely constrains the problem-solving potential of Porter and Kramer’s approach (Stuart Orr & William Sarni, 2015) enticing corporations to cherry pick “islands of win-win projects in an ocean of unsolved environmental and social conflicts” (Crane et al., 2014: 139). Fourth, and in close relation to the just mentioned criticism authors suggest that Porter and

Kramer are ignoring the difficult trade-offs connected to dealing with social problems in a financially viable manner through shared value strategies. They offer little explanation on the processes involved rather than declaring their intention “to move beyond trade-offs” (Crane et al., 2014; Hartmann & Werhane, 2013). Fifth, scholars assert a lack of empirical studies of shared value both in quality and quantity by pointing out that 49 % of all cases and examples in the literature come from just four articles authored by either Porter and Kramer or persons closely related to their network. Moreover, only 12,6 % of the cases within the literature were supported by some form of primary data and the overwhelming majority of cases are rather brief descriptions of financial benefits related to some form of social benefit in generic terms for a particular group of stakeholders (Dembek et al., 2015).

Consequently, the notion of sharing is controversially invoked both within sharing economy and shared value research. Interestingly, even sharing economy advocates seem to acknowledge the terminological confusion concerning the notion of sharing since several authors justify its use by referring to its popularity and diffusion amongst practitioners rather than by stressing analytical considerations (Stephany, 2015). Sundararajan (2016: 27) for example states rather bluntly: “Although I find “crowd-based capitalism” most precisely descriptive of the subject matter I cover, I continue to use “sharing economy ” as I write this book because it maximizes the number of people who seem to get what I’m talking about.” This pragmatic view with regards to the sharing terminology is most common among sharing economy practitioners where “self-definition by the platforms and the press defines who is in and who is out” (Schor, 2016: 9). Also the term shared value has been used in an unsystematic, rather colloquial way in many studies across a variety of management journals suggesting that shared value until now is best conceived of as a “buzzword” (Dembek et al., 2015). While such a pragmatic use of terminology might be less problematic from a practitioner’s point of view, it poses significant challenges for the academic discourse (Baden & Harwood, 2013). Since construct clarity and analytical precision are widely accepted standards among management

scholars the controversy around the notion of sharing within the sharing economy and shared value literature calls for further scrutiny (Dembek et al., 2015; John, 2013, 2016; John & Sützl, 2016). Investigating the meaning and adequate use of the term sharing is a delicate balancing act between an essentialist-prescriptive approach on the one hand and a pragmatic-contextual approach on the other hand. While Belk (2010, 2014a) establishes a “true meaning” of the notion of sharing on which basis making use of the term in research and practice can be evaluated, others adopt a primarily agnostic approach relying on actors’ actual use of the term in different contexts (Schor, 2016; Sundararajan, 2016). However, both approaches by themselves are arguably insufficient to account for the reflexive and dynamic nature of language (Baden & Harwood, 2013; John, 2016): Neither can the meaning of words be evaluated from a time- and contextless analytical point of view nor can it be established by selected individuals or groups alone. Hence, a framework is needed to understand the meaning of sharing and to evaluate its use without being either overly prescriptive or excessively agnostic. Accordingly, I pursue the following interrelated research questions in this paper: What does the notion of sharing mean and how can its use in management theory and practice be assessed? How is the notion of sharing used in Porter and Kramer’s Shared Value concept? I proceed by developing an analytical framework that captures the central meaning of the term sharing and provides criteria for assessing its use in management theory and practice. Then, the analytical value of this framework is illustrated by applying its assessment criteria to the analysis of Porter and Kramer’s use of the notion of sharing.

Developing an analytical framework indicating the risk of ideological obfuscation associated with the notion of sharing

Following recent research on CSR terminology (Baden & Harwood, 2013) I distinguish between a denotative and a connotative dimension of the notion of sharing. While the denotative

dimension contains the literal meaning of sharing the connotative dimension “encompasses the range of personal associations and secondary meanings, many of which have affective associations” (Baden & Harwood, 2013: 623). Both dimensions and the corresponding assessment criteria are reported in table 3 and will be elucidated in the following.

Table 3: Dimensions and Criteria for Assessing the Risk of Ideological Obfuscation Associated with the Notion of Sharing

Assessment Dimensions	Assessment Criteria	Description	
1. Denotative dimension			
a. Specificity of sharing process	a.1 Sharing as active act of distribution	Active practice of distribution in the manner of a zero-sum-game; In digital contexts: dissemination of content without the characteristic of a zero-sum-game	
	a.2 Sharing as passive act of distribution	Passive practice of distribution without the characteristic of a zero-sum-game; i.e. having something in common	
	a.3 Sharing as act of communication	Talking about one’s thoughts, feelings and experiences In digital contexts: communicating/participating in social media	
	b. Commerciality of sharing process	b.1 Relevance of profit motive	The degree to which actors involved in a sharing process are mainly motivated by financial gain
		b.2 Relevance of self-interest	The degree to which actors take part in a sharing process to advance their own interest
		b.3 Expectations of reciprocity	The degree to which actors involved in a sharing process expect something in return
		b.4 Sense of anonymity	The degree to which actors involved in a sharing process experience the interaction as impersonal and purely transactional
	2. Connotative dimension		
	a. Sharing as act of distribution	Sharing as positive, prosocial behavior geared towards a more just and equal allocation of resources	
	b. Sharing as act of communication	Sharing as a more intimate, personal and honest type of talk through which people relate to each other, come closer together and develop a deeper understanding of each other	

Source: own table

The denotative and connotative dimension of the notion of sharing

Three main meanings of sharing can be differentiated according to the literature (John, 2012, 2016): First, sharing describes an active act of distribution where something is divided between actors in the manner of a zero-sum game. For example, if two persons share a meal both receive less food than they would by eating the full meal alone. In digital contexts however, sharing also describes the practice of disseminating content online without engaging in a zero-sum game. To share a video on youtube or to share files with friends does not imply that anyone is left with less. Second, sharing means having something in common with someone, i.e. a passive act of distribution. Two friends for example might share a flat or a certain political orientation meaning that they live together in the same flat and both support for example the Democratic Party. Third, sharing can also be understood as an act of communication. When someone shares a thought or experience with another person this can also mean talking about the issue at hand and communicating one's thoughts and feelings. In digital contexts sharing also means communicating with others by posting statements, fotos or status updates on social media. As depicted in table 3, I subsume these three meanings of sharing under the assessment dimension "specificity of the sharing process" since these meanings provide criteria to assess how precise the notion of sharing is used in a particular context. Accordingly, the notion of sharing can be understood as denoting a specific process of interaction that involves either an act of distribution or communication (Belk, 2007, 2010; John, 2016).

The second critical component of the denotative dimension of the notion of sharing is captured by a set of assessment criteria that I call "commerciality of the sharing process". These criteria can be used to evaluate the degree to which a particular act of sharing can be considered as commercial. The literature suggests four main criteria to conduct this evaluation (Belk, 2010, 2014a): First, commercial sharing implies a high relevance of the profit motive, i.e. at least one actor involved in the sharing process is mainly motivated by financial gain. Second, commercial sharing also means that actors take part in a sharing process to advance their own interest rather

than the interest of others, meaning that commercial sharing is characterized by a high relevance of self-interest. Third, commercial and non-commercial sharing can be differentiated according to the degree to which expectations of reciprocity exist between the participants of a sharing process. While non-commercial sharing implies that actors do not expect to receive anything in return commercial sharing is characterized by high expectations of reciprocity between the parties in that actors strongly expect a quid pro quo for participating in the sharing process. Fourth, the commerciality of sharing can be assessed according to the degree to which a sharing process is characterized by a sense of anonymity between the actors. Commercial sharing involves a high sense of anonymity because actors are unlikely to experience a human connection or attachment with each other. Therefore, commercial sharing comes close to a conventional market transaction where a personal connection is not necessary to sustain the transaction. Non-commercial sharing on the other hand is based on the intention of actors to help each other and to make human connections on a deeper level than merely exchanging items for mutual advantage. Non-commercial sharing then is a distinct form of distribution in which the social and personal connection to others takes center stage (Belk, 2010).

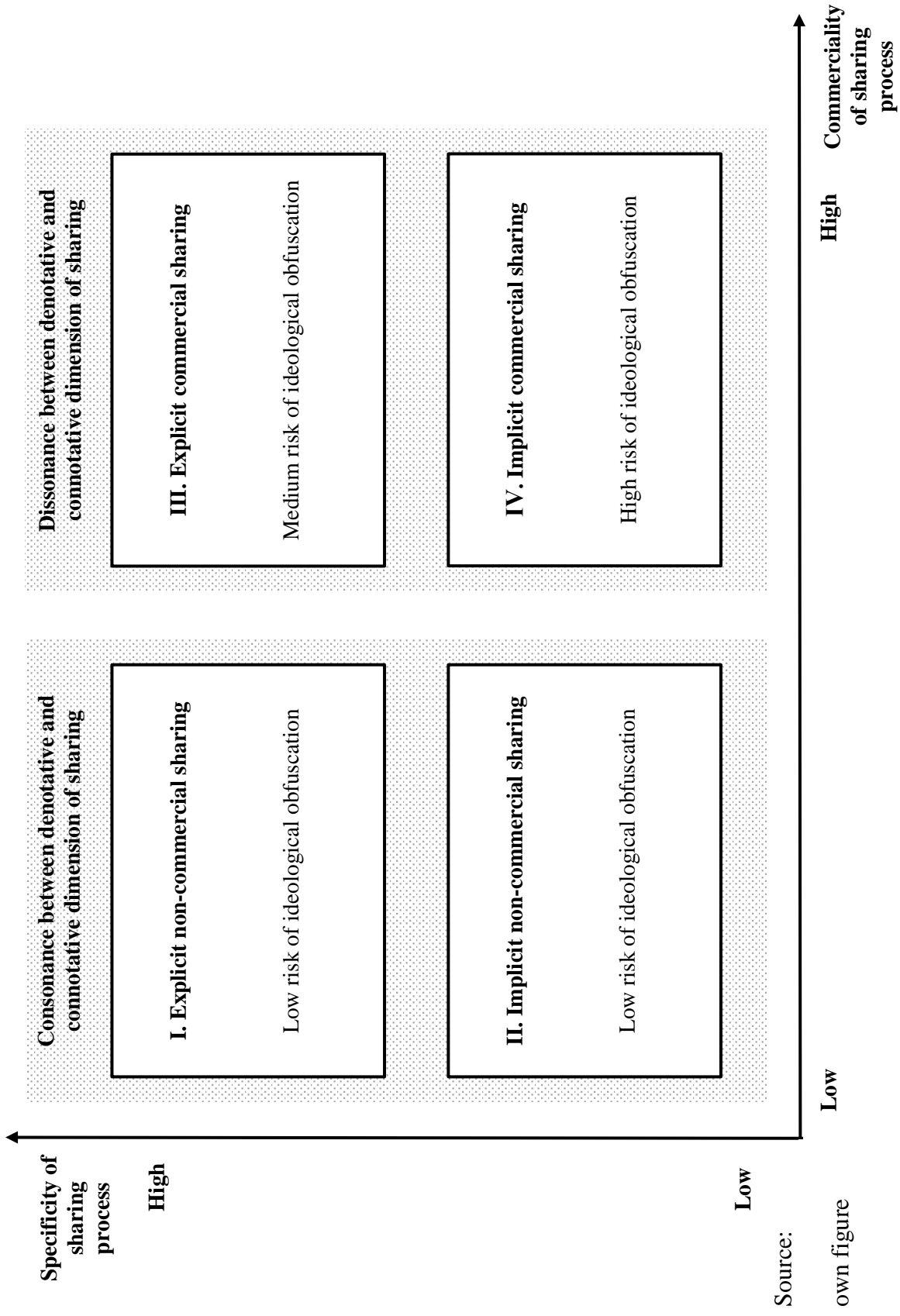
Having laid out the two components of the denotative dimension of the framework I now turn to the connotative dimension of the notion of sharing (see table 3). Sharing as act of distribution is associated with positive and prosocial behavior geared towards a more just and equal allocation of resources (Belk, 2010; John, 2012, 2016). For example, Saint Martin cutting his cloak into two parts and sharing it with a beggar in the winter represents one of the classic narrations that embody these positive connotations of sharing. Also sharing as act of communication is associated with a more intimate, personal and honest type of talk through which people relate to each other, come closer together and develop a deeper understanding of each other in the process. By sharing for example an experience or emotional state with others people open up to each other and develop a closer and more personal connection (John, 2012, 2016). Hence, the notion of sharing carries largely positive connotations both as act of

distribution and communication. In fact, John notes that it is very difficult “to talk about sharing in negative terms” (2016: 150).

Assessing the risk of ideological obfuscation associated with the notion of sharing

Precisely this fact exposes the notion of sharing to a phenomenon that I call “ideological obfuscation”. I define ideological obfuscation as obscuring the background assumptions of a concept or practice by using terminology in a way that places a term in a context at odds with its established connotative meaning while remaining vague on the specifics of a term’s denotative meaning. Accordingly, a term is used for its connotative appeal rather than its denotative meaning which introduces the possibility to promote a concept or practice through the rhetorical power of a term’s positive connotations rather than through the self-promoting power of its substance. Particularly in cases where a concept or practice is controversially discussed the positive connotations of a term then can be used to gloss over shortcomings and criticisms. As depicted in figure 4 the aforementioned assessment dimensions and criteria enable the distinction between four different types of making use of the notion of sharing each associated with a different risk of ideological obfuscation.

Figure 4: Assessing the Risk of Ideological Obfuscation Associated with the Notion of Sharing - An Analytical Framework



I proceed by outlining each type in more detail. Type I and type II are both characterized by a low commerciality of the sharing process implying that both represent forms of non-commercial sharing. However, type I describes explicit non-commercial sharing meaning that the notion of sharing is clearly specified. Belk's concept of sharing for example provides a precise and detailed definition of sharing as "the act and process of distributing what is ours to others for their use as well as the act and process of receiving something from others for our use" (Belk, 2007: 127). Belk distinguishes sharing as a third form of distribution from gift giving and marketplace exchanges stating that "money profanes the sharing transaction and transforms it into a commodity exchange" (Belk, 2014b: 19). In practice, Couchsurfing can be considered as a good example for an explicit non-commercial sharing service since the platform clearly states on its site that "couchsurfers open their homes and share their lives for free" (Couchsurfing, 2017). Type II on the other hand represents implicit non-commercial sharing in that the meaning of the term sharing is not clearly specified. Consider for example the notion of file-sharing that – being a mainly non-commercial sharing practice on the internet – has been criticized for not adequately describing the actual activities of file-sharers (John, 2016). Liebowitz (2006: 4) therefore calls file-sharing "something of a misnomer" since files are copied rather than shared suggesting "anonymous file copying" as a more accurate term. In both cases the risk of ideological obfuscation is low because there is no discrepancy between the denotative meaning of non-commercial sharing and the largely non-commercial connotations of the notion of sharing. Hence, the denotative as well as the connotative dimension of sharing are consonant.

Types III and IV on the other hand both represent forms of commercial sharing exhibiting a high degree of commerciality. Type III describes explicit commercial sharing in that the meaning of sharing is clearly specified. This is the case for example in Stephany's (2015) conceptualization of the sharing economy that focuses on the creation of economic value by platforms offering access to underutilized assets. Car-sharing services like Zipcar, Drivenow or

Car2Go are good examples for this kind of explicit commercial-sharing service. Type IV in turn contains implicit commercial sharing since the notion of sharing is specified rather vaguely. Both types run a higher risk of ideological obfuscation than types I and II because the denotative and connotative dimensions of sharing are no longer consonant but dissonant. Explicit commercial sharing (type III) bears a medium risk of ideological obfuscation. Although commercial sharing is at odds with the largely non-commercial connotations of sharing the fact that the commercial sharing process is clearly specified makes it less likely that the non-commercial connotations can completely overlay the denotative meaning of sharing. Nevertheless, several sharing economy scholars consider this medium risk of ideological obfuscation as problematic proposing different terms for commercial sharing services such as “collaborative consumption” (Botsman & Rogers, 2010) or “access-based consumption” (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012; Eckhardt & Bardhi, 2015) that ease the tension between commercial sharing activities and the largely non-commercial connotations of the notion of sharing. Accordingly, implicit commercial sharing (type IV) poses the highest risk of ideological obfuscation since the dissonance between the denotative and connotative dimension can no longer at least in part be mitigated by a precise specification of the sharing process. Hence, in these cases commercial logics can be obscured by the rhetorical power of the positive and largely non-commercial connotations of sharing. John (2012) for example alludes to this point in his critique of Facebook’s use of the sharing terminology with regards to its user data policies. He describes the fact that Facebook calls selling user data to advertisers ‘sharing’ as “mystification” of its commercial intentions. To further illustrate the analytical value of this framework, in the following section I apply this framework to the analysis of Porter and Kramer’s use of the notion of sharing in the Shared Value concept.

Assessing the notion of sharing in Porter and Kramer's Shared Value concept

In a nutshell, shared value is defined as creating “economic value by creating societal value” with the aim of “expanding the total pool of economic and social value” (Porter & Kramer, 2011: 77, 65). Porter and Kramer emphasize that shared value is about approaching “societal issues from a value perspective” which is characterized by an understanding of the notion of value as “benefits relative to costs, not just benefits alone” (2011: 66). In addition, Porter and Kramer state that shared value is “integral to profit maximization” and “presumes compliance with the law and ethical standards, as well as mitigating any harm caused by the business” (2011: 76, 75). They further emphasize that their understanding of value is not linked to personal values or moral obligations. Shared value is eventually created when both dimensions of value – economic and social – overlap. Shared value thus represents cases where long-term financial profits (understood as positive relation between revenues and costs) are simultaneously increased with companies meeting unmet needs and addressing harms and unresolved challenges of society. At this point “the magic of shared value” reveals itself, as Michael Porter puts it (Porter, 2014), meaning that businesses can scale social benefits due to long-term profits and self-sustaining business activity.

What becomes evident from this brief description of shared value's basic tenets is that Porter and Kramer apply a notion of value creation primarily focused on the creation of as much financial value as possible. The notion of social value is viewed through this prism meaning that to create shared value only those needs and challenges of society are to be addressed which go along with an increase of financial profits. From the fact that the shared value concept explicitly excludes personal and moral implications of the notion of value it follows that for Porter and Kramer value creation seems to mean little more than striving for positive and possibly high digits on a balance sheet. Hence, at its conceptual core shared value represents little more than an iteration of an idea that many management scholars and economists support for a long time: the idea that social welfare is maximized when businesses focus on the

maximization of financial value for shareholders (Friedman, 1970; Jensen, 2002; Sundaram & Inkpen, 2004).

Although Porter and Kramer's concept focuses on the creation of value that is supposedly shared, they do not elaborate on the sharing processes between stakeholders involved in the creation of shared value. The only explicit reference Porter and Kramer (2011: 65) make to a sharing process in their approach is that they state that shared value is not "about "sharing" the value already created by firms – a redistribution approach". They also emphasize that shared value "is about solving societal problems in order to create economic value, not about (...) balancing different types of value" (2014: 149–150). Moreover, Porter and Kramer stress the importance of managerial control over the conception and implementation of shared value strategies by stating that the CSR agenda should be driven by management rather than by demands of external stakeholders (Porter & Kramer, 2006, 2011). Hence, shared value is portrayed as kind of automatic result of management applying Porter and Kramer's "value perspective" on unmet societal needs and challenges without further specification of the underlying sharing process.

Therefore, Porter and Kramer use the notion of sharing in a very unspecific way resorting to an understanding of sharing as passive act of distribution (see table 3, criterion a.2). The value to be created by corporations is only shared in the sense that an increase in economic value for the firm goes along with an additional benefit for society. Business and society receive a common or joint benefit. In addition, Porter and Kramer use a highly commercial notion of sharing since both profit maximization (see table 3, criterion b.1) and self-interest (see table 3, criterion b.2) are explicitly stressed as key characteristics of the shared value approach. Furthermore, shared value is based on mutually beneficial market transactions between business and society that imply both high expectations of reciprocity (see table 3, criterion b.3) as well as a high sense of anonymity (see table 3, criterion b.4). Accordingly, Porter and Kramer use an implicit and commercial notion of sharing in their concept (see figure 4, type IV) bearing

a high risk of ideological obfuscation. Hence, the shared value concept runs the risk of obscuring the ideology of shareholder value maximization at its conceptual core. The rhetorical power of the positive connotations of the notion of sharing then assists the promotion and diffusion of the concept without being matched with the corresponding denotative substance. A recent literature review on shared value shows that out of 392 articles that used the term shared value in either abstract or title only 13 articles explicitly used definitions provided by Porter and Kramer and only 73 papers used the term more than twice (Dembek et al., 2015). This can at least in part be explained by the rhetorical power of both the notion of sharing and the notion of value that Porter and Kramer brought together in their concept.

Discussion and contributions

At this point it is important to stress the fundamental ambiguity of the concept of ideological obfuscation through the notion of sharing as developed in this paper. To begin with, ideological obfuscation associated with the term sharing is not necessarily an intentional process. Therefore, I do not suggest that Porter and Kramer intentionally use the sharing terminology to obscure their rather conventional and - at least amongst CSR scholars - controversial conceptual core. In line with Baden and Harwood (2013) I rather want to point out the importance of terminology for management theory and practice. As understandable as it is to connect research to contemporary buzzwords the risk of ideological obfuscation needs to be taken into account when doing research to advance theory instead of – be it consciously or unconsciously – advancing hidden agendas or background assumptions. Otherwise management scholars not only run the risk of developing weak management theories but also are co-responsible for negative outcomes of these theories in practice. Without a careful use of language and a transparent development of theories both the scientific discourse and management practice suffer (Ferraro et al., 2005; Ghoshal, 2005).

Furthermore, I want to highlight that the framework developed in this paper is subject to the dynamic nature of language. The denotative and connotative meaning of words is constantly evolving implying that the assessment dimensions of this framework have to be adaptive to this change. John (2016) traces succinctly how the meaning of the notion of sharing evolved from mainly denoting an act of distribution to assuming the meaning of a specific kind of talk before changing once again in the digital era. Intriguingly, the notion of sharing played a central role in the development of digital technologies such as computing, the internet and social media constantly incorporating new meanings and connotations. Starting with the widespread practice of time-sharing of the rare resource of mainframe computers in research institutions during the early days of computing, the notion of sharing became associated with internet technologies like file-sharing or sharing on social media (John, 2014). As discussed in this paper, more recently the notion of sharing is invoked to describe new internet-mediated services that enable the joint access to resources such as cars, accommodation or food. Consequently, the key finding of this paper might itself be an expression of this dynamism since making use of the notion of sharing in new contexts partly creates the tension between the denotative and connotative dimension that lies at the center of ideological obfuscation. Hence, sharing might assume more and more commercial connotations in the future for being to a large extent invoked as commercial sharing within the sharing economy discussion. The widespread use of the shared value terminology might also contribute to a potential connotative commercialization of the notion of sharing. Accordingly, at some point the risk of ideological obfuscation might be significantly reduced since sharing in this case then is mostly associated with commercial connotations. Hence, the analytical framework in this paper is to a certain extent limited by the dynamic nature of language itself.

Moreover, it is important to point out that working with terms that bear positive connotations can also serve aspirational goals (Baden & Harwood, 2013; Christensen, Morsing, & Thyssen, 2013). Invoking the notion of sharing then might be intended to foster pro-social

behavior. The pro-social associations of sharing then might translate into more socially oriented sharing activities. In fact, some studies suggest that online sharing on social media led to increased offline sharing (Gaskins, 2010) which might at least in part be explained by the performative effects of language, i.e. the phenomenon that “talk[ing] about behavior influences that behavior” (Ferraro et al., 2005: 16). However, particularly in the case of implicit commercial sharing (type IV) the connotative aspirations of sharing are largely contradicted by the commercial logic underlying its denotative meaning. Therefore, an aspirational explanation for making use of sharing to describe commercial activities such as renting a car or creating shared value is difficult to sustain since encouraging more pro-social sharing behavior is often directly at odds with commercial goals: people resorting to non-commercial sharing might drive less cars or buy less products and services and thus might create less economic value for companies. Porter and Kramer’s Shared Value concept is another case in point where non-commercial sharing behavior would likely threaten its underlying goal of shareholder value maximization.

This paper contributes to recent research on the importance of terminology for CSR research and practice (Baden & Harwood, 2013; Ferraro et al., 2005) by developing an analytical and non-prescriptive framework for assessing the risk of ideological obfuscation associated with the notion of sharing. This framework unpacks the different denotative and connotative meanings of the notion of sharing and provides assessment criteria for its use in management theory and practice. Furthermore, this paper introduces the concept of ideological obfuscation through terminology into this research stream suggesting that using the notion of sharing bears a risk of ideological obfuscation depending on the degree of dissonance between the denotative and connotative dimensions of the notion of sharing. Accordingly, the framework developed in this paper provides a balanced perspective on the different meanings of sharing and its use in the recent management literature that is neither overly prescriptive nor excessively agnostic (Belk, 2010, 2014a; John, 2013, 2016). Hence, this paper emphasizes the need for

researchers and practitioners to develop theory on contemporary subjects such as the sharing economy or shared value on the basis of a thorough analysis of both the denotative and connotative dimensions of relevant terms.

Moreover, this paper heeds the call to further scrutinize the meaning of shared value (Dembek et al., 2015) by assessing how Porter and Kramer use the notion of sharing in their concept. This assessment reveals that Porter and Kramer use a very unspecific and highly commercial notion of sharing. Shared value's implicit and commercial notion of sharing bears a high risk of ideological obfuscation, i.e. of obscuring the ideology of shareholder value maximization that lies at the core of Porter and Kramer's concept. This analysis shows that the current state of shared value theory risks propagating the controversial shareholder value ideology by drawing on the pro-social and largely non-commercial sharing rhetoric. Hence, this framework assists CSR practitioners and scholars to uncover the controversial background assumptions of shared value.

Directions for further research

This paper represents just the beginning of an intriguing research agenda investigating the meaning and use of the notion of sharing as well as the concept of ideological obfuscation in the CSR and sharing economy literature. First, the findings of this paper indicate new avenues for shared value research in that the identified high risk of ideological obfuscation can be mitigated by increasing the specificity of the sharing process associated with the creation of shared value. Shared value theory can thus be advanced through conceptual research that explores through which kind of sharing processes shared value's normative aspiration to bring "business and society back together" (Porter & Kramer, 2011: 64) can be actually realized. Second, the framework developed in this paper calls for its further application to analyze how other management theories and concepts make use of the notion of sharing. In this way, the

clarity of constructs and terminology of sharing-related theory can be enhanced and further avenues for theory development concerning sharing processes can be explored. Third, as discussed above the challenge to account for the dynamic nature of language when assessing the meaning and use of terminology deserves further scrutiny. Scholars should investigate for example how actors adopt the term sharing to a new practice and how these actors cope with the plurality of meanings of sharing in different contexts. Fourth, more research is needed that scrutinizes the concept of ideological obfuscation as developed in this paper by examining in how far other popular terms in the management and CSR literature are exposed to a similar risk of ideological obfuscation as the notion of sharing. In addition, empirical research of the underlying processes of ideological obfuscation would be very fruitful. Particularly through qualitative methods such as discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2003) researchers could analyze the sharing discourse in a particular context exploring the cognitive processes involved in ideological obfuscation.

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Paper III:

**Creating Value by Sharing Values – Managing Stakeholder Value
Pluralism through Discursive Justification**

Maximilian J. L. Schormair & Dirk Ulrich Gilbert

Abstract: How to engage with stakeholders to create value that includes a plurality of stakeholder value perspectives represents one of the crucial current challenges of value creation stakeholder theory. To address this challenge, we develop a procedural framework based on recent advancements of Habermasian ideas as developed in Rainer Forst's theory of justification. In our framework, we conceptualize a communicative sharing process between affected stakeholders oriented towards the discursive justification of moral, political, legal and ethical dimensions of value creation facilitated by criteria of justification for each of these dimensions. This discursive sharing process provides comprehensive guidance for managers and stakeholders to create value in alignment with a plurality of stakeholder value perspectives. Hence, this paper contributes to the recent debate on pluralistic conceptions of stakeholder value creation as well as to recent research on democratic processes geared towards balancing different stakeholder perspectives.

Keywords: Stakeholder Value, Multi-Objective Corporation, Pluralism, Justification, Sharing

This paper is currently under review in Business Ethics Quarterly (Second Round).

Introduction

The (neo-)classical idea that by focusing exclusively on the creation of financial value corporations automatically provide sufficient value for stakeholders and society as a whole has recently come under closer scrutiny (Jones, Donaldson, Freeman, Harrison, Leana, Mahoney, & Pearce, 2016; Jones & Felps, 2013a). Porter and Kramer for example propose a more practitioner-oriented variation of financial value creation as corporate objective by suggesting that corporations should “pursue financial success in a way that also yields societal benefits” (Kramer & Pfitzer, 2016: 82). Jones and Felps in turn argue for a revision of the normative objective of corporations around the enhancement of the “aggregate happiness of its normatively legitimate stakeholders over the foreseeable future” (2013b: 358). These monistic conceptions have been criticized for being one-dimensional and reductionist by scholars advocating value pluralism instead of monism in value creation stakeholder theory (VCST) (Mitchell, van Buren, Greenwood, & Freeman, 2015; Mitchell, Weaver, Agle, Bailey, & Carlson, 2016; van der Linden & Freeman, 2017). In this vein, Harrison and Wicks conceptualize value creation beyond the exclusive focus on financial value by proposing “the sum of the utility created for each of a firm’s legitimate stakeholders” (2013: 102) as a more pluralistic measure for firm performance.

However, accepting stakeholder value pluralism as a necessary condition for value creation poses a significant new challenge for research: conceptualizing processes that assist managers to navigate stakeholder value pluralism in order to create value for stakeholders (van der Linden & Freeman, 2017). Consequently, Mitchell et al. call for research on processes to “better match corporate objectives to the preferences of stakeholders and managers” (2016: 270). Scholars have only recently started to address this issue by either conceptualizing a procedural approach to social welfare in the realm of public policy based on deliberative democracy (Marti & Scherer, 2016) or by proposing a decision making process for managers grounded on the concept of thick evaluations (van der Linden & Freeman, 2017). However, still largely

unaddressed remains the need to investigate “processes for engaging stakeholders and understanding value creation from their perspective” (Harrison & Wicks, 2013: 118). In this paper we address this research gap by pursuing the following research question: How should managers engage with stakeholders to create value that includes a plurality of stakeholder value perspectives?

We address this research question by drawing on novel insights from the theory of justification as developed by the philosopher Rainer Forst (2002, 2012, 2014b) who has advanced and extended Habermasian ideas in important ways in recent years. Grounded on a pragmatic, weak-foundationalist account (White, 2015) of Rainer Forst’s theory of justification we develop a procedural framework based on a communicative sharing process between affected stakeholders oriented towards discursive justification involving two steps: Managers and stakeholders first need to assess moral, political, legal and ethical dimensions of value creation under the guidance of corresponding criteria of justification as are reciprocity and generality, justifiability to all political community members, lawfulness and anchoring in individual/collective self-understanding. Second, to create pluralistic stakeholder value managers and stakeholders proceed by connecting these dimensions and justifications with one another without either ignoring, limiting or absolutizing relevant dimensions of value creation.

This paper contributes to both recent research on pluralistic stakeholder value creation (Harrison & Wicks, 2013; Mitchell et al., 2016; van der Linden & Freeman, 2017) and the democratic inclusion of different stakeholder perspectives (Marti & Scherer, 2016; Scherer, 2015; Scherer, Palazzo, & Baumann, 2006; Scherer, Rasche, Palazzo, & Spicer, 2016) by providing a comprehensive procedural framework to guide managers and stakeholders to create value that includes diverging value perspectives of stakeholders. Hence, this procedural framework addresses the recently stated need to “further investigate the creation of processes and valid norms among stakeholders (...) that are both normatively sound and instrumentally viable” (Harrison & Wicks, 2013: 117). The proposed procedural criteria of justification enable

an evaluation of value creation possibilities before, during and after communicative exchanges with stakeholders and provide material guidance for corporate decision making and actual stakeholder deliberations. Furthermore, the “Forstian” notion of sharing provided in this paper moves beyond the consensus-orientation of Habermasian discourse theory by conceptualizing a communicative sharing process of discursive justification that replaces the orientation towards consensus with an orientation towards sufficient justification according to multiple criteria of justification. These criteria facilitate the iterative exchange of justifications among affected stakeholders particularly in the case of diverging value perspectives. Thus, our framework is less susceptible to criticisms voiced against consensual and deliberative CSR in the recent literature (Dawkins, 2015; Sabadoz & Singer, 2017; Whelan, 2012, 2013).

The paper is organized as follows. In the next section, we provide an overview of the debate on monistic and pluralistic conceptions of stakeholder value creation. On this basis, we identify the need to investigate in more detail how managers should engage with stakeholders to create value that includes a plurality of stakeholder value perspectives. In the following section, we then address this research question and develop a procedural framework based on a discursive sharing process as conceptualized in Rainer Forst’s theory of justification. As we will show this theory offers important advancements of Habermas’ discourse theory which provide managers with procedural guidance for creating pluralistic stakeholder value based on both a multidimensional notion of value creation and a comprehensive discursive understanding of sharing. We conclude by elaborating on the key contributions of our paper for advancing theory and by discussing several limitations of our framework.

Monistic vs. pluralistic conceptions of stakeholder value creation

Within the recent debate on the corporate normative objective two fundamental approaches to stakeholder value creation in particular can be identified: On the one hand, monistic approaches

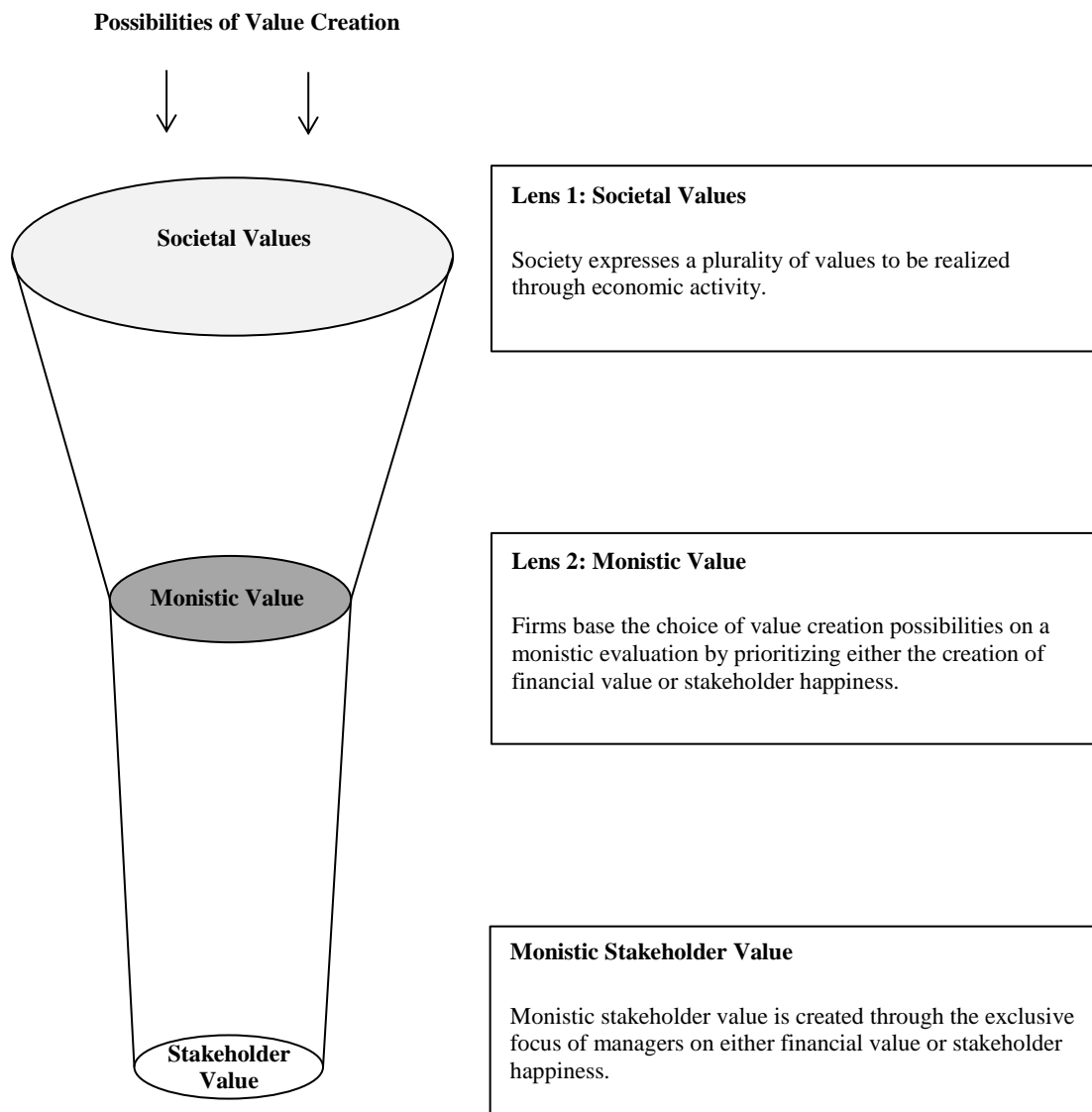
conceptualize a single value such as profit or happiness as the value to be created by corporations. Pluralistic conceptions on the other hand, propose that businesses should refer to concepts such as for example stakeholder utility in order to create multiple values for stakeholders at the same time. In the following, we detail both sides of this controversy in order to develop our research question that we want to address in this paper.

Stakeholder value monism

The arguably most prominent single value that corporations ought to create is financial value or profit. Several scholars have argued in favor of financial value maximization (FVM) as corporate objective (Friedman, 1970; Porter & Kramer, 2011; Sundaram & Inkpen, 2004) positing that “managers should make all decisions so as to increase the total long-run market value of the firm” (Jensen, 2002: 236). According to Jensen this single-valued objective is necessary to avoid “confusion and lack of purpose that will fundamentally handicap the firm in its competition and survival” (2002: 238). Governing the firm in the financial interest of owners or shareholders is then also instrumental to creating value for all other stakeholders of the firm. However, it is important to point out that FVM does not imply that non-financial values such as job security or meaningful work are not important for the creation of financial value. On the contrary, these values are included in the FVM-process by way of considering their consequences for the profitability of the firm. The most recent variation of FVM as the corporate objective is provided by Porter and Kramer’s Creating Shared Value approach (2016; 2011) suggesting that corporations should “pursue financial success in a way that also yields societal benefits” (Kramer & Pfitzer, 2016: 82). Emphasizing that Shared Value is about approaching “societal issues from a value perspective” which is characterized by an understanding of the notion of value as “benefits relative to costs, not just benefits alone” (2011: 66) Porter and Kramer state that Shared Value is “integral to profit maximization” (2011: 76).

Jones and Felps (2013a, 2013b) in turn conceptualize the corporate objective based on a neo-utilitarian perspective advocating stakeholder happiness as single value that corporations should seek to create. While agreeing with the argument of FVM-proponents that management needs a single valued objective in order to manage the firm effectively for stakeholders they criticize FVM for providing only indirect and increasingly insufficient contributions to social welfare. Instead they propose stakeholder happiness enhancement (SHE) as a more direct and effective objective to create value for stakeholders and society as a whole. SHE suggests that managers should “enhance the aggregate happiness of normatively legitimate stakeholders over the foreseeable future” (Jones & Felps, 2013b: 358) defining happiness as “sum of positive feelings (...) net of negative feelings” (idem., 355). Hence, Jones and Felps contend that managers can base their choices of value creation possibilities on a principled criterion providing happiness as a common metric to which all other values are commensurable. As a consequence, within SHE financial value creation constitutes a “necessary condition for the provision of happiness to stakeholders” (Jones & Felps, 2013b: 360) rather than being the single value to be created by firms as in the FVM-approaches outlined above. The result of our analysis of stakeholder value monism is depicted in figure 5. In this figure, creating value for stakeholders on monistic grounds is visualized through a sequence of lenses focusing on different possibilities of value creation: First, a given society expresses a plurality of values to be realized through economic activity (depicted as “Lens 1: Societal Values”). Following the monistic stakeholder value conceptions, businesses further narrow down the resulting pool of value creation possibilities by focusing on those possibilities that either increase financial value or stakeholder happiness for the firm (depicted as “Lens 2: Monistic Value”). As the difference in size of both the ellipse of Societal Values and of Stakeholder Value in figure 5 indicates monistic approaches to stakeholder value creation imply that only a limited portion of stakeholder value creation possibilities can actually be realized. We will elaborate this point in more detail in the following.

Figure 5: Creating Monistic Stakeholder Value



Source: own illustration

Stakeholder value pluralism

Pluralistic conceptions of stakeholder value creation start from the assumption that human values in business are so diverse and manifold that efforts to reduce this plurality of values to one common metric or evaluative standard constitute a “humanly unrealistic goal” (Mitchell et al., 2016: 259). Accordingly, stakeholder value pluralists refuse the argument that managers need a single-valued objective in order to ensure firm survival suggesting instead that “the simultaneous consideration of different values appears not to be a problem, but rather the very

basis for managerial decision making” (van der Linden & Freeman, 2017: 374). Hence, applying a monistic value mindset to the task of stakeholder value creation would ultimately result in less overall value created by firms. Consequently, SHE is criticized to “arbitrarily truncate the potential range of factors” (Mitchell et al., 2016: 263) valuable to stakeholders. From the perspective of value pluralism FVM in turn is best described as a reductionist and one-dimensional perspective conceptualizing value creation as little more than striving for positive and possibly high digits on a balance sheet. Harrison and Wicks criticize such narrow conceptions of value for disregarding “other critical aspects of utility relevant to a discussion of value – particularly dimensions that extend beyond profitability and economic returns” (2013: 100). Other stakeholder theorists argue that the value corporations create can only be understood by referring to a multiplicity of stakeholder value perspectives (Freeman, Harrison, Wicks, Parmar, & Colle, 2010). Value judgements of individual stakeholders are based on a multifaceted process which in turn ultimately determines the degree to which value has been created by the corporation (Lankoski, Smith, & van Wassenhove, 2016). Accordingly, to incorporate said pluralism Harrison and Wicks propose to define value “broadly as anything that has the potential to be of worth to stakeholders” (2013: 100–101). They conclude that firms should be managed to create utility for each of a firm’s legitimate stakeholders and propose to operationalize utility by considering stakeholder’s utility functions “express[ing] the stakeholder’s preferences for particular types of value” (idem., 101).

While accepting stakeholder value pluralism as a necessary condition for value creation might solve important conceptual problems it poses a significant new challenge for research: the question remains open how to conceptualize processes that assist managers to navigate stakeholder value pluralism in order to create value for stakeholders (van der Linden & Freeman, 2017: 376). Consequently, Mitchell et al. solicit research on processes to “better match corporate objectives to the preferences of stakeholders and managers” (2016: 270). Scholars have only recently started to address this issue by either conceptualizing a procedural

approach to social welfare in the realm of public policy based on deliberative democracy (Marti & Scherer, 2016) or by proposing a decision making process for managers grounded on the concept of thick evaluations (van der Linden & Freeman, 2017). Accordingly, our research is motivated by the need to develop processes that assist managers to cope with the plurality of stakeholder value perspectives they are confronted with when striving for stakeholder value creation (Harrison & Wicks, 2013: 118). Thus, we formulate the following research question: How should managers engage with stakeholders to create value that includes a plurality of stakeholder value perspectives? In the remainder of this paper, we will address this research question by developing a procedural framework based on a discursive sharing process among managers and stakeholders geared towards including the pluralism of stakeholder value perspectives.

Creating pluralistic stakeholder value through discursive sharing of values – a procedural framework

In the following we develop a procedural framework which is based on recent advancements of Habermasian ethics by Rainer Forst. We begin by briefly discussing the relevance of the concept of sharing for VCST before elucidating the notion of sharing from the perspective of Rainer Forst's theory of justification. Having conceptualized sharing as a process of communication oriented towards discursive justification we then proceed by explaining how managers can create pluralistic value for stakeholders through this discursive sharing process. Managers and stakeholders first need to assess moral, political, legal and ethical dimensions of value creation under the guidance of corresponding criteria of justification before proceeding with the connection of these dimensions and justifications with one another without either ignoring, limiting or absolutizing relevant dimensions of value creation.

The concept of sharing and its relevance for value creation stakeholder theory

While the concept of sharing has been theorized in many research streams (John, 2016) in the following we focus on its core meaning as well as its direct relevance for VCST. Recent research points out that the notion of sharing “incorporates a wide range of distributive and communicative practices, while also carrying a set of positive connotations to do with our relations with others and a more just allocation of resources” (John, 2012: 176). Thus, sharing can be understood as both an act of distribution and an act of communication. The former has received the most attention so far within the literature, as sharing has been conceptualized as a distinct form of social exchange (Belk, 2007, 2010), as a mode of “collaborative” consumption (Botsman & Rogers, 2010) as well as an “access-based” form of consumption (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012). Within VCST the notion of sharing plays an important role since value creation rests on *shared* stakeholder interests constituting a situation of harmony where metaphorically speaking “[t]he notes are different but they must blend together” (Freeman et al., 2010: 27). The essence of stakeholder management is described “as a sequential risk-sharing process of stakeholder organization (...) toward the end of value creation” (Mitchell et al., 2015: 858). While John sheds light on the notion of sharing in social media communications (2012) and links sharing to the concept of a “therapeutic discourse” (2013) very few other studies further investigate the communicative aspect of sharing. In the following we approach the notion of sharing as act of communication from the perspective of Forst’s theory of justification (2002, 2012, 2014b). Rainer Forst is a member of the third generation of German-speaking critical theorists who advanced Habermas’s theory in important ways as we will further elaborate in the next section.

Sharing as process of discursive justification - implications from Rainer Forst's theory of justification

Habermasian business ethics research has proliferated in recent years with scholars drawing on Habermas's seminal conceptions of discourse ethics (Gilbert & Behnam, 2009; Gilbert & Rasche, 2007; Goodman & Arenas, 2015; Reed, 1999; Scherer, 2015; Stansbury, 2009; Ulrich, 2008) and deliberative democracy (Mena & Palazzo, 2012; Scherer et al., 2006). Particularly Habermas' political writings (1996, 1999) have inspired a fairly influential stream of research called Political CSR stating that societal acceptance of corporate value creation is increasingly dependent upon processes of argumentation and deliberation with affected stakeholders (Palazzo & Scherer, 2006; Scherer et al., 2016; Scherer & Palazzo, 2007; Scherer & Palazzo, 2011). However, this research has recently been criticized for being overly focused on consensus and for grounding its theory on a too idealistic concept of communication resulting either in the overburdening of corporations or the rather naïve disregard of power imbalances and communication strategies aiming at dissent rather than consent between stakeholders (Dawkins, 2015; Sabadoz & Singer, 2017; Whelan, 2012, 2013).

Against this backdrop, Forst characterizes his theory of justification as an "intersubjectivist theory that is neither particularistic nor universalistic in the wrong way" (2002: 257). Particularly relevant for our research problem is that Forst shifts the theoretical focus from discursive consensus to a process of discursive justification guided by criteria of justification driven by the insight that "justification in real life (...) need[s] criteria beyond consensus" (Forst, 2014a: 196). This process is based on the so called "principle of justification" which states that "normative answers to practical questions are to be justified in precisely the manner referred to by their validity claims" (Forst, 2012: 18). This principle expresses the key insight of Habermas' communicative approach according to which normative validity is tied to the rational acceptability of reasons in practical discourses (1993, 1996, 1999). Hence, Forst assumes with Habermas that actors "have reasons for their actions that they can justify to

themselves and can communicate and justify to others, so that these reasons (...) can be *shared* (emphasis added)” (Forst, 2002: 256). Thus, on Forstian grounds sharing is understood as a process of communication oriented towards discursive justification.

On this basis, Forst develops several procedural criteria of discursive justification by performing a *recursive* analysis of the conditions of justifying values, norms and actions through moving “inquiringly from normative validity claims back to validity reasons and validity justifications” (2002: 193). Therefore “[p]ractical, grounded validity must be seen as “situated” in contexts of justification” allowing “a differentiated analysis of the conditions of normative validity in different contexts” (idem.).

In the context of VCST scholars have argued for the normative complexity of business and value creation based on the paradigmatic insight that business and society must be conceived of as deeply entangled rather than as completely separated from each other (Freeman et al., 2010; Harris & Freeman, 2008). From a Habermasian standpoint, these findings have been reflected in the view that communicative processes of justification are not only the building block of society but also an essential part of the value creation process of businesses (Gilbert & Behnam, 2009; Gilbert & Rasche, 2007; Smith, 2004). In modification of the (neo-)classical characterization of business as a nexus of contracts scholars supporting a relational view on economic activity conceptualize businesses as a “nexus of social relationships” arguing that “firms are also moral communities in which communicative action explains their ability to enhance the interests of all members” (Smith, 2004: 329–330). Accordingly, we can distinguish on Forstian grounds between moral, political, legal and ethical dimensions of value creation: As much as managers face though *ethical* choices on a daily basis concerning e.g. questions of work-life-balance or diverse corporate cultural values (Gilbert & Behnam, 2009; Reed, 1999), they are confronted with *legal* and *political* issues. These have been theorized in particular within the Habermasian political CSR research stream stressing the increased necessity of self-regulation against the backdrop of global governance voids (Scherer et al., 2016) which leads

managers to participate in deliberative exchanges with multiple stakeholder to find solutions to global problems (Mena & Palazzo, 2012). Not the least, managers have to deal with *moral* issues involving universally valid norms like for example human rights (Wettstein, 2012) or norms of stakeholder cooperation and reciprocity (Bosse & Phillips, 2016; Mitchell et al., 2015; Phillips, 2003a, 2003b) in order to keep their business a going concern in a competitive environment. These dimensions and Forst's corresponding criteria of justification are summarized in table 4 and will be outlined in more detail in the following. In addition, table 4 shows the different types of validity claims associated with these dimensions of value creation and corresponding questions intended to assist managers to create value for stakeholders given the pluralism of stakeholder value perspectives.

Table 4: Dimensions of Pluralistic Stakeholder Value Creation and Criteria of Discursive Justification

Dimensions of Stakeholder Value Creation	Type of Normative Validity Claim	Criteria of Discursive Justification	Guiding Questions for Managing Stakeholder Value Pluralism
Moral	Universal, unconditional binding validity	Reciprocity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Do we consider the plurality of stakeholder value perspectives equally, neutrally and empathically? ▪ Do we create sufficient value for stakeholders to remain a going concern in a competitive environment?
		Generality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Do we include all affected stakeholders?
Political	General interest of a political community	Justifiability to all members of a political community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Do we create value in accordance with the general interest of our political stakeholder community? ▪ Do we participate in political processes of determining/fostering that general interest?
Legal	Binding norms in the form of law within a legal community	Lawfulness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Do we respect the established soft- and hard-law regulations? ▪ Do we respect the necessary conditions for their generation?
Ethical	Questions of the good life	Anchoring in individual/collective self-understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Do we respect the individual/collective self-understanding of all affected stakeholders?

Source: own table

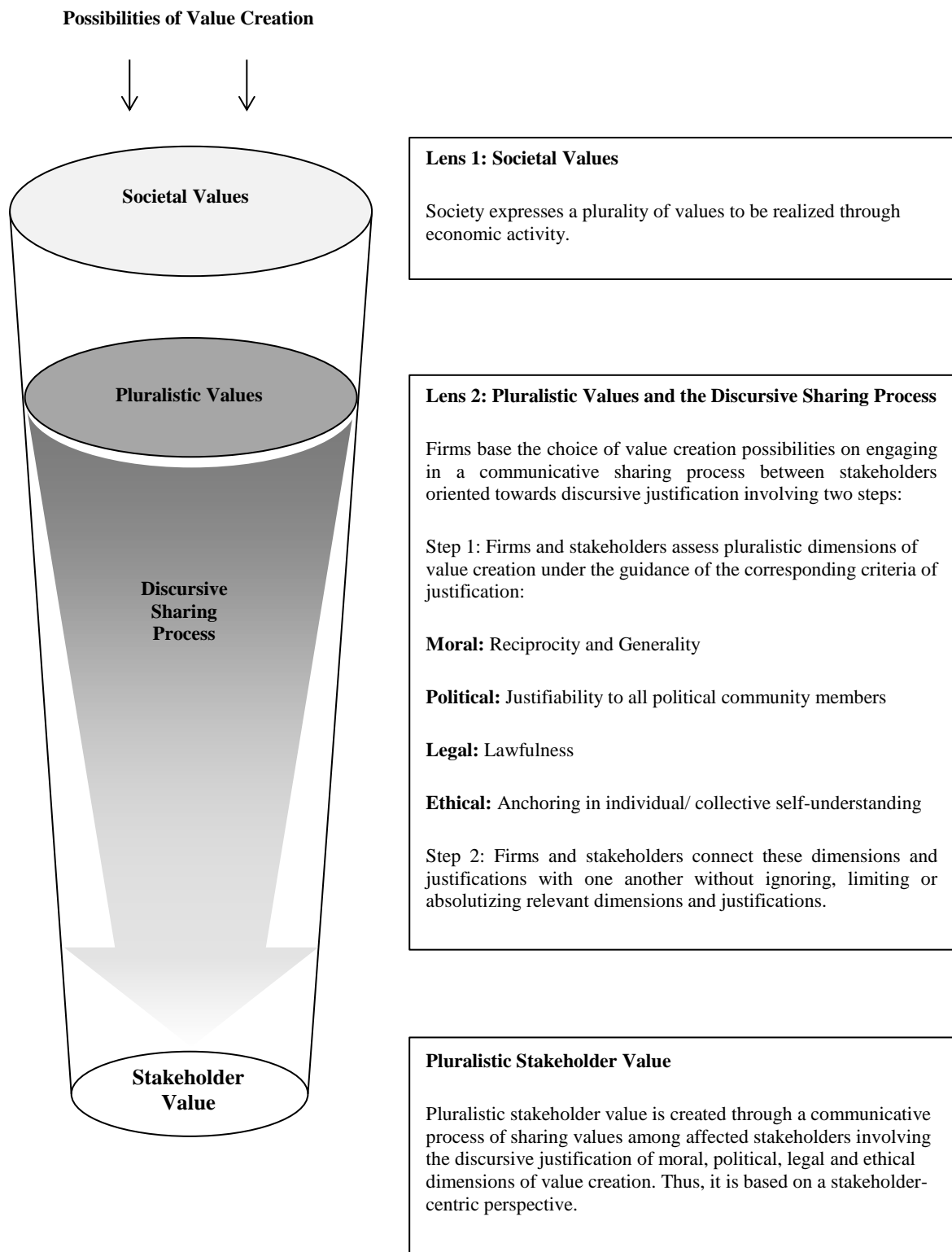
Managing stakeholder value pluralism through discursive justification – a procedural framework

On this basis, we can now sketch in more detail how the Forstian notion of discursive sharing can facilitate the creation of value for stakeholders given the pluralism of value perspectives. We argue that to deal with stakeholder value pluralism managers should engage in a communicative sharing process between stakeholders oriented towards discursive justification involving two steps (Forst, 2002):

1. Assess moral, political, legal and ethical dimensions of value creation under the guidance of corresponding criteria of justification as are reciprocity and generality, justifiability to all political community members, lawfulness and anchoring in individual/collective self-understanding.
2. Connect these dimensions and justifications with one another without ignoring, limiting or absolutizing relevant dimensions and justifications.

These two steps represent the core of our procedural framework as depicted in figure 6. Analogical to the visualization of recent monistic approaches to stakeholder value creation in figure 5, corporations are confronted with many possibilities of value creation that are expressed by society (Lens 1: Societal Values). Instead of applying a monistic lens of value, corporations according to our framework apply a pluralistic perspective of value creation (depicted as “Lens 2: Pluralistic Values and the Discursive Sharing Process”). Thus, managers base their choice of value creation possibilities not only on the potential to increase either financial value or stakeholder happiness for the firm. Instead their choice is based on a thorough and comprehensive evaluation of the moral, political, legal and ethical implications of possibilities of value creation through a two-step discursive sharing process between stakeholders.

Figure 6: Creating Pluralistic Stakeholder Value by Sharing Values – A Procedural Framework



Source: own illustration

To explain this discursive sharing process in more detail we will discuss each step by illustrating with concrete examples how this sharing process facilitates the creation of pluralistic stakeholder value. According to Forst, the *moral dimension of value creation* requires a discursive justification that meets the criteria of reciprocity and generality. The criterion of reciprocity forbids to “raise any specific claims while rejecting like claims of others” and to “simply assume that others share one’s perspective, evaluations, convictions, interests, or needs” (Forst, 2012: 49). The criterion of generality guarantees that the objections of anyone affected are included. Consequently, the criteria of reciprocity and generality fulfill the following functions: they both ensure equal status and concrete respect of individuals and guarantee the inclusion of all affected stakeholders. Forst suggests to operationalize these criteria by testing whether reasons provided in the process of discursive moral justification can be “generally and reciprocally rejected” (2012). Only reasons passing this test of reciprocal and general rejectability provide a sufficient justification for moral issues.

The beneficial role of discursive processes of moral argumentation for stakeholder value creation has been stressed by a recent longitudinal study of legitimacy strategies at Puma (Baumann-Pauly, Scherer, & Palazzo, 2016). This study shows, how Puma’s annual stakeholder dialog forum at the former monastery Banz in Germany helped to reduce tensions between stakeholders and to initiate value creating organizational changes like wage increases for garment workers or the successful market launch of products with reduced social and ecological impacts. Forst’s criteria of reciprocity and generality assist managers to conduct moral dialogues in a value creating way by urging them to communicate directly with stakeholders under procedural guidance. Hence, these criteria prompt managers to ask themselves whether they considered the plurality of stakeholder value perspectives in a equal, neutral and empathic way without excluding affected stakeholders and without jeopardizing a sufficient level of value creation for all stakeholders in order to remain a going concern in a competitive environment. Procter and Gamble (P&G) for example created additional value in

the developing world by inventing a powder to purify water (Procter & Gamble, 2017). By engaging directly with the living conditions of affected communities in Africa P&G managers identified an urgent moral value (clean drinking water) to be realized (reciprocity) and in the process discovered a new stakeholder group affected by their business activity (generality). Or consider the example of the German sustainability bank GLS which decided through a democratic process among its members to introduce an additional fee for all members (including employees) in order to remain a going concern in a low interest rate environment. By ensuring the long-term survival of the bank in difficult market conditions GLS managers considered the criterion of reciprocity by maintaining a sufficient level of value created for its stakeholders (GLS Bank, 2017).

As recently suggested ensuring a sufficient level of stakeholder value might even imply exceeding stakeholder expectations (Harrison & Wicks, 2013) as for example Amazon continuously introduces new offerings like the Alexa voice assistant or the various Prime offerings without customers explicitly soliciting such products and services. Or consider another example concerning employees: far too common negative stakeholder values such as poor working conditions and wages below the poverty line would be less likely to occur since managers would be directly confronted with the general and reciprocal rejection of these conditions by affected employees outlining their struggle to make a living and their suffering from stressful working conditions. On this basis, even in the most difficult circumstances at least incremental solutions can be found, like e.g. reducing working hours while maintaining pay or improving working conditions through changes in processes and practices.

The *political and legal dimensions of value creation* are – at least in reasonably democratic contexts – closely intertwined. Forst captures this interconnectedness between political and legal issues in democracies in the following statement: “While persons as legal persons are obliged to assume responsibility within the framework of law for their actions and to justify themselves, as citizens they themselves must justify to one another the legal norms under which

they live” (Forst, 2002: 267). Redeeming a political validity claim then refers to a discursive process oriented towards the general interest of all members of a political community. Redeeming the validity of generally binding norms as codified in the established law of a legal community on the other hand implies “lawfulness” as the relevant criterion of justification. Consequently, the political criterion of justification leads managers to reflect on the accordance of value creation possibilities with the general interest of the firms’ political stakeholder community. This also includes considering the participation in political processes to determine and foster the general interest (Scherer et al., 2006; Scherer et al., 2016). The legal criterion of justification in turn poses the question to managers whether the established soft- and hard-law regulations as well as the necessary conditions for their generation are respected (Habermas, 1996; Mena & Palazzo, 2012; Reed, 1999).

Many companies in the international ready-made garment industry for example participate in the so called Accord for Fire and Building Safety (Accord) in Bangladesh – a democratically structured initiative bringing together global unions, international companies and NGOs with the common goal to improve fire and building safety standards in Bangladeshi supplier factories. Through their participation these companies move beyond a legal compliance approach by collaboratively filling regulatory gaps regarding the enforcement of Bangladeshi building and fire safety standards. Rather than exploiting regulatory weaknesses these companies decided to participate in political processes to foster the general interest not only of Bangladeshi garment workers but also of their own business community (Reinecke & Donaghey, 2015). Thus, value is being created first and foremost for workers by improving factory safety as well as for the textile industry as a whole since the Accord established a level playing field regarding basic factory safety standards in Bangladesh. Therefore, businesses no longer compete against each other by selecting the cheapest suppliers with low factory safety and reputational damages as caused by the Rana Plaza factory collapse in 2013 are less likely to occur in the future. Another revealing example is provided by the collaborative efforts of the

car industry and regulatory authorities concerning the development of autonomous car technology in the USA or Germany (International Risk Governance Center, 2016; New York Times, 2016). In order to bring this innovation to the market and create value for stakeholders, companies deliberate with regulatory authorities on many matters of common concern such as traffic control and safety, insurance issues and the expected behavior of autonomous cars in the case of accidents. The political and legal criteria of justification provide managers with the necessary guidance to initiate and conduct such endeavors.

For Forst, within the *ethical dimension of value creation* sufficient ethical reasons depend on the anchoring of values in a person's self-understanding: The more constitutive a value is for a person's identity the stronger is its justification. Considering the fact that an individual's identity is formed not alone but in relation to particular others, ethical justification occurs on the intra- and interpersonal level as well as on the level of a specific ethical community characterized by certain joint beliefs and evaluations (e.g., religious community) (Forst, 2002, 2012). Therefore, the criterion of ethical justification causes managers to consider if the individual and/or collective self-understanding of all affected stakeholders is respected. Consider for example the small German coffee roaster Quijote in Hamburg (Quijotekaffee, 2017). Their corporate culture is strongly driven by values such as participatory democracy, transparency, justice, work-life-balance and a passion for high-quality coffee. By establishing and nurturing this self-understanding among their stakeholders Quijote became one of the leading sustainability oriented coffee roasters in the region. By collaborating on equal and transparent terms with democratically structured coffee cooperatives in South America Quijote maintains very high standards for its coffee. At the same time Quijote respects that its employees also value maintaining a balance between work- and life by establishing absolute limits on monthly turnover and working hours through internal democratic deliberations.

After assessing the moral, political, legal and ethical dimensions of value creation under the guidance of the corresponding criteria of justification our framework suggests that managers

proceed with step two of the discursive sharing process: firms and stakeholders should connect these dimensions and justifications with one another without ignoring, limiting or absolutizing relevant dimensions and justifications. *Ignoring* means that managers should not disregard relevant dimensions and justifications in a given context. The Accord for example clearly shows that the political and legal dimensions of value creation are relevant for creating value for stakeholders of firms in the textile industry. Disregarding these dimensions would therefore have been as much normatively inadequate as it would have been instrumentally wrong in terms of stakeholder value creation. *Limiting* in turn describes restricting the content and scope of relevant dimensions and justifications. For example, perceiving the state of Bangladesh as the sole actor responsible for improving factory safety would qualify as limiting the scope of the political and legal dimensions since fostering the general interest often includes but is not limited to the involvement of governments. *Absolutizing* on the other hand means singling out one dimension of value creation and giving this single dimension total priority over all other dimensions. Referring again to the Accord, managers would for example absolutize the political dimension if they would devote so many material and immaterial resources to the initiative that the survival of the firm is put at risk.

Hence, our procedural framework ensures that the value perspectives of all affected stakeholders are taken into account on the basis of the quality of justifications they provide rather than mainly on the basis of quantitative calculations of monistic value scores by accounting departments. As a result, companies become aware of many more possibilities for value creation awaiting to be realized through stakeholder-centric business activity (depicted by the bigger sized ellipse of “Stakeholder Value” in figure 6 in comparison to figure 5). We proceed by elucidating the contributions of our paper to theory as well as by discussing several limitations of our procedural framework.

Contributions and limitations

Our discursive sharing framework makes several contributions to the literature. First, we address the procedural void (Harrison & Wicks, 2013: 117; Mitchell et al., 2016; van der Linden & Freeman, 2017) within recent discussions on pluralistic approaches to stakeholder value creation by conceptualizing a theoretically well-grounded communicative sharing process between stakeholders geared towards the discursive justification of multiple dimensions of value creation. On this basis, companies are better equipped to implement recently proposed pluralistic corporate objectives (Harrison & Wicks, 2013; Mitchell et al., 2016). The proposed criteria of justification guide and facilitate this discursive sharing process providing a normative orientation for accommodating potentially diverging perspectives among stakeholders. Thus, these criteria can be particularly useful for mitigating so called “Missing the Boat Risk” (Mitchell et al., 2015) which describes the risk of losing stakeholder value creation opportunities due to managers failing to take stakeholder perspectives sufficiently into account. Since these criteria encourage managers and stakeholders to regularly consider multiple dimensions of value creation under the guidance of dimension-specific criteria of justification (see table 4), managers are more likely to remain responsive to additional value creation possibilities for stakeholders. It is important to note however, that these criteria are no panacea in that they describe the procedural pathways for including different stakeholder value perspectives without prescribing actual solutions in advance. These solutions ultimately rest upon the engagement of affected stakeholders in discursive sharing processes. Hence, our framework is in line with the recently advocated “formal approach” (van der Linden & Freeman, 2017: 365) within VCST by limiting itself to the conceptualization of a procedure and procedural criteria that facilitate a context-sensitive adoption by managers.

Second, our framework contributes to recent studies within political CSR research which focus on conceptualizing democratic processes in order to enhance social welfare and the democratic legitimacy of the firm through the inclusion of different stakeholder perspectives

(Marti & Scherer, 2016; Scherer et al., 2006; Scherer et al., 2016; Scherer, 2017). While the construct of legitimacy has been theorized from different perspectives (Suddaby, Bitektine, & Haack, 2017) the Habermasian political CSR research stream conceptualizes corporate legitimacy as a deliberative democratic process through which the societal acceptance of corporations is reproduced. Within this literature it is argued that under the conditions of value pluralism managers cannot simply presume knowing their stakeholders' value perspectives but instead have to take "seriously the priorities of those who are concerned" (Scherer, 2017: 9) through democratic processes of deliberation among stakeholders. Our framework contributes to this discussion by showing that managers can include different stakeholder value perspectives through a discursive sharing process guided by multi-dimensional criteria of justification.

These criteria provide two major theoretical advancements: First, the criteria of justification provide a more substantive but still strictly procedural guidance for real stakeholder deliberations which necessarily are never ideal. In the likely cases of disagreement or nonconsensual agreement the criteria can be used to evaluate whether the reasons discussed in the discourse are sufficient for justifying a given issue. Therefore, the focus of practical discourse shifts from mere consensus-orientation to sorting out "bad reasons", i.e. reasons failing to satisfy the criteria of justification. Hence, the "Forstian" notion of sharing provided in this paper avoids certain criticisms raised against the consensual and deliberative CSR research streams (Dawkins, 2015; Whelan, 2012, 2013) since the function of processes of discursive justification is less about finding actual consensus than it is about the joint and continuous "struggle to find meaning in the world" (White, 2015: 211) through sorting out insufficient justifications and providing better ones. Therefore, the process of discursive justification aims at a continuous discursive engagement of firms and stakeholders oriented towards developing a better understanding of each other's value perspectives in order to create more value for all involved. This process can involve consensus but explicitly includes

disagreement and what has been recently theorized as “temporary resting points” (Reinecke & Ansari, 2015).

Second, an “important practical aspect” (Forst, 2012: 67) of the criteria should be noted: Managers can use the criteria for assessing value creation possibilities before engaging in actual processes of discursive justification with stakeholders. Although Forst emphasizes that the actual conduct of discursive sharing processes rests ultimately decisive, the criteria of justification provide additional material guidance for managers before, during and after deliberative stakeholder interactions. Our framework therefore facilitates the accommodation of a plurality of stakeholder perspectives which ultimately contributes to strengthening the societal legitimacy of firms.

However, as recently pointed out by Marti and Scherer (2016) discursive engagements with stakeholders are a precious resource considering the multiple demands that managers are exposed to on a daily basis. Our framework acknowledges this fact through several provisions: First, both steps of our framework impose explicit limits on the advocated discursive sharing process by conceptualizing firm survival as essential part of moral justification as well as by excluding the assignment of an absolute priority to one dimension above all the other dimensions. Creating value for stakeholders through discursive sharing rather implies a *comprehensive* consideration of relevant dimensions and justifications. Second, as indicated by the closely interwoven political and legal dimensions of value creation, at least under reasonably democratic conditions the value creation process for stakeholders is embedded in a context of democratic institutions providing firms and stakeholders with democratically legitimized rules and regulations on which basis stakeholder interactions are coordinated. Fundamental human rights for example as well as minimum wages are codified in the established law of many developed countries easing the burden of discursive justification among stakeholders on those issues. However, we argue in line with Marti and Scherer (2016) that the discursive sharing process urges managers to remain responsive and vigilant in cases

where conflicts arise due to either insufficient democratic regulations or the legitimate contestation of certain corporate practices by stakeholders. The criteria provide guidance for firms to manage these situations. Hence, Finally, it is important to point out that the proposed discursive sharing process under the guidance of criteria of justification represents a necessary idealization or in Habermasian terms an “regulative idea”. This means that calling for its full realization at every point in time is beside the point. Rather than prescribing abstract ideal outcomes this approach aims at elucidating procedural pathways along which affected stakeholders can reach an understanding of their values in order to create value together. Thus, the discursive sharing process provides a useful yardstick for managers and stakeholders that is as much integral part of daily business practices as it transcends these practices by indicating avenues towards more inclusive and stakeholder-sensitive management.

Conclusion

With the proposed discursive conceptualization of the notion of sharing we open up new avenues for research (Scherer et al., 2016: 286) – in particular with regard to the advent of the so called “sharing economy” which is currently transforming many established business models (Sundararajan, 2016). Our concept of sharing as a process of discursive justification of multiple dimensions of value creation can be applied to both analyze recent developments in the digital economy and to derive practical recommendations for management on how to operate a sharing economy business that ultimately creates value that is shared between business and society. However, given the centrality of the notion of sharing in discussions about both alternatives to capitalism and its cutting edge in the digital economy (John, 2016) we encourage further conceptual research on the concept of sharing both as act of distribution and as act of communication. We are convinced that the “Forstian” notion of sharing developed in our paper

represents a promising starting point for a substantial discussion of this central concept among business ethics scholars employing a plurality of theoretical perspectives.

To conclude we stress three key implications of our paper: First, stakeholder value creation can be understood as a pluralistic discursive sharing process comprising moral, political, legal and ethical dimensions. Second, this pluralism of stakeholder perspectives can be managed according to dimension-specific criteria of discursive justification involving two steps: Managers and stakeholders start by considering these distinct dimensions under the guidance of the criteria of justification and then proceed by connecting these dimensions and justifications with one another without either ignoring, limiting or absolutizing relevant dimensions of value creation. Third, by assuming that every firm is embedded in moral, political, legal and ethical contexts we provide an analytical mapping of the normative complexity of pluralistic stakeholder value creation on the grounds of Forst's theory of justification.

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Paper IV:

From progressive to conservative and back: constructing political CSR identities in multi-stakeholder initiatives – the case of the “Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh”

Kristin Huber & Maximilian J. L. Schormair

Abstract

Multi-stakeholder initiatives (MSIs) permeate the governance of global business conduct. While the political role that corporations assume in MSIs is controversially discussed within political CSR research, the underlying processes of how corporations develop and enact political identities in MSIs has received little attention so far. In this paper we contribute to this discussion by introducing the construct of a political CSR identity (PCSRI). We explore how firms construct their PCSRIs in MSIs by conducting an in-depth case study of the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh – a recent MSI established after the collapse of the Rana Plaza garment factory complex in 2013 to improve working conditions in the Bangladeshi garment industry. Employing a qualitative inductive theory-building method, we analyse interview and archival data to develop a framework that elucidates how companies construct their PCSRIs within a continuum ranging from conservative to progressive by enacting specific political strategies along different trajectories. Our paper contributes to the literature by providing a political perspective on corporate identity construction that extends the emerging integrative perspective in PCSR research. We thus suggest that MSIs should be conceptualized as inherently political governance mechanisms that are driven by multidirectional political processes of PCSRI construction. Hence, our study shows that corporate political engagement in MSIs is a more nuanced and complex phenomenon than presently theorized.

Keywords: multi-stakeholder initiatives, political CSR, identity construction, business-to-business interaction

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Introduction

Over the past decades multi-stakeholder initiatives (MSIs) have become a central governance mechanism in the global economy initiating a wave of private regulation (Abbott & Snidal, 2009; Djelic & Sahlin-Andersson, 2006; Vogel, 2009). MSIs generally involve a variety of actors, including corporations, civil society organizations as well as at times governmental actors and usually aim at setting norms or standards to address social and environmental issues in global supply chains (Gilbert & Rasche, 2008; Levy, Reinecke, & Manning, 2015; Mena & Palazzo, 2012). Within the so called ‘political’ corporate social responsibility (PCSR) research stream the proliferation of MSIs and particularly the growing political role of corporations in MSIs is controversially discussed. On the one hand several scholars stress the positive potential of these developments by conceptualizing MSIs as a step towards a more democratic and inclusive governance of increasingly complex problems (Scherer & Palazzo, 2011; Scherer, Palazzo, & Matten, 2013; Scherer, Rasche, Palazzo, & Spicer, 2016). These scholars argue on the normative basis of Habermas’ theory of deliberative democracy (1996, 2001) that corporations should be embedded in an emerging global democratic world order by deliberating with affected stakeholders in the public sphere on standards, certifications or other forms of regulating business conduct (Hahn & Weidtmann, 2015; Scherer et al., 2013; Scherer, Baumann-Pauly, & Schneider, 2012). Hence, these more optimistic scholars suggest that corporations should understand themselves no longer as exclusively self-interested economic actors that limit their societal role to the (neo-)classical principle ‘to abide by the rules and make a profit’. Instead these scholars advocate that corporations develop a political self-understanding as democratic global governance actors that proactively address global governance voids through democratic collaboration with affected stakeholders. By participating in these democratic rule-setting processes corporations are expected to deepen their supply

chain responsibilities (Schrempf-Stirling & Palazzo, 2016) and to develop an increased commitment to their societal responsibilities (Haack, Schoeneborn, & Wickert, 2012).

More critical scholars on the other hand raise serious doubts about the advocated democratic shift in PCSR describing the increased political role of corporations in MSIs as a threat to democracy and essentially seeing them as “de-politicization mechanisms that limit political expression and struggle” (Moog, Spicer, & Böhm, 2015: 474). Rather than praising the positive effects of MSI participation on corporate legitimacy these scholars call into question the legitimacy and efficacy of such initiatives (Banerjee, 2007; Edward & Willmott, 2008a, 2008b; Moog et al., 2015; Utting, 2002). Particularly in the context of less developed democracies, several scholars argue that public interests have to be protected from private profit interests (Banerjee, 2007; Blowfield, 2012), as business-driven initiatives are criticized for ignoring normative and systemic issues, as well as for co-opting more fundamental critiques of corporations’ role in society at large (Fleming & Jones, 2013; Levy, Szejnwald Brown, & Jong, 2009; Shamir, 2010). Accordingly, these scholars contend that corporations continue to understand themselves as primarily economic actors that use their political power to advance their own narrow financial interests to the detriment of the general interest (Fooks, Gilmore, Collin, Holden, & Lee, 2013).

Intriguingly, despite corporations being at the centre of the normative debate around multi-stakeholder governance, research investigating the “underlying processes” (Mena & Waeger, 2014: 1111) of corporate political engagement in MSIs is rather scarce. While recent studies elucidate the interaction dynamics between corporations and civil society actors associated with CSR initiatives (Bakker, den Hond, King, & Weber, 2013; den Hond, Bakker, & Doh, 2012; Levy et al., 2015; Mena & Waeger, 2014; Reinecke & Ansari, 2016) so far, we know little about how companies actually understand their role and interact with other actors when participating in MSIs. Research hitherto mainly focused on developing conceptual and normative theory either in favour (Mena & Palazzo, 2012; Scherer & Palazzo, 2011) or against

(Edward & Willmott, 2013; Whelan, 2012; Willke & Willke, 2008) the assumption of an emerging democratic political self-understanding without scrutinizing the processes involved in corporations constructing this self-understanding in practice. In fact, the concept of a political self-understanding of corporations itself remains largely implicit in the literature so far. We hence need a deeper understanding of the “modes of operationalization” of political CSR by corporations (Scherer et al., 2013: 151). Although an integrative perspective on political CSR aiming at a “synthesis” of the optimistic and critical perspectives has recently begun to emerge the development of this perspective is still in its early stages calling for further research to clarify the processes involved in different contexts and actor constellations (Levy et al., 2015: 33).

The notion of corporations developing a distinct self-understanding has been studied within research on corporate identity construction (Gioia, Patvardhan, Hamilton, & Corley, 2013b; Schultz, 2012). This research stream suggests that firm behaviour is strongly affected by a firms’ organizational identity, i.e. how a company “develops a collective understanding of ‘who we are as an organization?’” (Gioia, Price, Hamilton, & Thomas, 2010: 4). Investigating how firms construct a political identity when participating in MSIs represents a promising research endeavour for clarifying the controversially discussed political role of corporations in MSIs. While several studies indicate the political nature of identity-construction at the managerial level (Maguire & Hardy, 2005; Musson & Duberley, 2007; Wright, Nyberg, & Grant, 2012) more research is needed that focuses on the corporate level of analysis. In fact, only very few studies deal explicitly with the concept of a corporate political identity. Wilts (2006) in particular elucidates its implications for corporate political strategizing without however discussing this concept in the context of CSR. Furthermore, corporations so far have been largely treated as a homogeneous group within political CSR research (for a notable exception see Wickert, Scherer, & Spence, 2016) leaving the investigation of potentially diverse

approaches of corporate political engagement and identity construction as an open research agenda.

To examine how companies construct their political CSR identities in MSIs we use a qualitative, inductive theory-building approach (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013a). This approach is particularly suited when studying phenomena in complex contexts for which theory is lacking, as well as for studying processes, i.e. how something occurs and the dynamics underlying emerging relationships (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Creswell, 2005). We conduct an in-depth case study of the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh (Accord) building on both interview (24 interviews with 29 persons) and archival data (Yin, 2013). The Accord was set up after the collapse of the factory complex Rana Plaza in Bangladesh in 2013, which caused the death of more than 1100 garment workers. Bringing together corporations with unions and NGOs as witnesses to collaboratively solve a problem arising due to a governance void, i.e. the failure of the state of Bangladesh to uphold its building standards, the Accord represents an emblematic example of political CSR. It represents a case in which corporations act as rule-maker and rule-enforcer of building safety standards through an MSI in order to maintain their societal legitimacy.

Our study contributes to the literature by providing a political perspective on corporate identity construction (Gioia et al., 2010; Schultz, 2012) that extends Wilts' (2006) strategic take on the notion of corporate political identity. Accordingly, we introduce the notion of a distinct political CSR identity (PCSRI) that corporations construct in MSIs. We define this identity as a corporation's self-understanding as an actor that seeks to enact its CSR policies through political means. Our findings suggest that corporations construct their PCSRIs within a continuum ranging from conservative to progressive. While progressive companies understand themselves as co-responsible governance actors that proactively seek long term solutions to global CSR challenges along their supply chains through collaborating with multiple affected parties, conservative companies construct a PCSRI as primarily economic actors that perceive

engaging with affected parties of global CSR challenges along their supply chains as exceeding both their core business responsibilities and their financial as well as managerial capacities. We develop a framework showing that corporations construct these PCSRIs by enacting specific political strategies along four different trajectories. We find that the *progressive* PCSRI is constructed either through affirmation of an already existing progressive orientation (Trajectory 1) or through transformation of a previously conservative orientation towards a more progressive identity (Trajectory 2). The *conservative* PCSRI on the other hand is constructed either through transformation of a previously progressive identity orientation towards a more conservative identity (Trajectory 3) or through affirmation of an already existing conservative orientation (Trajectory 4).

Our findings thus show that the political engagement of corporations in MSIs is characterized by dynamic processes of PCSRI construction. While some companies drive the Accords agenda either through staying or becoming more progressive, other companies seek to impose limits on the Accord by either staying or becoming more conservative. Therefore, multi-stakeholder governance is characterized by a dynamic political tension between conservatives and progressives rather than being dominated by one PCSRI alone. Hence, our paper contributes to the emerging integrative perspective within political CSR research (Levy et al., 2015) by suggesting that MSIs as governance mechanism can neither be understood as unidirectional move towards the democratic self-embedment of corporations nor can they be seen as hegemonic tools for the expansion of corporate power. Instead, MSIs should be conceptualized as inherently political governance mechanisms that are driven by multidirectional political processes of PCSRI construction. Concerning the specific case of this study our findings suggest that the Accord represents a positive evolutionary step in multi-stakeholder governance schemes without however being a panacea for improving working conditions in Bangladesh.

We proceed by providing a brief review of the controversial debate in the literature about MSIs and corporations as political actors as well as the concept of identity construction. We then outline the context of our case study and the method used in our data analysis. Thereafter we present the findings of our analysis and develop a framework of how corporations construct their political CSR identities in MSIs. Finally, we discuss the implications of our findings for theory as well as the limitations of our study before offering directions for further research.

Corporate political engagement in multi-stakeholder-governance – a controversial debate

MSIs have been defined as private regulatory initiatives involving “at least two of the three following actors: governments, corporations, and civil society (generally represented by NGOs and humanitarian organizations)” (Mena & Palazzo, 2012: 535–536). The rule-setting activities of MSIs can take various forms, reaching from establishing learning platforms without specific rules and enforcement mechanisms to developing codes, standards or certification schemes with varying degrees of rule specificity and enforcement mechanisms (Mena & Palazzo, 2012). Examples include the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) which aims to promote sustainability in forest management, the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), setting standards for non-financial reporting or the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) which issues general principles for good corporate conduct (Rasche, Waddock, & McIntosh, 2012). MSIs usually produce rules and standards that are voluntary in nature and hence generally represent a form of soft law (Abbott & Snidal, 2000). In this paper we use the term MSI to refer to initiatives which bring corporations into dialogue with stakeholders to address social or environmental issues that emerge along global supply chains.

The rise and proliferation of MSIs is discussed controversially within the emerging debate on a political understanding of CSR. Although there are many different scholars drawing on political theory in the conceptualization and analysis of CSR (Cohen, 2010; Hsieh, 2009;

Mäkinen, Kourula, & Arnold, 2012) the term ‘political CSR’ is mostly used to refer to the theory proposed by Scherer and Palazzo (2011) and colleagues (Scherer et al., 2013; Scherer et al., 2016; Scherer, Palazzo, & Baumann, 2006). Following this line of thought, corporations should increasingly understand themselves as democratic global governance actors that “engag[e] in public deliberations, collective decisions, and the provision of public goods or the restriction of public bads in cases where public authorities are unable or unwilling to fulfil this role” (Scherer et al., 2016: 276). Consequently, corporations can strengthen their societal legitimacy through deliberative interactions with stakeholders in the public sphere. According to Scherer and Palazzo (2007, 2011), the increased regulatory engagement of corporations has a distinctively political quality since corporations move from being the object of regulation to being its subject. They argue that stakeholder deliberation within MSIs not only secures corporate legitimacy but “at the same time launches a learning process through which democratization effects are strengthened” (Scherer et al., 2006: 522). With reference to Fung (2003: 52), Scherer et al. (2006: 522) state that “[a]renas of deliberation can thus function as schools of democracy”. Moreover, with reference to Risse (1999), Scherer and Palazzo (2007: 1111) note that corporate deliberative engagement in MSIs, will lead corporations into an “argumentative self-entrapment” such that corporations will “increasingly contribute to an institutionalization of norms and the solution of political challenges”.

This argument in turn is developed further within the literature on the constitutive aspect of CSR communication suggesting that communication not only passively reflects but also actively shapes and creates the reality of CSR programmes and initiatives (Christensen, Morsing, & Thyssen, 2013; Haack et al., 2012; Schultz, Castelló, & Morsing, 2013; Wickert et al., 2016). Accordingly, talking about CSR can have performative effects such as what Haack et al. (2012) call “creeping commitment”. This describes a process by which low initial commitment of managers to their companies’ CSR claims is transformed into higher levels of commitment through internalizing the inherent discursive aspirations of the companies’ CSR

communications. While Scherer and Palazzo ground their concept on the normative notions of consensual communication and deliberation as developed by the philosopher Juergen Habermas (1996, 2001) other scholars use critical discourse analysis to reveal discursive legitimacy strategies (Vaara, 2014) and argumentative dynamics involved in the discursive construction of the political responsibilities of corporations (Joutsenvirta & Vaara, 2015). Recent studies investigate the role of communicative resources such as frames for firm-stakeholder relationships (Lehtimaki & Kujala, 2015; Reinecke & Ansari, 2016) and narratives for interpretations of CSR (Blindheim, 2012).

However, several scholars describe the increased political role of corporations in MSIs in less favourable terms stressing ‘apolitical’ aspects of CSR initiatives or identifying ‘depoliticization’ at work in and through MSIs. These critics describe the increased regulatory role of MSIs as a threat to democracy and essentially see them as “de-politicization mechanisms that limit political expression and struggle” (Moog et al., 2015: 474) calling into question the legitimacy and efficacy of such initiatives. In this vein, scholars have identified the risk of losing the “radical and political edge” (Banerjee, 2007: 92) of the CSR discourse by confining it to the narrow boundaries of the business-case for CSR (Edward & Willmott, 2008a, 2008b; Fleming & Jones, 2013; Levy et al., 2009; Shamir, 2010). As Kourula and Delalieux (2016) for example show in their study of a French retailer, companies can use CSR practices to placate criticisms of civil society while maintaining their dominant position. Fooks et al. in turn conclude in their study of British-American Tobacco’s CSR policies and practices that “stakeholder dialogue (...) is primarily a defensive practice aimed at preventing stakeholders from forcing change on companies through formal government intervention” (2013: 294). Hence, from this perspective political CSR and the political engagement of corporations in MSIs is geared towards exploiting governance voids to the detriment of society rather than compensating these voids in the public interest through democratic stakeholder deliberations (Whelan, 2012; Willke & Willke, 2008). In addition, the problem-solving capacity of MSIs

regarding social and environmental problems has been questioned by stressing the lack of “financial resources and jurisdictional authority needed to effectively regulate these trenchant problems” (Moog et al., 2015: 488).

Furthermore, the growing political role of corporations in and through MSIs has been conceptualized as privatization of regulation (Abbott & Snidal, 2009; Djelic & Sahlin-Andersson, 2006; Vogel, 2009) that risks undermining the democratic sovereignty of governments since “many supposedly sovereign polities are increasingly rule takers rather than rule makers” (Levi-Faur, 2005: 13). From this perspective, particularly the increased influence of experts in global governance runs the risk of removing important decisions from democratic scrutiny within parliaments and other government institutions (Levi-Faur, 2011). Accordingly, all these critical scholars converge in rejecting the notion that corporations enact or develop a democratic self-understanding in MSIs. Instead, these scholars conceptualize the political self-understanding of corporations as primarily self-interested economic actors that use MSIs as political tools to increase corporate profits as well as corporate power over society at large.

Within the identity literature the highly political nature of the identity-construction process is reflected in several studies focusing on the managerial level of analysis. Wright et al. (2012) for example show how the way sustainability managers construct their identities shapes their behavior as well as the behavior of others within the company. The identity-construction process is characterized as “social discursive construction” that is political in nature. This process is political since it “involves collective struggle” (Wright et al., 2012: 1454) between managers and it is discursive in that identities are constructed through communicative interaction with others (Wright et al., 2012: 1470). While several other studies shed light on the political character of managerial identity construction (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Maguire & Hardy, 2005; Musson & Duberley, 2007) research on organizational or corporate political identity is rather scarce. Quite a few studies on organizational identity construction share the “social constructionist view” (Gioia et al., 2013b; Schultz, 2012) of the aforementioned

managerial identity literature in stating that identity “involves members’ negotiation of shared meaning about ‘who we are as an organization’” through “shared interpretive schemes that members collectively construct to provide meaning to their organizational experience” (Gioia et al., 2010: 5). However, only very few scholars investigate corporate identity construction from a political perspective. The concept of a corporate political identity is defined as a firm’s self-understanding “as an actor that is able to achieve competitive goals through political means” (Wilts, 2006: 452). Furthermore, Wilts stresses the importance of political identities for corporate strategic behavior by pointing out that “[i]t is in terms of their identity that actors perceive opportunities and threats, set goals for strategic behavior [and] assess the appropriateness of particular strategies and tactics” (2006: 449).

Since this strategic aspect of corporate behavior resonates with the critical voices within the political CSR literature, we suggest that introducing the notion of political identity into the debate on political CSR holds the promise for a better understanding of how firms construct and enact their identities in collective struggles with other stakeholders in MSIs. In this paper, we therefore propose to extend the notion of a corporate political identity with an explicit reference to CSR. We define the conception of a political CSR identity (PCSRI) as a corporation’s self-understanding as an actor that seeks to enact its CSR policies through political means. Constructing a PCSRI involves companies’ collective negotiation concerning ‘what kind of political CSR actor are we as a corporation’ as manifested in the political CSR behavior of corporations as well as in the manifold communicative interactions with stakeholders.

Understanding processes of political identity construction in MSIs, in our view, holds the potential for new theoretical insights for the ongoing controversy in the literature between PCSR optimists and its critics. First, how corporations actually understand and enact their political role within MSIs has fundamental implications for what governance outcomes can be expected from MSIs. Despite corporations being at the center of this controversial debate only

recently studies have started to uncover the underlying processes of political CSR initiatives. These studies focus in particular on the interaction dynamics between corporations and civil society actors in CSR initiatives and programs (Bakker et al., 2013). Reinecke and Ansari (2016) show how NGOs contributed to what they call the “responsibilization” of companies by employing framing strategies, while Hond et al. (2012) investigate drivers for corporate collaborations with NGOs. Mena and Waeger (2014) in turn conceptualize in how far specific properties of MSIs provide opportunity structures for civil society activism. However, we still lack an understanding of the political processes involved in business-to-business interactions in MSIs (Mena & Waeger, 2014; Scherer et al., 2013; Scherer et al., 2016). Since corporations so far have been largely treated as a homogeneous group within the political CSR literature (Wickert et al., 2016) further research is needed exploring potentially diverse approaches of corporate political engagement and PCSRI-construction.

Second, the emerging integrative perspective on political CSR could be advanced by developing a better understanding of PCSRI construction. This integrative perspective has only recently begun to emerge in the literature suggesting a “synthesis between ideal and critical views on PCSR” (Levy et al., 2015: 32). Accordingly, political CSR initiatives are described as dynamic interplay between both processes of contestation and accommodation among stakeholders over time that each party tries to steer in its interest without being able to control the process entirely. This integrative perspective is still in its early stages needing further research “to reveal differences in PCSR processes, associated with different sets of actors and institutional templates” (Levy et al., 2015: 33).

Methods

In order to investigate how corporations construct their political CSR identities in MSIs we adopt a research approach that allows for studying processes as well as interpretations of

corporations with regards to their political role. Qualitative research is particularly suited to address research questions that focus on processes as well as for settings in which theory needs to be developed or elaborated (Creswell, 2005). Moreover, as Denzin and Lincoln (2011: 3) note, qualitative research is suited when the aim of research is “to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them”. We therefore adopted a qualitative, interpretive approach, carrying out a qualitative case study (Yin, 2013) and applying an inductive theory-building method (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Gioia et al., 2013a).

Research Context

Given our research interest, we were concerned with finding a context in which corporations were confronted with taking on a political role in MSIs. We found the Accord to represent a particularly compelling context to study corporations as political actors. The Accord was set up in May 2013 after the collapse of the factory complex Rana Plaza in which more than 1100 workers were killed and which left more than 2000 injured. The Accord represents a legally binding agreement between as of today 217 mostly European garment brands and retailers and two global unions (IndustriAll and UNI Global Union) as well as several local trade unions (Accord, 2013). The Clean Cloth Campaign (CCC), Worker Rights Consortium, International Labor Rights Forum and Maquila Solidarity Network served as witness signatories to the agreement.

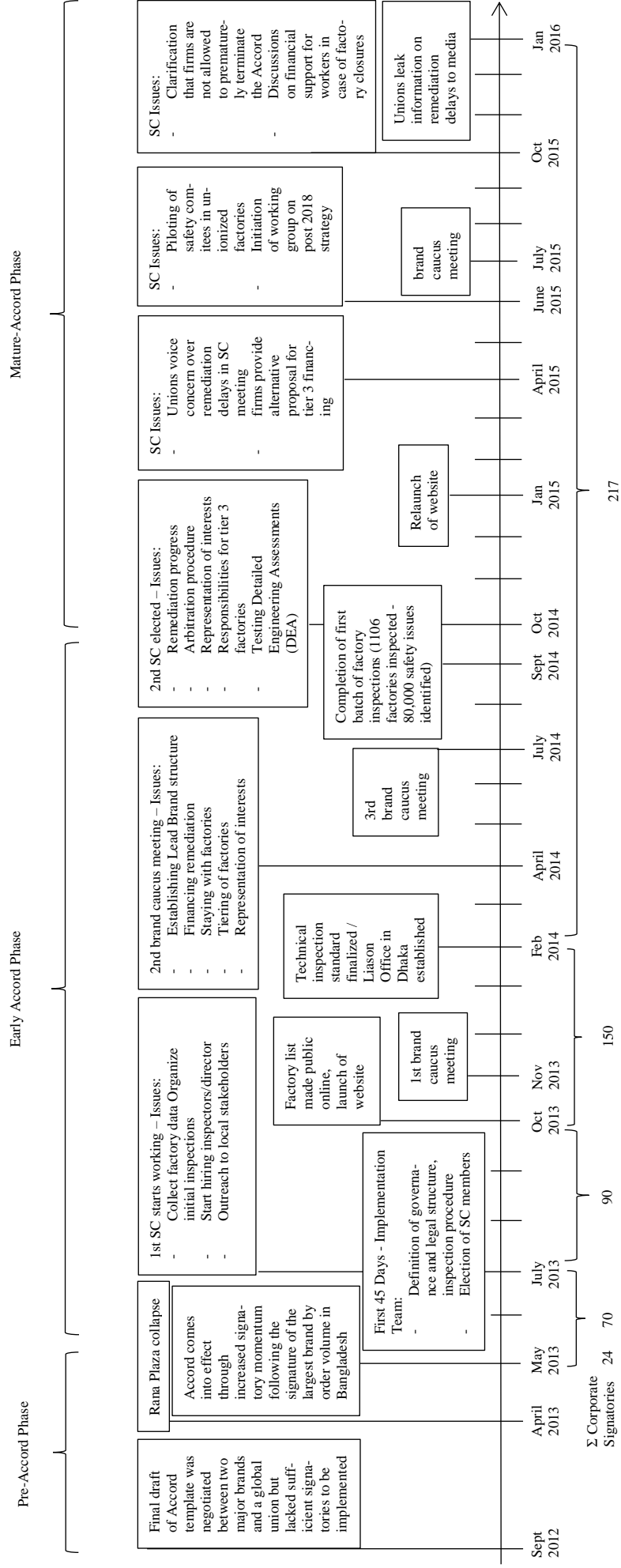
The Rana Plaza disaster shed light on the substantial institutional weaknesses of Bangladesh in terms of rule enforcement and efficacy of government agencies (Bolle, 2014). Currently app. 5000 garment factories exist in Bangladesh employing app. 4 million predominantly female workers (app. 80%) (Anner & Bair, 2016; Labowitz & Baumann-Pauly, 2015; World Bank, 2013b). Over the past decade, the Ready Made Garment (RMG) industry has seen very high growth rates, now representing Bangladesh’s most important industry sector. Bangladesh currently is the second largest manufacturer of garments behind China. A key factor

for the growth of the industry has been the low wage level of Bangladesh. Wages in Bangladesh are only half of those in India and Vietnam, and even only one-fifth of China's (World Bank, 2013b). The low wage levels are induced by the huge pool of cheap labour available in Bangladesh. Presently, Bangladesh counts app. 152 million inhabitants (UNDP, 2014). Although Bangladesh has experienced a substantial growth in GDP over the past two decades, it still counts as one of South Asia's poorest countries (World Bank, 2013a). Hazardous working conditions, low levels of unionization, a system of subcontracting, corruption and strong industry associations have characterized the garment sector over the past years (Reinecke & Donaghey, 2015). The political landscape in Bangladesh is strongly interlinked with the garment sector (Economist, 2015; Yardley, 2013). In 2013, at the time of Rana Plaza, 31 members of the 300 parliament members directly owned garment factories, while many other MPs had indirect financial interests in the industry (Yardley, 2013). State agencies have been bribed in the past by factory owners to receive licenses (Khan & Wichterich, 2015). The owner of Rana Plaza had also received a license from a local authority although he ignored existing construction regulations by illegally adding several stories to the building (Al-Mahmood & Wright, 2013).

In this context, over the past decade a series of tragic events have occurred in the Bangladeshi RMG sector. Preceding the collapse of Rana Plaza, a series of factory fires had already cost the lives of many workers. Against this background, the international NGO CCC had started to engage with corporations already in 2011. The CCC negotiated a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to improve the safety situation in the Bangladeshi RMG sector (CCC, 2013). However, by the end of 2012, the MoU did not reach the minimum number of corporate signatories required to come into effect. With the collapse of Rana Plaza on 24th April 2013 international media attention soared providing a basis for a coalition of unions and NGOs to induce corporations to sign a slightly altered version of the initial MoU which was relabelled

into the Accord (Reinecke & Donaghey, 2015). Figure 7 illustrates major events and issues concerning the Accord within the timeframe of our study.

Figure 7: Timeline of Accord Process



Source: own illustration

With its legally binding feature, the parity of representation of unions and corporations in the SC and the strong commitment to transparency the Accord may well be perceived as a next step in multi-stakeholder governance. Covering over 1800 garment factories in Bangladesh in which app. 2 million workers are employed (Accord, 2017) the Accord provides a commitment by the signing parties to implement a comprehensive fire and building safety program over a period of five years (2013-2018). This includes an independent fire, electrical and structural inspection program which is conducted by specialist engineers, a remediation program as well as a worker participation program. The Accord also entails a financial commitment by signatories to contribute funding (up to \$500,000 max. p.a.) and to continue ordering for a period of 2 years from Tier 1 and 2 factories, i.e. those factories covering 65% of a signatory's volume from Bangladesh (Accord, 2016). A complaints procedure and binding arbitration system was set up which entails that signatories may be pursued for e.g. the enforcement of fees in their respective national legal systems (Reinecke & Donaghey, 2015: 725). Signatory companies are assigned supplier factories in Bangladesh for which they are 'in the lead' meaning that they are in charge to follow up on and communicate progress of the factory regarding safety issues.

The Accord has a two-tier governance structure. A Steering Committee (SC) consisting of three representatives from trade unions and three signatory companies, as well as a neutral chairperson from the International Labour Organization (ILO) serves as the executive organ of the Accord. The Advisory Board (AB) on the other hand involves representatives of the government of Bangladesh, factory owners and representatives from Bangladeshi civil society organizations operating without decision making authority. Besides that, signatory companies regularly meet in company caucuses to discuss pertinent issues and to consult with the company representatives in the SC. Given the circumstances of its inception the Accord started with a turbulent initial phase in which its governance structure and processes for safety inspections had to be set up from scratch, requiring substantial coordination amongst signatories and the SC. With the completion of the first batch of factory inspections and the election of the second

SC, the Accord entered into a more ‘mature’ phase. Although the operational part of factory inspections became more routine in this phase, a number of critical issues such as the financing of tier 3 remediation or how to deal with arbitration cases surfaced that had to be worked out collectively by the Accord signatories (see figure 7).

The Accord has been characterized from an industrial relations perspective as “unique and novel” (Reinecke & Donaghey, 2015: 734) labour governance mechanism that represents a radical departure from established CSR initiatives by switching from industry self-regulation to a transnational co-determination approach (Donaghey & Reinecke). In this paper we analyse the Accord from a political CSR perspective suggesting that the Accord can be understood as next evolutionary step of multi-stakeholder governance (Scherer et al., 2016). Following Mena and Palazzo (2012) analytically the Accord clearly qualifies as MSI since companies, unions, the ILO as well as local representatives from the government, worker and industry associations jointly organize the inspection and remediation of Bangladeshi textile factories based on a negotiated set of rules and internal democratic governance procedures. This view is also reflected in our data since all companies referred to the Accord as an MSI in our interviews. Novel features of the Accord such as its legally binding nature, the important role of unions in its decision-making bodies and its emphasis on worker empowerment constitute substantial improvements in both input and output legitimacy.

By signing the Accord companies found themselves co-responsible for fire and building safety of garment factories in Bangladesh and thus were no longer the object, but subject of regulation and rule enforcement. Moreover, the participation of corporations in the MSI reflects an attempt to collaboratively regain and maintain their legitimacy in the eyes of their stakeholders. How corporations act and interact with other stakeholders in the Accord and how they discursively process and depict their respective Accord experience provides a fruitful ground to study processes of political identity construction. The Accord put companies into a

new role thus challenging their self-understanding regarding CSR. Hence, the Accord represents a critical case (Yin, 2013) for developing theory in the context of political CSR.

Data Collection

Data were collected over a period of half a year, between September 2015 and April 2016 from two main sources. Firstly, we conducted 24 semi-structured interviews with 29 persons involved with the Accord. Besides covering union representatives that were active within the Accord as well as external experts, we conducted interviews with 16 signatory companies ranging from small to medium sized companies and to large multinational corporations in the garment industry. We focussed our analysis on German signatory companies since they represent the largest group of signatories within the Accord and to keep the cultural context of our study constant. Of these 16 signatory companies, 8 were brands and 8 were importers that source garments from Bangladesh for large retailers. Two of the 29 interviewees were active SC members in the Accord, one as brand and the other as union representative. The transcription of 26h and 33 minutes in total of recorded material resulted in 522 pages of single spaced transcript providing a rich source of qualitative data. We conducted these interviews using an interview guide which we adapted to each interview situation (see Appendix A6).

Secondly, we analysed archival data including Accord documents such as the SC and AB Meeting Minutes, the Accord's twitter feed and other external types of documentation such as newspaper articles as well as corporate communication documents such as press releases and sustainability reports. With regards to the newspaper articles, we focused on large international media outlets and searched for articles that dealt with the Accord and specifically addressed the conduct of corporations in the Accord (for a more detailed list of data sources please refer to Appendix A8). These additional sources allowed us to gain a deeper understanding of the temporal sequence of events and the broader context, dominant themes and public perceptions against which interactions between the actors within the Accord emerged. To mitigate

retrospective bias, the analysis of the interviews as primary source of data was thus combined and triangulated with other sources of data (Miles & Huberman, 2008). Table 5 summarizes the different sources of data collected for this study.

Table 5: Overview of Collected Data

Type of Data	Description
Interviews	24 interviews with 29 persons (26:33 h of interview material, 522 pages of transcript); Interviewees: CSR managers, sourcing managers, trade unionists, Accord office project manager, staff of related institution (GIZ)
Archival Data	Accord Documents (SC Meeting Minutes, AB Meeting Minutes, Regulations, Reports, Twitter Feed), Media Coverage, Corporate documents (corporate reports and press releases)

Source: own table

Data Analysis

In the analysis of our collected data we employed a grounded theory oriented approach (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Gioia et al., 2013a). As we conducted all but one interview together, after each interview we discussed themes that had come up during the interviews as well as observations that caught our interest and took turns in writing short interview logs covering interesting points. From these initial discussions we realized that corporations displayed a self-understanding through their actions and argumentations within the Accord in two distinct, yet opposing ways: Some corporations exhibited an open posture in the Accord commending their interactions with Accord stakeholders and expressing a particularly positive attitude towards unions. Others however exhibited a rather defensive posture being very critical about the role of unions for the genesis of the Accord and portraying their interactions with unions and other

more active signatories as a tiresome and overly demanding process. Drawing on the literature on corporate (political) identity construction (Gioia et al., 2010; Schultz, 2012; Wilts, 2006), we ultimately termed these two distinct ways of companies developing a self-understanding of their political role in the Accord as constructing either a progressive or a conservative political CSR identity.

With these rough contours of themes in mind, after the transcription of the interviews, we entered into formalized coding, which proceeded in four steps. In a first step, we imported all data into the qualitative data analysis software MAXQDA which helped us to organize, develop and refine our emerging codes. We both openly coded a number of interviews, using descriptive as well as in-vivo codes, thereby identifying initial, first-order concepts (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). This open coding phase served to identify statements in the interviews describing processes that consciously or unconsciously emerged from the interaction with other participants in the Accord and arguments provided about how corporations understood their role in the initiative.

In a second step we discussed the open codes that we both had generated and entered into axial coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). We looked for relations and dissociations between the first-order codes we had identified, grouping them into more generic second order themes (Gioia et al., 2013a). This step involved identifying and comparing processes and strategies that were incited through the participation of governance actors in the MSI as well as singling out actions and arguments brought forward by corporations that served the construction of a particular PCSRI.

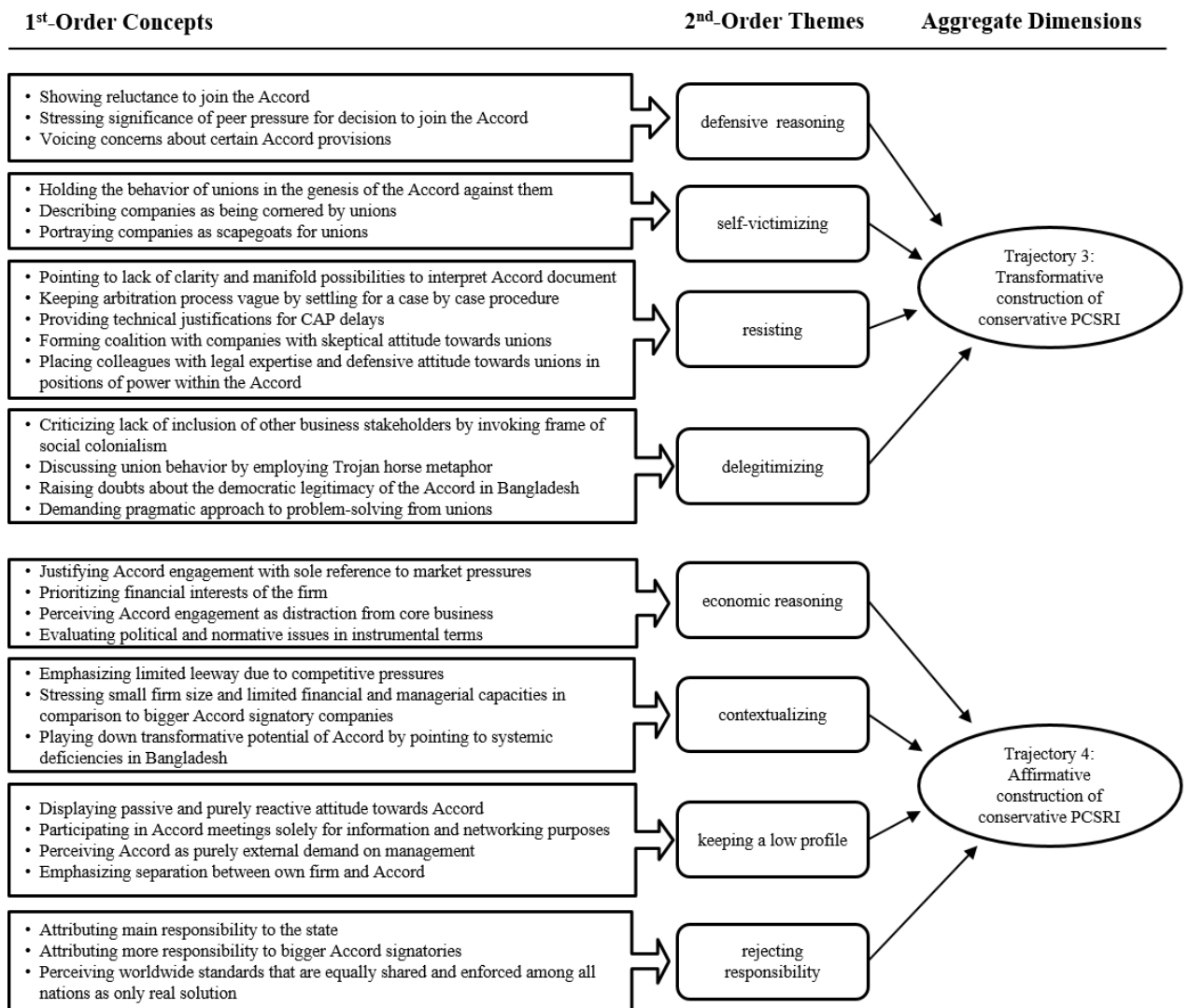
In a third step, in the spirit of the technique of constant comparison (Corbin & Strauss, 2015), we went back and forth between our emerging theory and data, constantly discussing occurring themes and analysing further interviews to compare identified patterns. In this process we also consulted the secondary sources of data and iteratively refined the second-order themes in light of new information. In particular the analysis of the Accord's SC and AB

meeting minutes as well as the Accord's Twitter Feed were helpful in reconstructing the temporal sequence of events (see figure 7). Through these comparisons, it iteratively became apparent that the identified two broad PCSRIs are associated with "specific, but not always intentional or conscious" (Joutsenvirta & Vaara, 2015: 744) ways of developing these identities. Consistent with existing theory we called these ways political strategies of identity construction (Joutsenvirta & Vaara, 2015; Schultz, 2012; Wright et al., 2012). We found that these political strategies are constituted by both the way firms tend to behave (Gioia et al., 2010; Wilts, 2006) and the way firms talk (Christensen et al., 2013; Haack et al., 2012) within the initiative.

In a fourth step we again discussed emerging theoretical relationships among the second order themes we had identified and aggregated them into more abstract dimensions that merged the existing codes into a coherent set of trajectories that characterized the process of how corporations constructed their PCSRIs within the initiative over time. We found that all corporations had entered the Accord with a specific mind-set and level of experience in dealing with different stakeholders. Yet, whereas for some of the corporations the participation in the Accord could be interpreted as affirmative experience in their construction of their political CSR identity, for others the Accord participation could be interpreted as a transformative experience which significantly altered and shaped the construction of their specific political CSR identity. The overall construction of a progressive versus conservative political CSR identity could be associated with both an affirmative and transformative process over the course of the Accord. We hence identified four distinct trajectories of identity construction. These trajectories related to either an *affirmative* or *transformative* construction of a *conservative PCSRI* or an *affirmative* or *transformative* construction of a *progressive PCSRI*, respectively. The data structure that resulted from this analysis is presented in figure 8 below. Appendix A9 shows the data structure in more detail.

Figure 8: Data Structure





Source: own illustration

Findings: constructing what it means to be a political actor in MSIs

In the following section we present our findings about political CSR identity construction in MSIs. First, we describe the two different political CSR identities that we identified in our data. Second, we explain how companies constructed these identities by revealing four different trajectories constituted by specific, yet interrelated political strategies that companies resorted to in the Accord over time. Third, we develop a framework for PCSRI construction in MSIs by integrating our findings into a comprehensive framework.

Progressive versus conservative political CSR identities (PCSRI)

Our data reveal that companies constructed their PCSRIs within the Accord along a continuum between two opposite poles which we labelled a conservative and a progressive PCSRI. These labels emerged from in vivo codes in our data. One particularly reflective CSR-manager succinctly characterized central components of what we identified as progressive PCSRI in the following quote:

This work to set something up globally is first and foremost political work and it is political because different stakeholder groups have different interests and that is ok. But the point is, these interests exist for several decades now and these interests have kept us from implementing a substantial upgrade in the industry so to speak. Therefore, in my view, conflict was necessary at this point to brake this up. And that is precisely what the Accord stands for in my opinion. (Company D, I5)

This quote shows an explicitly political self-understanding of Company D as proactive governance actor aiming at “a substantial upgrade” of industry standards through a collaborative approach involving multiple affected parties. From this perspective the Accord is portrayed as necessary brake-up of defensive corporate positions through conflict with unions and other civil society organizations. Companies with a progressive PCSRI expressed a positive attitude towards these actors by acknowledging the ultimately beneficial role of critical stakeholders such as unions or NGOs. In addition, progressive companies advocated a more holistic view of their supply chain responsibility by stressing the need to take a comprehensive and multidimensional perspective on global sustainability issues.

Key elements of the conservative PCSRI on the other hand are captured in the following statement about the Accord by a general manager:

I once again realized, that I dislike everything related to politics and that I much prefer approaching things from an operational standpoint. But many things simply are politics and that's usually not very useful. (Company K, I13)

In contrast to the progressive CSR-manager cited above the political nature of the Accord is not commended but rather disapproved of by this company. Instead, an “operational standpoint” and “usefulness” are highlighted as more important factors for multi-stakeholder governance. In this vein, conservative companies advocated a primarily economic perspective on their supply chain responsibility by aiming for solutions of the Accord with minimal impact on their cost structures and internal processes. Rather than discussing the need for an industry upgrade companies with a conservative PCSRI emphasized the limits of their engagement in the Accord by stressing their limited financial and organizational resources as well as by attributing the main responsibility to uphold fire and building safety standards to the state of Bangladesh. Furthermore, conservative companies expressed a reactive rather than proactive attitude towards future CSR challenges and asserted a negative attitude towards the involvement of unions or other NGOs in the Accord. Conflict with unions is not perceived as “necessary evil” but rather seen as detrimental to the Accords’ cause since union demands are perceived as excessive, largely destructive and ultimately paralyzing for the implementation of the Accord.

Hence, our data show that companies developed either a rather progressive or a rather conservative PCSRI within the Accord. Since we wanted to understand not only which PCSRIs companies develop but more importantly how these identities come about in the first place we engaged in a deeper analysis of our data to uncover the underlying processes of PCSRI construction in MSIs. Our analysis reveals that companies constructed their PCSRIs through enacting several political strategies along four different trajectories within the Accord over time.

Trajectory 1: Affirmative construction of progressive PCSRI

From our analysis of the interviews as well as the secondary data it became apparent that some companies entered the Accord already with a strong progressive orientation. Company D, for example, had already in 2006 committed itself publicly to make its business “100% sustainable”

and has ever since gained a reputation as sustainability leader within the industry among both the general public and more critical NGOs. Company D was already actively involved in the early stages of the Pre-Accord phase where several unions and the CCC approached the company to draft an MoU which later became the Accord. The deep involvement with the Accord of Company D is captured by the following reconstruction of the companies' rationale to join the Accord:

We have discussed the subject matter very much internally, and then we decided to do it because the logic behind it, i.e. independent inspections, but also the whole aspect of the integration of unions, making sure, that employees ultimately have a grievance mechanism and have the support from the outside, that they ultimately are able to defend themselves in an emergency. So that were for us the aspects, where we said, okay, everything has to work together and that is why that made sense for us. And with this decision, we went into the negotiation process with the Clean Clothes [Campaign], where we discussed different points again with them. But in my view, this was relatively relaxed. (Company D, I5)

Stressing in detail the advantages of the “logic” of the Accord with a particular focus on improving the situation of factory workers shows that Company D justified their engagement with the Accord by referring to the ethical benefits the Accord provides for workers in Bangladesh. In addition, describing their interactions with the CCC as “relaxed” emphasizes the degree of consensus between these actors in the Pre-Accord phase. Furthermore, companies with a progressive orientation expressed a strong commitment to the normative cause of the Accord and stressed their responsibility to uphold universal norms in the weak governance context of Bangladesh. We subsumed these first order concepts under the second order theme of *ethical reasoning* since these statements reflect a rationale behind the decision to engage with the Accord dominated by ethical and normative considerations. Entering the Accord with this ethical rationale provided the background for companies to enact a political strategy which we called *engaging*. This strategy entails several actions that certain companies took that reflect an active posture within the Accord. Company D for example collaborated with unions and the CCC way before the Rana Plaza incident because they anticipated the CSR challenge in Bangladesh and realized the need for a multi-stakeholder approach to this particular problem.

Hence, Company D approached competitors and civil society organizations to find common solutions and co-negotiated the draft framework for the Accord with unions and the CCC. Therefore, Company D related to these actors on the basis of mutual trust, which is reflected not only in their interactions with unions and NGOs in the Accord but also in the initiative “ACT” that Company D initiated together with several competitors, unions and NGOs in 2014 to address the issue of living wages in its supply chain (ACT, 2017). Enacting the political strategy of engaging also entails participating actively in the Accord to advance its agenda. Company D for example provided a member for the first SC of the Accord in order to assist the initial set up of inspection procedures and governance structures in the early phase of the Accord. Another company in turn stressed the need to contribute actively to the Accord in order to achieve improvements for their own internal processes as well as for their suppliers and the other signatories by e.g. taking the factory lead brand role very seriously. In addition, these companies related to their suppliers as long term partners on an equal footing by stressing frequent personal visits at supplier factories in Bangladesh and by characterizing their relationship as close or “more similar to friendship than to a conventional client-producer relationship” (Company B, I2).

Intriguingly, companies within trajectory 1 constructed their PCSRI not only by relating positively to other governance actors such as like-minded companies or unions but also by creating distance between them and other signatory companies - a political strategy that we labeled *distancing*. Company D for example portrayed itself as change-agent for higher CSR standards in the industry that follows an innovative approach in comparison to other companies. A CSR manager from Company D further elaborated on this innovative approach by emphasizing the importance of the equal representation of unions in the Accord which they “never had a problem with”. Instead, this CSR manager describes companies that have a problem with the involvement of unions in the following way:

And then there is this other group of companies, which - how can I say this – maybe did not get so close to the union people, where there is no significant dialogue and, from my point of view, which are very much driven by the bad myths about all the things that happen there and ultimately live in a mind-set stating that you cannot cooperate with unions or that unions are dangerous (Company D, I5)

By relating to Accord signatory companies with a skeptical attitude towards unions as “the other group” that is “driven by bad myths” due to a lack of concrete interactions with union representatives this manager describes these companies as prejudiced while at the same time positioning her own company at an advanced level. In addition, companies in trajectory 1 distanced themselves from other Accord signatories by criticizing these companies for “signing but not really engaging with the Accord” (Company B, I2) as well as for failing to take their supply chain responsibility seriously. Interestingly, our data reveal that while companies on trajectory 1 were eager to stress their own innovativeness in comparison to others they also engaged in a complementary strategy when describing their own CSR approach. Company D for example describes its collaborative approach to problem-solving as “part of the 101 of sustainability management” (I4) and states:

I would say, this is simply good management practice, to simply say, if I have a problem, and if I have identified an issue, that you think about whether you can solve it alone, or not. If I cannot solve it alone, I look out for partners, and then I particularly look for those partners, that represent different societal interests, since they bring different know-how to the table, which is necessary because the problems are so complex. (Company D, I4)

By describing its own CSR approach as part of the “101” as well as of “simply good management” this manager plays down the peculiarity of the companies’ CSR policy by portraying it as natural and logical approach to pursue. In addition, companies on trajectory 1 display modesty by asserting the preference for walking rather than talking CSR. We called this strategy *understating* since companies played down the exceptionalism of their advanced CSR policies in order to reinforce their progressive understanding of their political role within MSIs. By stressing the naturalness of their progressive PCSRI these companies reaffirm their progressiveness since they portray their identity as having become a kind of second nature.

Trajectory 2: Transformative construction of progressive PCSRI

Our data reveal a second trajectory along which companies constructed a progressive PCSRI. In contrast to trajectory 1, companies underwent a transformation from a rather conservative to a more progressive PCSRI by enacting a different set of political strategies to construct their PCSRI in the Accord over time. Rather than entering the Pre-Accord phase with a progressive orientation, these companies joined the Accord with a more conservative orientation. Company J for example recalls its decision to join the Accord in the following way:

the reason why we joined the Accord is because we are convinced that everyone can and must, within his or her limits, contribute to a socially responsible supply chain. Frankly speaking, from an economic point of view the Accord only produces costs and brings no returns, but nevertheless we have wholeheartedly decided to join the Accord. [...] One wants to earn money, that's only natural, [...] but that does not mean that one is not aware of one's responsibility. [...] So in this respect, [...] it was certainly a point where we then said it is great that this initiative exists and then quickly got on board. (Company J, I12)

This CSR manager describes the decision to join the Accord as being torn between ethical and economic considerations. His company joined the Accord despite the costs which nevertheless played an important role in the internal deliberations leading up to the decision to join. Furthermore, Company J justified its Accord participation by pointing to the fact that “90% of our production volume takes place in Bangladesh” (I12). Thus, this company evaluated its responsibility to join the Accord also in relation to its order volume in Bangladesh. In addition, the CSR manager of Company J stressed the strong personal impact of Rana Plaza as important reason to join the Accord by emphasizing the “terrifying” nature of the factory collapse. We subsumed these first order concepts under the second order theme *tentative reasoning* since these statements reflect a rationale behind the decision to join the Accord torn between ethical and economic considerations.

Joining the Accord with this tentative rationale provided the starting point for the progressive transformation that companies experienced along trajectory 2. After joining the Accord these companies started to take substantial measures by creating new positions, policies

and processes dedicated to the full implementation of the Accord within their companies as aptly described by a CSR manager in the following quote:

I mean it is only through the Accord, that we have people now who intensively engage with the whole subject matter. It took a while, one had to first acquire the knowledge, in order to be able to process this internally, but we then also adapted our sourcing guidelines [...] that you have to take into consideration permanently not only quality or price aspects but also working conditions on the ground, and I would say, working conditions have actually become a third pillar besides quality and price. One also scrutinizes how something is produced. This passed on all the way to us here in Germany. (Company A, I1)

This statement clearly reflects the substantial impact the Accord participation had on the internal processes of that company by hiring “new people”, adapting sourcing guidelines and by elevating working conditions to the same level of significance as “quality and price”. Moreover, these companies engaged in debates with their suppliers in order to enforce the Accord provisions. One CSR manager explained his efforts to convince his suppliers to invest in fire and building safety measures in the following way:

why is it important that your employees do well? It is important because you profit from it if your employees have a low disease level, and if your people do not cut their fingers with their scissors all the time, then they are not absent from work. If they are not absent, you will have a higher capacity output, and if you have a higher capacity output, [...] you do not have to pay a concessional penalty once you cannot meet the delivery deadline. (Company J, I12)

Instead of resorting to pure commercial pressure this CSR manager tried to provide his supplier with a rationale for implementing the Accord based on a win-win logic. Accordingly, workers, factory owners and importers are better off in the longer run if factory safety and working conditions are improved. In addition, companies emphasized being animated by their experiences within the Accord to further scrutinize their own supply chains by stressing the need to look “at the whole package” on the ground and not only on selected issues. Several companies continued in this vein by highlighting the need to set up similar initiatives in other countries. Since all of the aforementioned actions signal serious and substantial efforts by

companies to implement the Accord we subsumed these actions under a political strategy which we called *internalizing*.

Having engaged in several measures to implement the Accord these companies then started to develop a positive stance towards the Accord - a strategy that we subsumed under the label *approving*. Hence, as these companies started to see the first safety improvements in factories they praised the positive outcomes of the Accord. Furthermore, these companies portrayed the governance structure of the Accord in a positive light and commended the collaboration with other Accord signatory companies. In addition, controversies between businesses and unions within the Accord are described as only initial difficulties that are largely attributed to the chaotic circumstances in the early phase of the Accord. The situation within the mature phase of the Accord is instead characterized as “calmed down” with several stakeholders “being simply thankful that the Accord exists” (Company J, I12). Interestingly, our data reveal that companies on trajectory 2 also enacted a strategy that served to reinforce their newly constructed progressive PCSRI. A CSR manager of Company A for example noted:

In all my years [visiting suppliers] abroad, I have never noticed what possibilities are out there - somehow you have simply accepted the conditions as they are. [...] When I started, I had more of this, let's say, strictly numerical orientation, to somewhere make the most favourable business deals. However, through this role one learns, of course, also how business relations can go much easier, if you can create a Win-Win-situations and so to say take care a bit of the local surroundings. (Company A, I1)

In this quote the Accord is described as an eye-opening event leading to a fundamental change of perspective that makes prior practices seem one-dimensional and outdated. Another CSR manager from a different company called the Accord enthusiastically “an unprecedented big thing” which he would have considered impossible only a few years ago causing “goose bumps” (Company J, I12). Hence, this manager portrayed the Accord and his company's engagement as pioneering. Moreover, several companies stressed experiencing deep satisfaction and motivation in overseeing progress in supplier factories. In addition, these companies

emphasized the need for idealism and compassion to fulfill their role in the Accord as illustrated by the following quote:

It is a role, I think, where one must also bring a certain idealism to the table and actually one cannot handle this only rationally, but one needs a certain feeling, so to say, in order to be able to fully stand behind it and to be successful. (Company A, I1)

Since all these arguments served to elevate the CSR efforts of these companies within the Accord to a higher level expressing the firms' CSR exceptionalism we called this political strategy *self-heroizing*. Hence, other than companies along trajectory 1 who engaged in understating to play down their CSR approach companies within trajectory 2 stabilized and strengthened their newly constructed progressive PCSRI by engaging in self-heroizing.

Trajectory 3: Transformative construction of conservative PCSRI

Our data analysis shows another transformative trajectory along which companies constructed a conservative PCSRI after entering the Accord with a more progressive orientation. Company G for example is a big brand with a long retail tradition in Germany that built a good CSR reputation among its stakeholders and the general public over the last decades mainly driven by the strong values of its founder. Against this background Company G enacted what we called *defensive reasoning* in the Pre-Accord phase. This political strategy consists in enacting a defensive rationale when contemplating the decision to join the Accord. A CSR manager of Company G described the reluctance to join the Accord by emphasizing the very low recognition of the MoU among "the business world" as well as by characterizing the Accord draft document as "extremely union friendly" (I8). Company G participated in several meetings in the Pre-Accord phase in order to voice its concerns about certain Accord provisions in order to make the initiative more business friendly. The final decision to join the Accord despite these concerns is explained by the CSR-manager in the following way:

And that resulted in the fact that on Monday morning, so before the end of the deadline, the first [companies] started to announce, we are going to sign this thing as it is now. And so the story was over for everyone else. This exhausted the room for negotiation. If one [company] signs, we do not need to negotiate again, whether to change the article 22 or 23. (Company G, I8)

Here the CSR manager explains the company's signature of the Accord with peer pressure that was created after the signature of the largest brand by order volume in Bangladesh "exhausted" the room for negotiation that company o still wanted to use to its advantage. Hence, companies on trajectory 3 joined the Accord reluctantly feeling that several concerns about its governance structure and the role of unions have not been adequately addressed. In particular, several companies held the behavior of unions in the final negotiations leading to the Accord against them as illustrated by the following quote:

And we had a deadline, which was on a Monday evening, until when we should collect feedback and over the weekend it happened that the unions targeted two or three companies [...] That is, the unity among businesses which had existed up until then, was broken up in a very targeted manner by putting individual businesses under massive pressure. (Company G, I8)

This quote shows that companies on trajectory 3 felt treated unfairly by unions which in their view breached an agreement to continue the negotiations by strategically "singling out" several companies to exert "massive pressure" on them to sign the Accord without further changes. This perception of feeling forced into an initiative due to unfair negotiation tactics by unions shaped the trajectory along which these companies constructed their PCSRI in the Accord in a fundamental way. Hence, our data indicate that this mood represented the starting point for the conservative transformation of companies on trajectory 3. These companies felt cornered by unions as described by this CSR manager:

But, of course, right from the start this led to businesses feeling somehow pushed into a corner and declared open season on [...]. And that actually runs through, in a way, through the whole thing. So, in my opinion, this is not a good condition to pursue common goals. (Company G, I8)

In addition, companies portrayed themselves as being scapegoated by unions which in their view constantly blamed companies for profiting from human rights abuses instead of treating them as partners on equal terms. Since all of these first order codes served to portray companies as the victim of unfair treatment by unions within the Accord we called this political strategy *self-victimizing*. Understanding themselves as victims of unfair union behavior fueled the enactment of a political strategy which we called *resisting*. Through resisting companies took actions geared towards counterbalancing the perceived dominance of unions in the Accord. Several companies for example insisted right from the start that the Accord document contains several ambiguities which enable manifold possibilities of interpretation. The question of which responsibilities signatory companies have for factories within the lower tiers of their supply chains represents one example from the early stages of the Accord. In addition, several companies were successful in keeping the arbitration procedure of the Accord vague by settling with unions after intense debates on a case by case procedure. After the first round of factory inspections was completed and unions started to criticize companies for an increasing number of remediation delays these companies responded by providing technical justifications that blamed a lack of coordination between several complex engineering procedures for these delays. The most emblematic expression of this political strategy in our data however consists in the circumstances of the second SC election of the Accord. As the election of the second SC was approaching, several companies with a skeptical attitude towards unions formed a coalition through several informal interactions at caucus meetings in order to coordinate the election of a stronger, more business friendly representative to the SC. Company G that provided the representative who was ultimately elected described this operation rather bluntly:

Of course, we also put [this person] in the Steering Committee for political reasons because, in the first year, there were CR Representatives, who had represented the brand side in the Steering Committee. But they found themselves confronted by a team of professional lawyers. [...] This is why we decided, at that time, we also need more lawyers or people with a legal background in the Steering Committee, so that it can be averted, that every discussion turns legal at some point. So and that was one of the reasons and of course it is always more comfortable when you are in the driver's seat instead of being driven. (Company G, I8)

By placing a colleague with legal expertise and a more defensive attitude towards unions in a position of power within the Accord this company explicitly emphasizes their intention to resist unions by getting “into the driver seat” themselves. This election resulted in a more hostile atmosphere in the SC as several union representatives confirmed in our interviews.

After taking several actions to resist unions in the Accord companies on trajectory 3 started to voice several criticisms of the Accord. Several companies raised doubts about the democratic legitimacy of the Accord in Bangladesh by emphasizing the right to self-determination of citizens and elected representatives of Bangladesh. In addition, companies criticized the missing inclusion of other business stakeholders such as factory owners and their industry associations by invoking the strong frame of “social colonialism” as illustrated by the following quote:

[...] because we have to be careful, I believe, not to engage in social colonialism, because this is what it is after all. I say, ‘your opinion is of no interest to me, because I know what is right and this is why I am pushing through with this, and I do not even take you into the steering bodies that decide what I can force through in your country because we in the western hemisphere know exactly what is good for you. (Company G, I9)

The term social colonialism bears extremely negative connotations and is deliberately used to rhetorically enforce the criticism that certain business stakeholders have been left out of the Accord. Unions on the other hand are criticized by using another strong rhetorical instrument: the metaphor of the trojan horse. By describing the Accord as “some sort of trojan horse” (Company O, I17) for promoting union interests in Bangladesh both the Accord and unions are discredited as essentially insidious undertakings. Furthermore, unions are criticized for their unrealistic and excessive demands that leave business no choice other than raising “the voice of reason” by calling on unions “to get a little pragmatic here and focus on the issues” (Company G, I9). Since all of these criticisms aimed at the delegitimation of the Accord we called this political strategy *delegitimizing*. Through engaging in delegitimizing companies on trajectory

3 stabilized their newly constructed conservative PCSRI by embedding their identity into a broader rationale for their conservative stance within the Accord and beyond. By stressing democratic deficits of the Accord and by criticizing unions for their lack of pragmatism these companies reinforced key tenets of the conservative PCSRI as outlined above.

Trajectory 4: Affirmative construction of conservative PCSRI

Finally, our data reveal a fourth trajectory along which companies constructed a conservative PCSRI. Conversely to trajectory 1, companies that we identified to move along trajectory 4 entered this trajectory with a conservative orientation which set the stage for the construction of an even more pronounced and substantiated conservative PCSRI within the Accord over time. These companies justified their decision to join the Accord with the sole reference to market pressures exerted by either the general public or important customers, as many of the companies on this trajectory were importers for large retailers. Furthermore, these companies reflected on their Accord participation with a mind-set that prioritized the financial interests of the firm as clearly illustrated by the following quote:

I have to tell you honestly, our first priority is to take care of our business. That's the most important thing. We have to get orders first. This is the most difficult aspect of all. Once we have them, we try to handle them on time. And then, of course, we try to make the factories better. But if the factory does not cooperate, what are we to do about that? [...] We cannot save the world that is not our approach. (Company H, I10)

For this general manager improving working conditions in supplier factories unambiguously plays a minor role, not only because he considers getting and processing orders from customers as more important but also because he perceives his influence on factory safety as very limited. In this vein, companies on trajectory 4 perceived the Accord as a distraction from their core business which “forces” suppliers to implement excessive demands and keeps businesses from “focusing on the things that really matter” (Company N, I16). We subsumed these first order

concepts under the second order theme *economic reasoning* since these companies resorted to an economic rationale when contemplating to join the Accord.

We identified another political strategy in our data which is closely related to economic reasoning. Several companies emphasized their own limitations regarding their engagement with the Accord by pointing to strong competitive pressures as well as by stressing their smaller firm size and their limited financial and managerial capacities in comparison to bigger Accord signatory companies. In addition, these companies played down the transformative potential of the Accord by pointing to the systemic deficiencies in Bangladesh. One general manager for example noted:

‘Money has to go into my pocket’, that is the purpose of politics in Bangladesh. And how am I to make it clear to a factory owner that you have to stick to the rules and laws when everyone else breaks them. This just makes no sense. (Company H, I10)

By displaying this kind of fatalism regarding the enforceability of rules in Bangladesh this manager significantly diminishes the degree of change that seems achievable by initiatives such as the Accord. Accordingly, his own Accord engagement seems less important and it becomes easier to remain passive within the Accord. Since in all of the statements above companies used context to minimize their own role within the Accord we called this political strategy *contextualizing*. Taken together economic reasoning and contextualizing shaped the PCSRI of companies on trajectory 4 in the Pre-Accord phase.

After the Accord became operational these companies displayed a passive and purely reactive attitude towards Accord processes. One CSR manager for example described the behavior of his company in the Accord in the following way:

We are more or less reserved I would say. We are [...] never really in the focus of anything, cause we are a family-owned company and are in [the middle of nowhere, somewhere in Germany], and therefore we kind of are under the radar, and this is also how we were acting in the ACCORD. We are not the ones who are pushing to work harder together with unions, we are just wanting our factory to be inspected, we don't want something happening like Rana Plaza again and we think that the ACCORD is also a really good tool to push these goals, but we are not really actively involved in any working groups or any big discussions with other brands. (Company P, I18)

This manager characterizes Company P's behavior in the Accord as staying "under the radar" which entails staying passively focused on factory inspections by avoiding being drawn into discussions with unions and other brands as well as by avoiding to participate in working groups. Several companies explained their participation at Accord meetings and company caucuses by stressing their intention to stay informed about current and future developments within the industry rather than by being motivated to actively participate in the Accords' governance. Furthermore, these companies did not really see themselves as part of an initiative since they perceived the Accord as purely external demand on management which is completely separated from their own firm. One general manager for example when asked about how he evaluates the semi-governmental role of the Accord in Bangladesh responded by stating: "The Accord has this role, not me" (Company K, I13). Since all of these actions were geared towards staying as little engaged in the Accord as possible we subsumed these actions under a political strategy which we called *keeping a low profile*.

Our data analysis shows one final political strategy that companies used to construct their conservative PCSRI along trajectory 4. This strategy consists in companies attributing the main responsibility for improving factory safety to other actors. Many companies saw the state of Bangladesh as bearing the main responsibility by describing the Accord as "auxiliary structure" for the state as well as by portraying law enforcement as "core task" (Company H, I10) of the state. In addition, based on the conviction that "big players have more power to implement things" (Company N, I16) companies attributed more responsibility to bigger signatory companies. Moreover, companies adopted a global perspective when discussing their responsibility to improve working conditions in supplier factories. One CSR manager for example noted:

I mean, there have been many cases where a factory in Bangladesh said: 'I do not work with Europe, it's too complicated for me, I rather prefer my Chinese customer who doesn't care so much'. And consequently, it does not bring us very far. So, if we could somehow find a standard, that has a worldwide reach and has all act in concert somehow. (Company N, I16)

By portraying world-wide standards that are equally shared and enforced among all nations as only real solution this manager attributes the main burden of responsibility to the international community. Since all these first order codes were used to reallocate responsibility to other actors we called this political strategy *rejecting responsibility*. Through rejecting responsibility companies on trajectory 4 further strengthened their conservative PCSRI by providing reasons that back their conservative stance within the Accord and beyond. By emphasizing the responsibility of other actors they diminish the importance of their own role in the Accord.

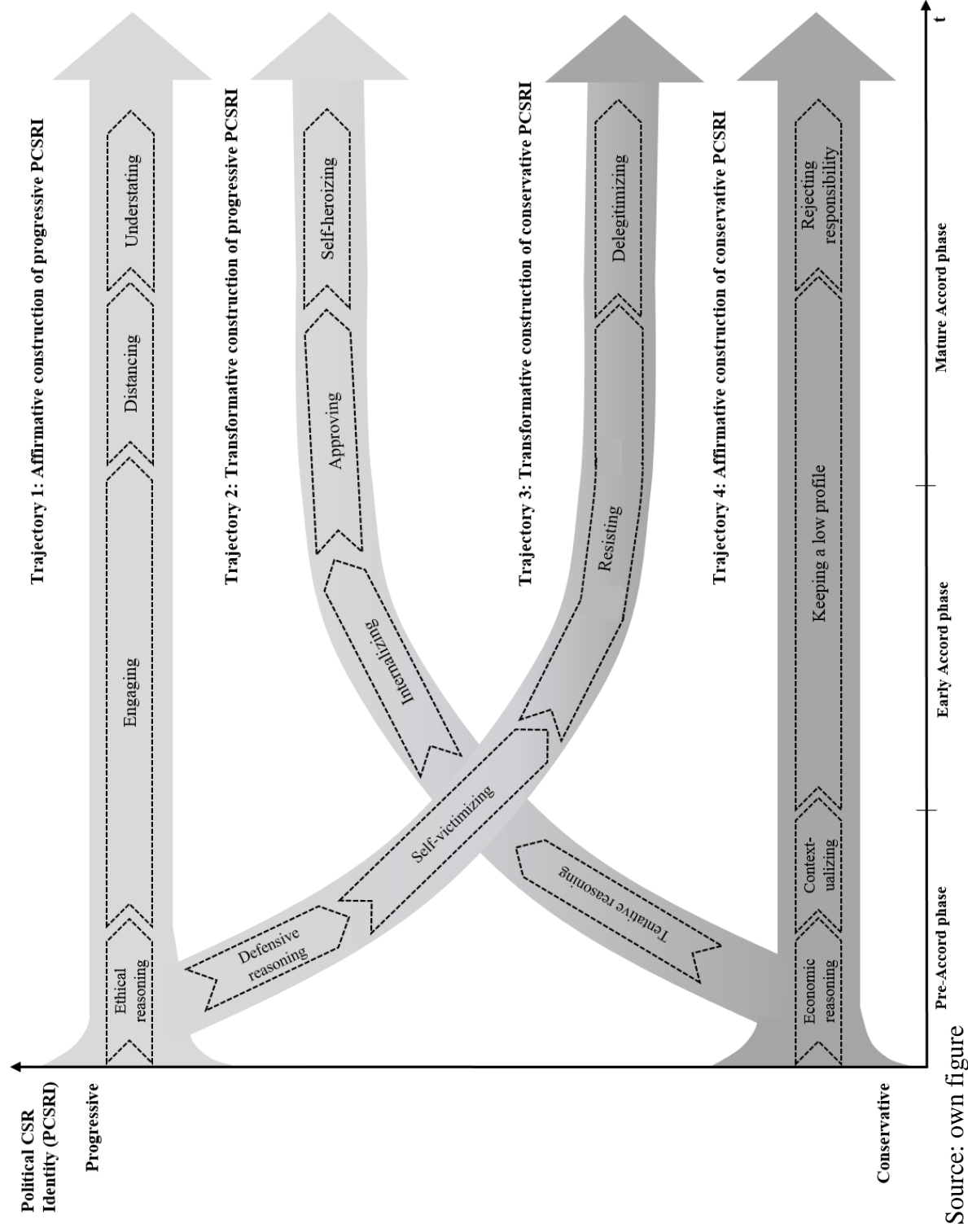
How companies construct political CSR identities in MSIs

In this study we aimed at understanding how companies construct their political CSR identities in MSIs. Our data show that companies constructed their PCSRIs along four different trajectories that consist of distinct political strategies enacted by companies within the Accord over time. We find that the PCSRIs that companies construct along these trajectories are situated on a continuum between conservative and progressive PCSRIs. Our data also indicate that PCSRI construction in MSIs is a dynamic process involving both affirmative and transformative trajectories to construct either a progressive or conservative PCSRI. We were struck how each of these trajectories required the enactment of specific political strategies by companies involving manifold interactions with other Accord stakeholders.

We found that a progressive PCSRI is constructed over time either through the affirmation of an already existing progressive orientation (Trajectory 1) or through a transformation of a previously conservative orientation towards a more progressive identity (Trajectory 2). Companies on trajectory 1 enacted the political strategies of *ethical reasoning*, *engaging* actively with the policies and practices of the Accord, *distancing* themselves from other corporations with a less progressive identity and *understating* their efforts to construct their progressive PCSRI while companies on trajectory 2 resorted to a different set of political strategies. These strategies included *tentative reasoning* about the economic costs associated

with participating in the initiative versus the moral obligations to prevent deaths within the own supply chain, *internalizing* the Accords' provisions, *approving* of the exchange and learning with different stakeholders as well as *self-heroizing*. The conservative PCSRI on the other hand is constructed either through a conservative transformation of a previously progressive orientation (Trajectory 3) or through the affirmation of an already existing conservative orientation (Trajectory 4). Companies on trajectory 3 enacted the political strategies of *defensive reasoning*, *self-victimizing*, *resisting* and *delegitimizing* to construct their conservative PCSRI while companies on trajectory 4 used the political strategies of *economic reasoning*, *contextualizing*, *keeping a low profile* and *rejecting responsibility*. Figure 9 provides a schematic representation of these trajectories and political strategies. On the abscissa we depict the three main phases that the Accord went through over time while on the ordinate we indicate the PCSRI continuum ranging from conservative to progressive. We illustrate how the progressive and conservative PCSRI are constructed within the Accord over time through four distinct trajectories and their associated political strategies.

Figure 9: Trajectories of Political CSR Identity Construction in Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives – A Framework



Progressive Political CSR Identity:

Companies understand themselves as co-responsible governance actors that proactively seek long term solutions to global CSR challenges along their supply chains through collaborating with multiple affected parties such as civil society organizations, competitors or government agencies.

Conservative Political CSR Identity:

Companies understand themselves as primarily economic actors that perceive engaging with affected parties of global CSR challenges along their supply chains as exceeding both their core business responsibilities and their financial as well as managerial capacities.

Source: own figure

While each company of our sample is associated with a specific trajectory (see Appendix A7), we note some variation in our data since some companies followed the trajectory closer than others. Moreover, while we present the associated political strategies in a discrete and sequential manner, we note the stylized nature of our second order codes and varying degrees of overlap between these codes in our data. As pointed out by several scholars, researching processes requires ensuring “that descriptive detail does not obscure analytical insights” (Eberlein, Abbott, Black, Meidinger, & Wood, 2014: 11). What we seek to highlight with our framework are the variety of ways in which companies constructed their PCSRI within the Accord over time and to stress both the converging as well as diverging nature of our identified PCSRI construction trajectories.

As far as more formal characteristics such as type and size of companies on our identified trajectories are concerned, our findings indicate that each trajectory contains companies with business models aiming at both business-to-consumer (brands) and business-to-business markets (importers and company B). While companies on trajectory 3 are predominantly larger in size we find that on trajectory 4 smaller sized companies prevail. Trajectories 1 and 2 in turn consist of large and medium sized companies (see Appendix A7). While we note that a deeper investigation of possible determinants for companies taking specific trajectories reaches beyond the methodological scope of our study, our data suggest that neither firm size nor business model seem to be clear indicators for how corporations construct their political identities. We proceed by discussing the contributions of our paper to advance theory before concluding by elaborating on the implications of our paper for the Accord and other MSIs.

Discussion and Conclusion

Our study contributes to the political CSR and corporate political identity construction literature by substantiating the so far rather implicit notion of a political CSR identity that corporations construct in MSIs. Our findings provide a political perspective on corporate identity construction (Gioia et al., 2010; Schultz, 2012) that extends Wilts (2006) strategic take on the notion of corporate political identity with an explicit reference to CSR. We conceptualize the construct of PCSRI as a corporation's self-understanding as an actor that seeks to enact its CSR policies through political means. This paper unpacks corporations as participant group in MSIs by elucidating the different trajectories along which companies construct their PCSRIs thus providing a more nuanced perspective on corporate political engagement in MSIs.

Our findings show that the political engagement of corporations varies considerably. While progressive companies drive the Accords agenda through either *engaging* or *internalizing* conservative companies seek to impose limits on the Accord by enacting either *keeping a low profile* or *rejecting*. These findings resonate with recent research suggesting that Scherer and Palazzo's notion of political CSR is operationalized by companies in different stages ranging from defensive and compliance oriented to more democratically spirited PCSR approaches (Wickert, 2014). We show that corporations construct their PCSRIs within a continuum ranging from conservative to progressive by enacting specific political strategies. The conservative PCSRI mirrors central elements of what Scherer and Palazzo (2011) call "instrumental CSR" which is characterized by a dominantly economic rationality implying a reactive and shareholder oriented mode of stakeholder engagement as well as the allocation of the main regulatory responsibility to the state. Moreover, the conservative PCSRI reflects many of the criticisms advanced against the democratic PCSR approach in the literature (Banerjee, 2007; Edward & Willmott, 2013; Fooks et al., 2013; Moog et al., 2015). The progressive PCSRI on the other hand reflects key components of said democratic PCSR approach such as a

“domesticated” economic rationality through proactive and democratic stakeholder engagement oriented towards solving global governance problems (Scherer & Palazzo, 2011).

Moreover, our paper contributes to the controversy between optimistic and critical perspectives on corporations’ political role in MSIs by extending the recently proposed integrative view on political CSR (Levy et al., 2015). We show that PCSRI-construction in MSIs is a complex and multidirectional political process involving the enactment of specific political strategies by corporations. Several strategies that companies enacted to construct a progressive PCSRI along trajectories 1 and 2 resonate with arguments put forward by political CSR optimists. Political strategies like *ethical reasoning* or *engaging* on trajectory 1 for example show that some companies indeed take on the role of proactive democratic governance actors that seek solutions for global governance problems by deliberating with affected stakeholders (Scherer & Palazzo, 2011). The already progressive orientation of these companies in the Pre-Accord phase is affirmed and strengthened through their engagement in the initiative over time showing that talking democratic political CSR can indeed have performative effects (Christensen et al., 2013; Haack et al., 2012; Wickert et al., 2016). Particularly political strategies such as internalizing and approving on trajectory 2 show that deliberative interactions of stakeholders in MSIs can serve as ‘schools of democracy’ (Fung, 2003) for corporations in which they learn to collectively solve problems and that these interactions can serve to argumentatively “self-entrap” (Risse, 1999) corporations leading to a normative spiral in which corporations increasingly commit themselves to principles of human rights. Companies on trajectory 2 developed for example a more holistic perspective on their supply chain responsibilities and stressed their positive attitude towards critical stakeholders. Through deliberations in the Accord these corporations gained new knowledge, learned representation, negotiation and compromise (Fung, 2003; Warren, 2001).

Furthermore, these companies took substantial measures to implement the Accord by changing internal policies and practices despite entering the initiative with a more conservative

orientation. This transformation again underlines the performative effects that can be caused by a company's formal commitment to MSI policies. The progressive political strategies enacted by companies on trajectories 1 and 2 are also reflected in several positive outcomes of the Accord. Since its inception four years ago the Accord not only led to a substantial progressive transformation of some signatory companies' PCSR practices and identities but the Accord also achieved significant improvements of fire and building safety with over 465 factories having completed more than 90% of remediation (Accord, 2017). Several progressive companies already reaffirmed their commitment to the Accord beyond 2018 acknowledging that the remaining timeframe is not sufficient to fully implement remediation plans as well as to install worker safety committees in all factories (IndustriAll global union, 2017). The new agreement contains several improvements like remunerations for workers whose factories are closed or relocated due to safety concerns. In addition, some progressive companies started a new initiative together with trade unions called "ACT" which aims at implementing living wages in textile supply chains (ACT, 2017).

However, the political strategies that companies enacted to construct a conservative PCSRI on trajectories 3 and 4 reinforce the critical perspective on corporate political engagement in MSIs. Political strategies such as *economic reasoning* and *rejecting responsibility* mirror the view that companies approach CSR initiatives from a mainly instrumental perspective focussing on financial rather than ethical aspects of multi-stakeholder governance (Fleming & Jones, 2013; Shamir, 2010). Conservative political strategies like defensive reasoning and resisting in turn relate to criticisms that companies use CSR initiatives to advance their economic rather than the public interest (Banerjee, 2007; Fooks et al., 2013). Particularly the conservative transformation of some companies' PCSRI within the Accord over time suggests that constructs like argumentative self-entrapment and performativity of CSR talk should be conceptualized as bi- rather than unidirectional constructs implying that companies can be discursively entrenched as well as 'disentrenched'. While some companies construct a

more progressive PCSRI others enter the initiative with a progressive identity orientation that is transformed into a conservative PCSRI over time. As much as talking CSR can open up a pathway to deeper political ‘responsibilization’ (Schrempf-Stirling & Palazzo, 2016) it can also trigger a dynamic that minimizes the political role of companies in and through MSIs. Therefore, being part of an MSI and formally committing oneself to its CSR provisions does not imply that a company’s political CSR identity and practices automatically converge towards democratic ideals. This resonates with Christensen and Cheney (2011: 501) who argue that CSR communication is no guarantee for desired outcomes.

On the contrary, conservative political strategies like resisting and keeping a low profile complicated the effective implementation of the Accord contributing to several negative outcomes such as the relatively slow pace of implementation regarding both remediation and worker safety committee installations in Bangladeshi supplier factories. After four years since the Accord’s inception the majority of the over 1800 factories have still not completed remediation and the safety committees have only been installed in about 300 factories (Accord, 2017). Furthermore, several conservative companies even extended their defensive posture beyond the Accord by using their forged ties with ‘like-minded’ peers within the Accord to build a coalition to slow down a government-driven initiative called ‘Textilbuendnis’ which was launched in Germany in 2014 to improve social and environmental standards of the German textile industry (Jastram & Schneider, 2015). Intriguingly, our study also shows that several arguments regularly put forward by rather progressive critics of the Accord were also used by conservative companies to advance their defensive agenda. These companies advanced criticisms such as the lacking inclusion of Bangladeshi stakeholders (Baumann-Pauly, Labowitz, & Banerjee, 2015) or the neglect of the systemic nature of poor working conditions in Bangladesh (Labowitz & Baumann-Pauly, 2014, 2015) in order to delegitimize the Accord and to minimize the importance of companies’ own role within the initiative.

Hence, our paper contributes to the emerging integrative perspective within political CSR research by suggesting that MSIs as governance mechanism can neither be understood as unidirectional move towards the democratic self-embedment of corporations (Scherer et al., 2013; Scherer et al., 2016) nor can they be seen as hegemonic tools for the expansion of corporate power (Banerjee, 2007; Fleming & Jones, 2013). Instead, MSIs should be conceptualized as inherently political governance mechanisms that are driven by multidirectional political processes of PCSRI construction. This study suggests that the Accord represents a positive evolutionary step in multi-stakeholder governance schemes without however being a panacea for improving working conditions in Bangladesh. Core features of the Accord such as transparency, its legally binding nature and direct involvement of buyers and workers in the enforcement of its provisions created tangible factory safety improvements on the ground in Bangladesh. Within those factories that already installed worker safety committees also the position of workers has been strengthened by giving them an explicit role and voice for co-monitoring factory safety.

However, much still needs to be done to improve working conditions for garment workers in Bangladesh. Not only are remediation and safety committee instalments still uncompleted in most of the factories covered by the Accord, but a considerable number of factories in Bangladesh still operates below the radar of any recently launched initiative to improve factory safety in Bangladesh. Although the exact amount of these “informal” factories is subject of intense academic debate (Anner & Bair, 2016) the fact remains that workers in these factories suffer from particularly dire conditions (Labowitz & Baumann-Pauly, 2015). In addition, the Accord is limited to improving fire and building safety of factories leaving many important issues such as unionization, wages or environmental impacts of production beyond its grasp. Moreover, recent research on Bangladeshi supplier factories covered by the Accord suggests that complying with provisions of CSR initiatives can also go along with negative unintended consequences for workers such as a lower total monthly income as well the

discontinuation of additional services such as free lunches or prayer facilities caused by increased compliance costs (Sinkovics, Hoque, & Sinkovics, 2016). This study also cites a Bangladeshi factory owner who described complying with the Accord as “decoration” of his factory in order to “enhance the beauty of our factories, in other words the shopping environment for MNEs” (Sinkovics et al., 2016: 643). This quote speaks volumes about both the progress already achieved and the significant challenges that still lie ahead calling for a deeper involvement not only of companies and unions but also of factory owners, the Bangladeshi government and industry associations (Labowitz & Baumann-Pauly, 2015).

Accordingly, our paper puts fundamental criticisms of the Accord into perspective. Chowdhury for example argues that the Accord “merely reinforces and expands MNCs’ power” since “MNCs use such platforms as public relations tools and change hardly any aspect of their behaviour or organizational structure” (2017: 8). Instead, our paper suggests a more nuanced perspective on corporate political engagement in the Accord as our findings clearly show that not all companies constructed a conservative PCSRI within the Accord. Some companies rather took the Accord implementation seriously and thus contributed significantly to the progress the Accord has achieved so far. Criticizing the incremental nature or the slow pace of said progress has certainly merit but as one progressive CSR manager put it: “We collaborate in MSIs in those cases where we do not make progress anyway; meaning that it cannot go any slower than that. Each step then increases the speed” (Company D, I4).

We contend that our findings are analytically generalizable (Yin, 2013) to other MSIs since corporations are more and more involved in collaborative governance efforts that require interactions among businesses and civil society associations (Schrempf-Stirling & Palazzo, 2016). These settings are likely to pose similar challenges for governance actors, as they are likely to involve similar trajectories of PCSRI-construction. Similar political strategies of PCSRI-construction might also emerge in other settings such as e.g. public-private-partnerships or collaborations with non-profit organizations (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012). However, we

acknowledge that particular features of the Accord, such as the high level of transparency and the legally binding nature of the agreement, as well as the circumstances of its genesis may potentially limit the transferability of this study (Lincoln & Guba, 2007). These factors might have impacted the trajectories of PCSRI-construction in a way that is not completely transferrable to more conventional MSIs. Moreover, over the past years, the textile industry has received much scrutiny by critical NGOs and the international media. Other, less publicly scrutinized industries might change the way how the political dimension of CSR is experienced and managed by corporations. Future research should thus address pathways of political identity construction in a comparative setting across different MSIs in different industries. Furthermore, in our study we have primarily interviewed corporate participants of the Accord based in Germany which limits our capacity to fully explore relationships between cultural characteristics, i.e. explicit versus implicit CSR (Blindheim, 2012; Matten & Moon, 2008) and PCSRI. Future research will thus be needed to investigate cultural aspects in the construction of PCSRIs. In addition, more research will be needed to explore underlying determinants for companies taking specific trajectories. In our study we have focussed on how corporations construct their identities in a collaborative political process over time and the political strategies involved in different trajectories of PCSRI. Future qualitative and quantitative research with bigger and more diverse cross-cultural samples could serve to further elucidate why companies construct their identities along our identified trajectories.

Besides contributing to theory our paper also provides practical implications for the design and management of future MSIs. Our finding that the conservative transformation of companies was crucially shaped by the perceived unfairness of unions towards several companies in the Pre-Accord phase, implies additional responsibilities for both progressive companies and unions or other civil society organizations. The former should consider taking further steps to engage more conservative companies in a positive dialogue instead of largely considering them as backward-oriented actors that belong to a different CSR category. The

latter should balance their eagerness to achieve results with the need to remain constructively engaged with a large spectrum of companies. These are rather difficult and delicate responsibilities for both progressive companies and unions or other civil society organizations but our data suggest that the potential benefits might outweigh the additional effort. Moreover, our paper shows that taking the PCSRIs of corporations into consideration in advance might help to design better MSIs. Conservative companies for example should be more actively approached in the beginning to avoid having them fall into a passive posture. Early successes should be clearly communicated to keep companies engaged and early implementation should be more strictly enforced or sanctioned to encourage companies to stay actively involved. These measures can contribute to push conservative companies on a more progressive PCSRI trajectory.

The tension between the proactive eagerness for change describing the construction of a progressive PCSRI and the reactive reluctance towards change characterizing the construction of a conservative PCSRI reminded us of the British writer and journalist G. K. Chesterton who once noted: “The business of Progressives is to go on making mistakes. The business of Conservatives is to prevent mistakes from being corrected.” Mistakes, setbacks and criticisms are therefore an unavoidable and essential part of political CSR initiatives. In fact, completely easing the tension between conservatives and progressives might be neither feasible nor desirable. Our study rather suggests that it is precisely this tension and its underlying political processes that ultimately drive change through MSIs.

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Appendix

A1 Summary of Dissertation

This cumulative dissertation explores the idea to create pluralistic stakeholder value through a discursive process of sharing values among affected stakeholders by resorting to both conceptual and qualitative-empirical methods.. The first paper of this cumulative dissertation critically examines the shared value concept suggesting that Porter and Kramer developed a promising idea without providing sufficient conceptual means to meet its aspirations. The second paper investigates the notion of sharing more closely developing an analytical framework outlining its denotative and connotative dimensions as well as introducing a set of assessment criteria indicating the risk of ideological obfuscation associated with the notion of sharing. The third paper theorizes the notion of sharing as act of communication in more detail by conceptualizing a discursive sharing process based on Rainer Forst's theory of justification that is guided by multidimensional criteria of justification assisting managers and stakeholders to create pluralistic stakeholder value. The fourth and final paper of this dissertation explores the political dimension of this discursive sharing process in practice uncovering the underlying processes of political Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) identity construction in multi-stakeholder initiatives (MSIs) by conducting a qualitative in-depth case study of the Accord – a recent MSI established after the collapse of the Rana Plaza garment factory complex in 2013 to improve working conditions in the Bangladeshi garment industry. Hence, this cumulative dissertation advances theory on both pluralistic stakeholder value creation and political CSR by exploring the potential of the notion of sharing as act of communication from a normative-conceptual as well as qualitative-empirical perspective.

A2 Zusammenfassung der Dissertation

Diese kumulative Dissertation ergründet unter Rückgriff auf konzeptionelle wie qualitativ-empirische Methoden die Idee über einen diskursiven Prozess des Werte-Sharings zwischen betroffenen Stakeholdern pluralistischen Stakeholder-Value zu schaffen. Das erste Dissertationspapier setzt sich kritisch mit dem Shared Value Konzept auseinander und kommt zu dem Schluss, dass Porter und Kramer zwar eine vielversprechende Idee entwickelt haben, der es aber an den entsprechenden konzeptionellen Mittel mangelt, um den selbstgesteckten Ansprüchen des Konzepts gerecht zu werden. Das zweite Dissertationspapier unterzieht den Sharing-Begriff einer genaueren Untersuchung und entwickelt einen analytischen Bezugsrahmen, der sowohl die dennotative als auch die konnotative Dimensions des Sharing-Begriffs abbildet als auch eine Reihe von Beurteilungskriterien beinhaltet, um das mit dem Sharing-Begriff einhergehende Risiko der ideologischen Verdunkelung einschätzen zu können. Das dritte Dissertationspapier theoretisiert die kommunikative Facette des Sharing-Begriffs eingehender, indem ein diskursiver Sharing-Prozess auf Basis der Rechtfertigungstheorie von Rainer Forst konzeptualisiert wird, der von mehrdimensionalen Rechtfertigungskriterien geleitet wird und Manager wie Stakeholder dabei unterstützt pluralistischen Stakeholder-Value zu schaffen. Das vierte und letzte Dissertationspapier untersucht die politische Dimension dieses diskursiven Sharing-Prozesses in der Praxis und zeigt anhand einer qualitativen Fallstudie des Accords die zugrundeliegenden Konstruktionsprozesse politischer Corporate Social Responsibility-Identität in Multi-Stakeholder Initiativen (MSIs) auf. Der Accord ist eine kurz nach dem Einsturz des Textilfabrikkomplexes Rana Plaza im Jahr 2013 gegründete MSI, die das Ziel verfolgt die Arbeitsbedingungen in Textilfabriken in Bangladesch zu verbessern. Diese kumulative Dissertation trägt folglich zur Weiterentwicklung der pluralistischen Stakeholder-Value-Creation-Theorie sowie der politischen CSR Forschung bei, indem das Potential der kommunikativen Facette des Sharing-Begriffs mittels normativ-konzeptioneller und qualitativ-empirischer Forschung erschlossen wird.

A3 List of Publications

Published

Schormair, Maximilian J. L. (2015): Discourse Ethics and CSR, in: Idowu, Samuel O. (Ed.): Dictionary of Corporate Social Responsibility, Springer, pp.178-179.

Schormair, Maximilian J. L. (2015): Shared Value, in: Idowu, Samuel O. (Ed.): Dictionary of Corporate Social Responsibility, Springer, p.474.

Schormair, Maximilian J. L./Gilbert, Dirk Ulrich (2015): Das Shared Value-Konzept von Porter und Kramer – Der Rede wert? Eine unternehmensethische Einordnung, in: Wirtschaftswissenschaftliches Studium, Vol. 44, No. 10, pp. 579-583.

Schormair, Maximilian J. L./Gilbert, Dirk Ulrich (2017): Das Shared Value-Konzept von Porter und Kramer – The Big Idea?, in: Wunder, Thomas (Ed.): CSR und Strategisches Management, Springer, pp. 95-110. DOI 10.1007/978-3-662-49457-8.

Submitted or under review

Schormair, Maximilian J. L./Gilbert, Dirk Ulrich (2017): Creating Value by Sharing Values – Managing Stakeholder Value Pluralism through Discursive Justification, in: Business Ethics Quarterly (Status: 2. Round).

Huber, Kristin/Schormair, Maximilian J. L. (2017): From progressive to conservative and back: constructing political CSR identities in multi-stakeholder initiatives – the case of the “Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh”, in: Business and Society (Status: 2. Round).

Schormair, Maximilian J. L. (2017): Obfuscating the ideology of shareholder value maximization through the notion of sharing – the case of Porter and Kramer’s Shared Value concept, in: Journal of Business Ethics (Status: submitted).

Conference papers and presentations

Schormair, Maximilian J. L./Gilbert, Dirk Ulrich (2017): Shared Value beyond the Porter & Kramer Paradox: A Procedural Framework. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management, Atlanta 2017.

Huber, Kristin/Schormair, Maximilian J. L. (2017): Creeping commitment versus creeping denial? Transitioning into the role of a political actor through Multi-stakeholder initiatives – the case of the “Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh”. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society for Business Ethics, Atlanta 2017. *Finalist für den Best Conference Paper Award der Society of Business Ethics 2017.*

Huber, Kristin/Schormair, Maximilian J. L. (2016): Uncovering the politicization and depoliticization dynamics of multi-stakeholder governance: the case of the “Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh”. Paper presented at the Journal of Management Studies Workshop on Political CSR at Cass Business School, London 2016.

Schormair, Maximilian J. L. (2016): Shareholder, Stakeholder, or Shared Value – Which value to realign business and society?. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Strategic Management Society, Berlin 2016.

Huber, Kristin/Schormair, Maximilian J. L. (2016): The ambiguity of multi-stakeholder governance: an exploratory study of the “Accord on fire and building safety in Bangladesh”. Paper presented at the Annual EGOS Colloquium, Napoli 2016.

Schormair, Maximilian J. L./Gilbert, Dirk Ulrich (2015): Shared Value beyond the Porter & Kramer Paradox: A Procedural Framework. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the European Business Ethics Network, Copenhagen 2015.

Schormair, Maximilian J. L./Gilbert, Dirk Ulrich (2014): Realigning Business and Society through Creating Shared Value? A Procedural Framework for Advancing Shared Value. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society for Business Ethics, Philadelphia 2014.

Schormair, Maximilian J. L./Gilbert, Dirk Ulrich (2014): From Financial, to Stakeholder, to Comprehensive Value Creation: Toward Realigning Business and Society through a Procedural Conception of the Corporate Objective. Paper presented at the Philosophy of Management Conference, Chicago 2014.

A4 Teaching Experience

Bachelorniveau

SS 2012	Proseminar an der Universität Mannheim „Kritische Theorie und Kapitalismuskritik – Eine Einführung“ (2 SWS, ca. 40 Stud.)
WS 12/13	Übung zur Vorlesung „Grundlagen und aktuelle Probleme der Wirtschafts- und Unternehmensethik“ (2 SWS, ca. 30 Stud.)
SS 2013	Übung zur Vorlesung „Grundlagen und aktuelle Probleme der Wirtschafts- und Unternehmensethik“ (4 SWS, ca. 60 Stud. in 2 Gruppen)
SS 2014	Seminar „Die Gesellschaftliche Verantwortung von Unternehmen in Theorie und Praxis“ (2 SWS, ca. 20 Stud.)

Masterniveau

WS 13/14	Übung zur Vorlesung „Introduction to CSR: Grundlagen und aktuelle Probleme der Wirtschafts- und Unternehmensethik“ (4 SWS, ca. 100 Stud. in 4 Gruppen)
WS 14/15	
WS 15/16	
WS 16/17	
WS 17/18	

Abschlussarbeiten

seit 06/2012	Betreuung von 25 Bachelor- und 10 Masterarbeiten in deutscher und englischer Sprache
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A5 Curriculum Vitae

Der Lebenslauf ist aus datenschutzrechtlichen Gründen nicht enthalten.

A6 Interview Guide

Informationen für den Interviewten vor Beginn des Interviews

Worum geht es in dem Interview?

Es geht um Ihre Erfahrungen in und mit MSI im Textilsektor. Hierbei konzentrieren wir uns auf den Accord, da es sich um eine relativ junge Initiative mit großer internationaler Aufmerksamkeit handelt. Wir wollen nachvollziehen, welche Effekte MSI auf die Teilnehmer und deren Organisation haben, und untersuchen wie sich bestimmte theoretische Annahmen zur Praxis verhalten. Insbesondere ist für uns von Interesse, welche Erfahrungen die teilnehmenden Unternehmen mit dem Accord gemacht haben, und welche Wirkungen in der Organisation entstanden sind.

Wertschätzung/Implikation

Durch die Befragung von Experten, die an MSI Prozessen teilgenommen haben, hoffen wir ein besseres Verständnis dafür zu entwickeln, welche Möglichkeiten aber auch welche Herausforderungen mit MSI einhergehen, wie diese effektiver gestaltet werden können und wo evtl. auch Grenzen von MSI Governance liegen.

Vertraulichkeit/Datenschutz

Wir würden das Gespräch mit Ihrem Einverständnis gerne aufzeichnen und planen die Ergebnisse in einem wissenschaftlichen Artikel zu veröffentlichen – Ihre Antworten werden wir dabei vertraulich behandeln, indem wir ihre Antworten anonymisieren.

Ablauf des Gesprächs

Wir werden Ihnen nun einige Fragen zum Accord und zum Thema Multi-Stakeholder Initiativen (MSI) im Textilsektor stellen. Zunächst gehen wir darauf ein, was sie ganz persönlich durch den Accord mitgenommen haben. Im Anschluss erweitern wir den Fokus des Gesprächs auf das Unternehmen und weitere MSI, an denen Sie beteiligt waren. Das Interview wird etwa 40-60 min dauern. Wir werden Ihnen einige offene Fragen stellen und ggfs. nochmal zu spezifischen Aspekten rückfragen.

Allgemeiner Einstieg

Leitfrage/Stimulus/Erzählaufforderung

Wir freuen uns auf das Gespräch mit Ihnen und würden uns als erstes gerne mit Ihnen und ihrer Position im Unternehmen vertraut machen. Würden Sie dafür zunächst einmal kurz sich selbst und Ihre Funktion im Unternehmen vorstellen?

Inhaltliche Aspekte

Unterschied strategische und operative Positionen; Größe und Zusammensetzung des Teams

Aufrechterhaltungsfragen

Können Sie nochmal genau beschreiben, wo Ihre Arbeitsschwerpunkte bzw. Hauptverantwortlichkeiten liegen?

Nachfragen

Wie sieht denn Ihr Team/Ihre Abteilung aus, also mit wem arbeiten Sie zusammen?; Wem berichten Sie?; Wie viele Mitarbeiter berichten Ihnen?; Wie viele Personen sind in ihrer Organisation mit dem Thema Unternehmensverantwortung/Nachhaltigkeit in der Lieferkette beschäftigt?; Wie werden Textilien in ihrem Unternehmen vorwiegend gesourced? Über die direkte Zusammenarbeit mit Vertragspartnern (direct sourcing) oder über Agenten (indirect sourcing)?

Einstieg Accord

Leitfrage/Stimulus/Erzählaufforderung

Bitte erzählen Sie einmal welche Erfahrungen Sie mit dem Accord gemacht haben. Beschreiben Sie auch, wie es intern zur Entscheidung für den Accord kam und wie Ihr Unternehmen nun am Accord beteiligt ist?; Welche Erwartungen hatten Sie an den Accord?; Welche Herausforderungen waren bzw. sind aus Ihrer Sicht mit dem Accord verbunden?; Wie zufrieden sind Sie mit der Arbeit des Accords?

Inhaltliche Aspekte

Generelle Einstellung zu Accord; Einbindung in den Accord; Erwartungen; Konkrete Probleme

Aufrechterhaltungsfragen

Was meinen Sie mit...?; Können Sie das noch einmal genauer erklären?; Und sonst?; Und weiter?

Nachfragen

Können Sie nochmal genau beschreiben, wie Sie persönlich in den Accord involviert sind?; Welche Bedeutung nimmt der Accord in Ihrem Arbeitsalltag ein (z.B. in Bezug auf die verwendete Arbeitszeit/kognitive Ressourcen)?; Was zeichnet den Accord in ihren Augen aus?; Haben Sie bereits an einem der Treffen teilgenommen (z.B. Company Caucus)?; Wie kann ich mir vorstellen, wenn so ein Treffen stattfindet? Wie laufen diese Treffen in der Regel ab?; Glauben Sie, dass das Engagement im Accord ein Indikator für die Übernahme gesellschaftlicher Verantwortung von Unternehmen ist?; Wie schätzen Sie das Engagement ihres eigenen Unternehmens im Verhältnis zu anderer Unternehmen in der MSI ein?

Individuelle Wahrnehmung

Leitfrage/Stimulus/Erzählaufforderung

Beschreiben Sie den Lösungsfindungsprozess des Accords, wie er sich Ihnen dargestellt hat. Hatte der Accord für Sie überraschende/unerwartete Ergebnisse/Lösungsansätze?; Wie schätzen Sie Ihren ganz persönlichen Beitrag zu den Ergebnissen des Accord ein?; Können Sie beschreiben ob und wenn ja was Sie persönlich durch die Teilnahme am Accord gelernt haben?; Wie hat sich Ihr Vertrauen zu den verschiedenen Stakeholdern des Accords/ zu Stakeholdern (Gewerkschaften/Wettbewerber/CCC) in Allgemeinen entwickelt?

Inhaltliche Aspekte

Efficacy; Information; Political skills; Civic virtues

Aufrechterhaltungsfragen

Was heißt...?; Können Sie auf diesen Punkt noch einmal genauer eingehen?; Wie sehr liegt der Schwerpunkt auf...?; Und weitere...?

Nachfragen

Wie hat sich Ihr Wissensstand in Bezug auf die sozialen Probleme der Textilindustrie in Bangladesch durch den Accord entwickelt?; Würden Sie sagen, dass Sie durch die Teilnahme am Accord gewisse persönliche Fähigkeiten – wie z.B. Rede-, Verhandlungsgeschick, Verständnis für Meinungs- u. Willensbildungsprozesse entwickelt haben?; Würden Sie sagen, dass sich durch ihre Teilnahme am Accord bei Ihnen ein stärkeres Verständnis für verschiedene Perspektiven und Standpunkte gebildet hat?/Ihre persönliche Meinung/Ihre politische Einstellung zu dem Thema U-verantwortung geändert hat?/ein stärkeres Interesse am Gemeinwohl herausgebildet hat?; Wie schätzen Sie die Wirkungen des Accords auf die Industrie und die Gesellschaft als Ganze ein?; Haben Sie das Gefühl, dass durch den Accord und die diversen Standpunkte, die in diesem zusammen kommen, bessere Entscheidungen getroffen werden?

Organisationale Auswirkungen

Leitfrage/Stimulus/Erzählaufforderung

Uns interessiert sehr, wie die Ergebnisse des Accords in ihr Unternehmen gelangen. Können Sie dies bitte einmal kurz beschreiben?; Welche Effekte hat der Accord auf ihr Unternehmen?; Wie gestaltet sich der Umsetzungsprozess für die eben angesprochene(n) Maßnahme(n)?; Empfinden Sie es als eine Aufgabe/Verpflichtung ihres Unternehmens sich aktiv in die Regulierung von nationalen (Bsp. Bangladesh) und internationalen Standards einzubringen?; Haben Sie das Gefühl, dass ihr Unternehmen zur Lösung der Herausforderungen in Bangladesh beitragen kann?; Haben Sie in Bezug auf den Accord (z.B. beim company caucus) manchmal trennen zu müssen zwischen Ihnen als Privatperson und Ihnen als Vertreter des Unternehmens?

Inhaltliche Aspekte

Änderungen von Strategien oder Prozessen; Maßnahmen innerhalb der Organisation; Beteiligte Abteilungen; Förderung sozialer Standards in Lieferkette; Single, double, deuterio learning; Subcontracting

Aufrechterhaltungsfragen

Was heißt...?; Was meinen Sie mit...?; Gab es weitere Veränderungen?; Was beinhaltet diese Maßnahme genau?; Was wird damit genau angestrebt?; Beschränkt sich das auf...?; Und sonst...?

Nachfragen

Hat sich seit dem Accord in ihrem Unternehmen eine Neuausrichtung von Unternehmensleitlinien oder gar auf strategischer Ebene ergeben?; Hat sich in ihrem Unternehmen das Verständnis in Bezug auf Herausforderungen in der Lieferkette geändert?; Welche Personen/Abteilungen sind an der Umsetzung des Accords beteiligt?; Haben sich Prozesse (Reporting/Sourcing/Tätigkeitsprofile von Mitarbeitern) seit dem Accord geändert?; Wie sind die Maßnahmen in die Gesamtstrategie eingebettet?; In der akademischen Diskussion werden die Einkaufspraktiken von Unternehmen mit kurzen Lieferzeiten und kurzfristigen Auftragsänderungen als eine Ursache von Verletzungen sozialer Standards in der Lieferkette genannt. Hat sich durch den Accord in ihrem Unternehmen eine Abteilungsübergreifende Diskussion ergeben dazu wie man soziale Standards in der Lieferkette sicherstellen kann?; Gibt es Versuche Fortschritte im Bereich sozialer Standards messbar zu machen?

Sind die Organisationstrukturen in ihrem Unternehmen eher hierarchisch oder nicht so hierarchisch?

Auswirkungen auf Öffentlichkeit

Leitfrage/Stimulus/Erzählaufforderung

Hat der Accord ihrer Meinung nach einen Einfluss auf die öffentliche Debatte/Wahrnehmung zum Thema Unternehmensverantwortung in Deutschland/Europa/ Bangladesh?; Inwiefern hat der Accord eine Art Gemeinschafts- bzw. Zugehörigkeitsgefühl unter den TeilnehmerInnen bewirkt? Stellte sich Ihrer Meinung nach ein Art Gefühl von „mit einer Stimme in der Öffentlichkeit Sprechen“ ein?; Welchen Effekt hat der Accord Ihrer Meinung nach auf die Regierung in Bangladesh/Deutschland?

Inhaltliche Aspekte

Representation of Difference; Public communication and deliberation; Representations of commonality

Aufrechterhaltungsfragen

Was meinen Sie mit...?; Und weiter?

Nachfragen

Bildet der Accord die Interessen der Teilnehmer korrekt ab und werden diese effektiv nach außen vertreten?; Welche Hindernisse sehen Sie...?; Aus welchen Gründen...?

Institutionelle Organisation des Accord

Leitfrage/Stimulus/Erzählaufforderung

Haben Sie im Zuge Ihrer Teilnahme am Accord das Gefühl, an Entscheidungen, die Sie direkt betreffen, angemessen beteiligt gewesen zu sein?; Inwiefern wurde durch den Accord Ihre Kooperationsbereitschaft erhöht und Gräben zwischen den Stakeholdern überwunden?; Sind die Regelungen des Accords aus Ihrer Sicht auf der passenden Ebene im internationalen Regelrahmen angesiedelt?; Müssten die Regelungen des Accords Ihrer Einschätzung nach eher auf einer höheren oder niedrigeren Ebene getroffen werden?

Inhaltliche Aspekte

Resistance; Representation; Subsidiarity; Coordination/Cooperation; Democratic Legitimation

Aufrechterhaltungsfragen

Was meinen Sie mit...?; Können Sie auf diesen ... noch einmal konkret eingehen?; Wie kann man sich das vorstellen, wenn...

Nachfragen

Glauben Sie, dass durch die MSI ein Druck auf die Regierung in Bangladesh/ Deutschland entsteht, transparenter zu werden und sich mit den Forderungen der Nämherinnen auseinanderzusetzen?; Wo liegen Gründe für mangelnde Kooperationsbereitschaft?

Textil MSI Allgemein

Leitfrage/Stimulus/Erzählaufforderung

Welche Vorerfahrungen haben Sie mit Textil-MSI vor dem Accord bereits gesammelt?; Wie unterscheidet sich der Accord von den anderen Textil-MSI an denen Sie teilgenommen haben?; Welche Aspekte von welcher MSI sind Ihnen besonders im Gedächtnis geblieben?; Welche Chancen und Grenzen sehen Sie in Zusammenhang mit MSIs?; Haben Sie schon einmal erlebt dass eine MSI gescheitert ist? Woran mag das gelegen haben?; Was zeichnet eine erfolgreiche Initiative für Sie aus?

Inhaltliche Aspekte

Accord einzigartig oder generalisierbar; Erfahrungen in anderen MSI

Aufrechterhaltungsfragen

Was meinen Sie mit...?; Können Sie auf diesen ... noch einmal besonders eingehen?

Nachfragen

Wenn mehrere: Bei welcher MSI haben Sie persönlich am Meisten gelernt? Wie erklären Sie sich das?

Ausblick

Leitfrage/Stimulus/Erzählaufforderung

Wenn Sie sich die besprochenen Maßnahmen/Ergebnisse des Accords vor Augen führen, welches Resümee würden Sie für sich ziehen?

Inhaltliche Aspekte

Konkrete Lehren aus den Erfahrungen; Ansatzpunkte für zukünftiges Engagement; Mainstreaming von Maßnahmen

Aufrechterhaltungsfragen

Könnte diese Maßnahme auf andere Orte/Bereiche übertragen werden?; Wo sehen Sie denn konkret Ansatzpunkte für weitere Maßnahmen?; Was meinen Sie mit...?

Nachfragen

Welche Schlüsse haben Sie für sich aus dem Accord für die Teilnahme an künftigen Initiativen gezogen?; Was muss passieren, damit soziale Standards in der Lieferkette sichergestellt werden können?

Ausstieg

Leitfrage/Stimulus/Erzählaufforderung

Gibt es abschließend noch Themen oder Aspekte, die Sie gerne ansprechen möchten?

Inhaltliche Aspekte

Wichtige Prioritäten des Gesprächs; Offen gebliebene Punkte

Aufrechterhaltungsfragen

Was meinen Sie mit...?

Nachfragen

Können Sie uns in ihrem Unternehmen oder in anderen Unternehmen noch weitere Gesprächspartner zu diesem Thema empfehlen?

A7 Overview of Companies on Trajectories of PCSR-Identity Construction

Trajectory	Company (type - size)
Trajectory 1: Affirmative construction of progressive PCSRI	Company B (Brand - medium sized) Company D (Brand - large sized)
Trajectory 2: Transformative construction of progressive PCSRI	Company J (Importer - large sized) Company E (Brand - medium sized) Company A (Importer - medium sized)
Trajectory 3: Transformative construction of conservative PCSRI	Company G (Brand - large sized) Company O (Brand - large sized) Company I (Brand - large sized) Company C (Importer - large sized) Company F (Importer - large sized)
Trajectory 4: Affirmative construction of conservative PCSRI	Company P (Brand - large sized) Company L (Brand - medium sized) Company K (Importer - small sized) Company M (Importer - small sized) Company H (Importer - small sized) Company N (Importer - small sized)

Source: own table

A8 Overview of Data Sources

Archival Data	Type	#
Accord Documents** (available on: http://bangladeshaccord.org/)		
	SC Meeting Minutes	16 documents
	AB Meeting Minutes	10 documents
	Reports (Annual/Quarterly Report, Inspection Reports)	14 documents
	Documents (Accord Agreement, Building Code, Remediation Guidance, Twitter Feed, etc.)	uncounted
Media Coverage***		
	Financial Times	55 articles
	Economist	20 articles
	Deutsche Welle	43 articles
	Guardian	15 articles
Corporate documents		
	Corporate communications on Accord on web pages and CSR reports for 16 companies selected for interviews if available	uncounted

Data Source		Details				
Interviews	Interviewees	Organization*	Country	Inter- view #	Duration	# Pages of Transcript
	CSR and Sourcing Manager	Company A (Importer - medium sized)	Germany	1	not recorded	4 pages of field-notes
	CSR Manager	Company B (Brand - medium sized)	Germany	2	01:08	25
	Sourcing Manager	Company C (Importer - large sized)	Germany	3	01:39	32
	Deputy General Manager	Company C (Importer - large sized)	Bangladesh			
	Compliance Manager	Company C (Importer - large sized)	Bangladesh			
	CR Director	Company D (Brand - large sized)	Germany	4	01:24	27
	CSR Manager	Company D (Brand - large sized)	Germany	5	01:11	27
	CSR Manager	Company E (Brand - medium sized)	Germany	6	00:58	17
	CSR and Sourcing Manager	Company E (Brand - medium sized)	Germany			
	CSR Manager	Company F (Importer - large sized)	Germany	7	01:40	41
	CSR Manager	Company G (Brand - large sized)	Germany	8	00:53	14
	CSR Manager	Company G (Brand - large sized)	Germany	9	01:19	24
	General Manager	Company H (Importer - small sized)	Germany	10	01:25	30
	VP CR and Sustainability	Company I (Brand - large sized)	Germany	11	00:33	12
	CSR Manager	Company J (Importer - large sized)	Germany	12	01:07	28
	Sourcing Manager	Company J (Importer - large sized)	Germany			
	General Manager	Company K (Importer - small sized)	Germany	13	01:08	20
	CSR Manager	Company L (Brand - medium sized)	Germany	14	00:29	10
	Sourcing Manager	Company M (Importer- small sized)	Germany	15	00:41	16
Interviews	Participant	Organization	Country	Inter- view #	Duration	# Pages of Transcript
	CSR Manager	Company N (Importer - small sized)	Germany	16	00:52	19

CSR Manager	Company O (Brand - large sized)	Germany	17	01:17	25
CSR Manager	Company P (Brand - large sized)	Germany	18	01:05	21
Sourcing Manager	Company P (Brand - large sized)	Bangladesh			
Accord staff member	Accord	Netherlands	19	01:10	18
Trade Union Manager	Union A (Global union)	Germany	20	01:16	23
Trade Union Manager	Union B (Global union)	Switzerland	21	00:53	14
CSR Manager	Former CSR Manager of Company O	Germany	22	01:18	26
GIZ staff member	GIZ	Bangladesh	23	00:58	15
GIZ staff member	GIZ	Germany	24	01:57	38
Σ 29	16 companies, 2 unions, GIZ, Accord		24	26:32	522

*Size is measured by employee numbers: Small (> 50 employees), Medium (50-500 employees), Large (< 500 employees)

**Sampling strategy: all available documents up until mid 2016

***Sampling strategy: We analysed 4 exemplary, internationally renowned media outlets and searched for keywords "Accord on Fire and Building Safety", "Bangladesh AND Accord"

A9 Interview Analysis: Overview Sample Quotations

Interviewee	Sample quotations	First order concepts	Second order themes	Aggregate Dimensions
Company J, I12	We are definitely in the area that it broadens our horizon [...] on the one hand the personal horizon, but on the other hand also the horizon of the company. That is to say, I cannot just say well now we installed 27 fire extinguishers, I have to also make sure that the employees are socially insured, or else this will not be sustainable. So sustainability does not end with the fire extinguisher or where an 18 year old has an employment contract. Sustainability is instead more complex and multidimensional.	Advocating more holistic view of supply chain responsibility	Progressive	Political CSR Identity (PCSRI)
Company B, I2	So that is not our approach, our approach is that we actively engage to actually improve something in the short, middle and long term.	Stressing long term perspective		
Company E, I6	I think that what is actually moving us forward in the Accord certainly is the cooperation with other stakeholders [...] As a company you just don't have so many points of contact with NGOs, for example some view it as critical since there are many NGOs that have a more conflictive approach, and I think in this regard the Accord [...] is a great example how one can learn from each other. And sure, also within the Accord there are many discussion, in particular between trade unions and NGOs and the companies, but I think it holds the chance to discard existing reticence.	Commending collaborative approach to problem solving		
Company D, I4	This is sustainability management 3.0. If you say, challenges downright inspire creativity to develop such instruments.	Expressing proactive attitude towards solving problems		

Company J, I12	<p>Well, you probably have to view it like that, unions have to represent their interests and those interests do not always align with ours. That is clearly a natural thing. And if there are no disputes, then it also doesn't move forward. But there are certainly situations where you think, 'ok now you have a very theoretical point of view, from the point of view of the unions and this will surely, if you speak with someone of the trade unions, they will probably also tell you, [...] 'the companies have also a very one-sided way of looking at things, they have to take a more holistic approach. So, in this respect, I believe, disputing and also that one has discrepancies with one another, that is just part of the process, I believe.</p>	<p>Asserting positive attitude towards unions and other civil society actors</p>	
Company H, I10	<p>[...] everything I do costs me money. So that means, 'how many jackets do I have to sell on top to retrieve this investment?'. It is as simple as that.</p>	<p>Advocating primarily economic perspective on supply chain responsibility</p>	<p>Conservative</p>
Company H, I10	<p>At company xx or yy nobody is interested [in how much these CSR activities cost] since the people that work there say 'well we are a huge company, one of the leading textile manufacturers, we don't care about that. This lawyer that sits there, he doesn't care whether it is 100 Euro more or less expensive. That means of course in the Steering Committee, only people of large companies are represented, simply because they are the ones who have the manpower, I personally cannot obviously not spend half my week on those things.</p>	<p>Emphasizing limited leeway to participate in collaborative problem-solving efforts</p>	
Company I, I11	<p>[...] we always say, we as a sourcing company cannot in the long run fulfil the role of the global police officer. [...] For that role we also don't have the legitimacy [...] and this is where it clearly intersects with the responsibility of the particular governments, to take action and responsibility that the existing legal frameworks are fully implemented and overseen.</p>	<p>Attributing main responsibility to the state</p>	

Company H, I10	Taking part in this game as a medium-sized company for some time leads you to conclude that at first it is best to stand in the second row, letting others make the first move.	Expressing reactive wait and see attitude towards future CSR challenges		
Company K, I13	Sometimes one would rather prefer the union side not being part of the Accord - like in the Alliance -, because then it would simply be more constructive and not, well if I use the word polemic it's too much, it's unfair. But sometimes it goes in a direction where I think, come on guys, let's focus on the reality on the ground and do not demand the population of the moon.	Asserting negative attitude towards unions and other civil society actors		
Company D, I5	We have discussed the subject matter very much internally, and then we decided to do it because the logic behind it, i.e. integration of unions, making sure, that employees ultimately have a grievance mechanism and have the support from the outside, that they ultimately are able to defend themselves in an emergency. So that were for us the aspects, where we said, okay, everything has to work together and that is why that made sense for us. And with this decision, we went into the negotiation process with the Clean Clothes [Campaign], where we discussed different points again with them. But in my view, this was relatively relaxed.	Justifying Accord engagement in ethical terms	ethical reasoning	Trajectory 1: Affirmative construction of progressive PCSRI
Company B, I2	In the document it also says that you have to take responsibility. One must also profess to the topics, how one plans to participate in the implementation process, possible conversion measures and it was for us self-evident, since we are always very active with our company and always look out for, when we are over there [Bangladesh], what we can improve, where there are still possibilities for optimization. Now for example, we want, we have a children's day care facility that we want to pump up until the next time, in order to make it more child-friendly.	Expressing strong commitment to the normative cause of the Accord		
Company D, I5	[...] of course, we do not want to impose anything on a country, but here we are talking about the fact that basic safety standards are not adhered to and that are intentionally disregarded by the state	Stressing responsibility to uphold universal		

Company D, I4	<p>from our monitoring systems [...] we have relatively - maybe not early, but still timely enough - recognized that is a topic that we cannot manage alone. There was no immediate evidence of building insecurity in our supply base in Bangladesh but we knew that in Bangladesh there were already other cases where buildings had collapsed.</p> <p>Then we said at some point, how do we get this issue actually solved, we must act here. We then - and this is how one works, I would say - in a multi-stakeholder format, in our network we simply addressed that as a problem and said, I think we have a problem here that we cannot solve alone.</p>	<p>norms in the weak governance context of Bangladesh</p> <p>Anticipating CSR challenges and seeking solutions on multiple levels</p>	engaging	
Company D, I4	<p>So whether I am only a member in order to be a member or whether I become a member and say I want to contribute actively [makes a difference]. [...] This is also our goal, we want to contribute actively, we want to see that also others are improving, but also, what can we get out of it for our own daily operations and what can we get out of it to make our suppliers even better than they already are. Not with regards to product quality, but with regards to social standards, human rights, production conditions.</p>	<p>Approaching competitors and civil society organizations to find common solutions</p>		
Company B, I2	<p>So [...] I believe overall the interaction of the Clean Clothes Campaign, even the trade unions Industry All, in particular, was very fair with us. Of course, they have also emphasized again and again that there have also been incidents in the past with our company, but they also communicated in the public, that we have also learned a lot from these processes - of course, in the end this did us quite well and was an acknowledgement for us. And now in particular in the process of construction of another multi-stakeholder initiative like Act, that aims at implementing collective labour agreements with the producers, I am personally glad, of course, when the umbrella association of trade unions is approaching us and says, 'don't we want to try together'. So, we perceive this as a great honour and distinction.</p>	<p>Participating in Accord meetings to advance the Accords agenda</p>		
Company D, I4	<p>Building relationships with unions and other civil society actors based on mutual trust</p>	<p>Building relationships with unions and other civil society actors based on mutual trust</p>		

Company B, I2	<p>Our management team is at least three to four times a year in Bangladesh. We then founded our own orphanage together with the owner of the production facility [...]. So, as you may realize, this is a very friendly relationship, no longer only a supplier-producer relationship, or customer- producer relationship, but a very friendly relationship. We were invited just last week to their employee celebration. It was very clear that Bangladesh is very close to us and it was clear that we would be a member [of the Accord].</p>	Perceiving suppliers as long term partners on an equal footing	
Company D, I5	<p>And then there is this other group of companies, which - how can I say this – maybe did not get so close to the people from unions, where there is no significant dialogue and, from my point of view, which is very much driven by the bad myths about all the things that happen there and ultimately live in a mind-set that you cannot cooperate with unions or that unions are dangerous</p>	Describing companies with a more sceptical attitude towards unions as prejudiced	distancing
Company D, I5	<p>that is, we have actually been on the subject from the very beginning, and accordingly, our role has been from the outset that of a driver, which is always our approach and concern, to get a few companies and engage them. The fact that it turned out to be a few hundred, we couldn't dream of and of course this had also other reasons but, so we were from the beginning in a kind of driving role. This was very important to us, because we have always seen this as one of the biggest risks in Bangladesh.</p> <p>So, there are many new things, and we as an industry are much too conservative. So the industry does not look ahead, but this is something that I, or we as a company, actually do, together with a few others, we discuss, how one can innovatively approach issues.</p>	Portraying oneself as innovative change-agent for higher CSR standards in comparison to other companies	
Company D, I5	<p>So we think that having such a 'corrective' is absolutely essential, since this is what has been missing in all programs so far, that workers have a legitimate representation, which represents their interests. And that is necessary. In the end it is all about the topic of reaching a balance of power - and that is simply absolutely essential. Because of this, we do not have a problem with it [the</p>	Emphasizing importance of equal representation of union interests in the Accord	

	unions having equal representation on the SC], actually we find that right and necessary.			
Company B, I2	It is actually simple, those brands that together produce in in the different factories, have to take responsibility. [...] And not move production from one factory to the next and think when they're gone, 'out of sight, out of mind'. [...] We do notice that some companies do not really engage; they have signed the Accord but are not really committed.	Criticizing other signatory companies for greenwashing and lack of responsibility		
Company D, I4	Working with multi-stakeholder initiatives in such projects, where we cannot proceed without the input of other societal players to solve problems, and tackle challenges, belongs to the 101 of sustainability management and also our sourcing policy. And this always concerns those aspects, where it turns out to be difficult, where we as a sole company, do not have enough momentum in the market, maybe not even with our own supplier, and where it is about political and structural [...] problems, that can only be solved by means of a Multi-stakeholder approach.	Describing collaborative approach to problem-solving through MSIs as natural thing to do	understating	
Company D, I4	I would say, this is simply good management practice, to simply say, if I have a problem, and if I have identified an issue, that you think about whether you can solve it alone, or not. If i cannot solve it alone, I look out for partners, and then I particularly look for those partners, that represent different societal interests, since they bring different know-how to the table, which is necessary because the problems are so complex.	Perceiving multi-stakeholder collaboration as part of good management practices		
Company B, I 2	It has always been like that, that our company sees its responsibility, and also lives up to that, and now starting from this year, actually with the creation of my position, we also want to try to communicate what we actually do. Which is actually a bit difficult because actually we do not want to do it so blatantly, we do not have a PR-strategy of ,do good and talk about it', but more that so far we have done good but have not talked much about it.	Asserting preference for doing rather than talking CSR		

Company J, I12	Obviously, it is also a requirement from our customer, but it was also for us out of question not to join [the Accord], since after all 90% of our production takes place in Bangladesh, and we see it as a duty from our side to support and engage there.	Evaluating responsibility to join the Accord in terms of order volume	tentative reasoning	Trajectory 2: Transformative construction of progressive PCSRI
Company J, I12	Rana Plaza [...] is absolutely terrifying, if one sees the pictures and also once we got notice of it. We were in that moment particularly concerned as we have a special relation with that country, since we are sourcing from there.	Stressing strong personal impact of Rana Plaza as important reason to join the Accord		
Company J, I12	the reason why we joined the Accord is because we are convinced that everyone can and must, within his or her limits, contribute to a socially responsible supply chain. Frankly speaking, from an economic point of view the Accord only produces costs and brings no returns, but nevertheless we have wholeheartedly decided to join the Accord. [...] One wants to earn money, that's only natural, [...] but that does not mean that one is not aware of one's responsibility. [...] So in this respect, [...] it was certainly a point where we then said it is great that this initiative exists and then quickly got on board.	Describing decision to join the Accord as being torn between ethical and economic considerations		
Company A, II	I mean it is only through the Accord, that we have people now who intensively engage with the whole subject matter. It took a while, one had to first acquire the knowledge, in order to be able to process this internally, but we then also adapted our sourcing guidelines [...] that you have to take into consideration permanently not only quality or price aspects but also working conditions on the ground, and I would say, working conditions have actually become a third pillar besides quality and price. One also scrutinizes how something is produced. This passed on all the way to us here in Germany.	Taking substantial measures to fully implement the Accord	internalizing	
Company J, I12	why is it important that your employees do well? It is important because you profit from it if your employees have a low disease level, and if your people do not cut their fingers with their scissors	Engaging in debates with suppliers to		

Company J, I12	<p>all the time, then they are not absent from work. If they are not absent, you will have a higher capacity output, and if you have a higher capacity output, [...] you do not have to pay a concessional penalty once you cannot meet the delivery deadline.</p> <p>[...] that you are also more aware and check out, ok who else is behind this production and not only the factory that sews the garment, but also who are the suppliers and do the suppliers also have the same standard as the main factory, so that you not only concentrate on one thing exclusively, but simply really consider the complete package.</p>	enforce Accord provisions		
Company J, I12	<p>I can also imagine that one also implements it [the Accord] in other production countries, because it [the debate] is currently very concentrated on Bangladesh and other countries, Pakistan, China, Vietnam are not controlled so much in the same way and I think or I actually don't want that also in those countries something has to happen first, before something [like the Accord] is organized. So I think, one should work from the beginning in this direction.</p>	Being animated by Accord to further scrutinize own supply chain		
Company E, I6	<p>I would say the ACCORD is definitely a good, very good initiative for Bangladesh. For the development of Bangladesh, and, as so to say, for the sustainable development of Bangladesh. Where also the customers of this sourcing country are also involved and held responsible. This is something that is very important for Bangladesh. However, it remains focused on Bangladesh only. It is a very good example that might be developed in other countries as a model. Okay, not everything is ideal, but all in all it is very, very, yes, very good.</p> <p>So I myself feel quite well represented by the Steering Committee, even if we do not directly influence it, but I think yes, there is always the possibility to give feedback. Until now we had not yet the great need to add big issues and I think with the Steering Committee and the brand representatives the representation is already quite good.</p>	Highlighting need to set up similar initiatives in other countries	Stressing positive outcomes of Accord for Bangladesh	approving
Company J, I12		Highlighting governance structure of the Accord as positive		

	<p>[...] I find that now, due to the fact that you also really meet in person at these meetings, it is easier to call somebody or quickly write an email, if one knows, that the other one is producing in the same factory, if you have questions at some points, or somehow want to achieve something. Then you can also exchange quite well and then also work a bit together.</p> <p>I think that was at the beginning simply because it was new and no one really knew anything and where it was going. I also believe that everything has calmed down a little now and some are also very grateful, that the Accord is there, just to put them on the right track.</p> <p>The reason for the foundation [of the Accord] is Rana Plaza, which may never happen again. We would like to see, how do we best get there and what proves itself in practice and what does not.</p> <p>In all my years [visiting suppliers] abroad, I have never noticed what possibilities are out there - somehow you have simply accepted the conditions as they are. [...] When I started, I had more of this, let's say, strictly numerical orientation, to somewhere make the most favourable business deals. However, through this role one learns, of course, also how business relations can go much easier, if you can create a Win-Win-situations and so to say take care a bit of the local surroundings.</p> <p>There was no real experience. And that's a huge thing. So, as a seasoned foreign trader [...], you actually get goose bumps, if you transparently disclose information about and contact details of supplier. This is actually the absolute no-go in classical foreign trade. But it works only, or this CSR approach works only in the medium and long term, however if one does it to a certain extent. [...] So I really now deal, as I said, with very different things. If someone had told me this two or three years ago, I would probably have declared him a fool.</p> <p>And it is really even a pleasure to be in the factories and see what they have already changed and you can see the small improvements. Then you are simply happy about it since you realize, it [the Accord] is also really accepted and they also know</p>			
Company J, II2		Commending collaboration with other Accord signatories		
Company J, II2		Perceiving controversies between businesses and unions as only initial difficulties		
Company A, II		Describing Rana Plaza and Accord as eye-opening events	self-heroizing	
Company J, II2		Portraying Accord and own engagement as pioneering		
Company J, II2		Stressing satisfaction and motivation in overseeing progress in supplier factories		

	<p>why they are doing it; that sometimes makes me proud, if it is one of our factories, where one realizes 'oh great they have implemented it in a certain manner and also the staff appreciate it, as they [the factory management] have installed a nice dining room, have a nice child care room - I simply find that important.</p>			
Company A, I1	<p>It is a role, I think, where one must also bring a certain idealism to the table and actually one cannot handle this only rationally, but one needs a certain feeling, so to say, in order to be able to fully stand behind it and to be successful.</p>	<p>Emphasizing need for idealism and compassion to fulfill role in Accord</p>		
Company G, I8	<p>There was a suggestion, which Company D had developed together with trade unions and put on the table, that one could set up such a multi-stakeholder initiative. And this proposal did not meet any resonance in the business world, because it was simply extremely infused by trade union interests, to put it simple.</p>	<p>Showing reluctance to join the Accord</p>	<p>defensive reasoning</p>	<p>Trajectory 3: Transformative construction of conservative PCSRI</p>
Company G, I8	<p>And that resulted in the fact that on Monday morning, so before the end of the deadline, the first [companies] started to announce, we are going to sign this thing as it is now. And so the story was over for everyone else. This exhausted the room for negotiation. If one [company] signs, we do not need to negotiate again, whether to change the article 22 or 23.</p>	<p>Stressing significance of peer pressure for decision to join the Accord</p>		
Company G, I8	<p>And then this proposal was fundamentally revised. But there have been and there still are a lot of differences, where the Businesses and Unions simply have not achieved an agreement. And then a process started, where we were asked to give feedback on which points continue to be difficult from a business perspective with which one cannot really live so well and which should be discussed again.</p>	<p>Voicing concerns about certain Accord provisions</p>		
Company G, I8	<p>And we had a deadline, which was on a Monday evening, until when we should collect feedback and over the weekend it happened that the unions targeted two or three companies [...] That is, the unity among businesses which had existed up until then, was broken up in a very targeted manner by putting individual businesses under massive pressure.</p>	<p>Holding the behavior of unions in the genesis of the Accord against them</p>	<p>Self-victimizing</p>	

Company G, I8	<p>But, of course, right from the start this led to businesses feeling somehow pushed into a corner and declared open season on [...]. And that actually runs through, in a way, through the whole thing. So, in my opinion, this is not a good condition to pursue common goals</p>	Describing companies as being cornered by unions		
Company O, I17	<p>And this aspect of being continuously pushed is that you receive letters from attorneys who are specialized in arbitration proceedings, so that it is not really the solution, I no longer think that it is not conducive to finding solutions, but only to show that companies have breached parts of the contract.</p>			
Company G, I9	<p>[...] tell me: 'who are we, that we are treated here as if we were somehow the servant of someone else' and I believe, it is very important to find a level that the companies are turning into the servants of civil society, to enforce their moral claims and ideas, but that companies become partners in this task, contribute within the frame of what they can, and they can certainly do a lot but they cannot do and achieve everything. And the claim often is, 'you must do everything'. And 'because you're guilty' and 'you're responsible' and 'you just outsource your purchasing process from Europe somewhere to Asia to benefit from the situation that there are human rights violations'.</p>	Portraying companies as scapegoats for unions		
Company O, I17	<p>Yes, it was not good that under the existing public pressure, companies were no longer taking the time to develop the wording of the document in a reasonable manner. We now have the problem that there are many ambiguities in the document, in the wording. It was clear from the beginning that there would be difficulties with regards to how to interpret different aspects and that is exactly where we are at right now.</p>	Pointing to lack of clarity and manifold possibilities to interpret Accord document	Resisting	
Company F, I7	<p>No, we have not determined particular process. The other side of the Steering Committee wanted to determine this. This, however, is where we as companies refused, because we said, we would like to, depending on the case, select who it [the arbitration committee] is, because of course we cannot now foresee the case, this is why we do not want to determine this beforehand.</p>	Keeping arbitration process vague by settling for a case by case procedure		

Company G, I8	<p>The problem for me is, for example, if I have over the past 15 months not received an approval for a DEA [Detailed Engineering Assessment], the factory cannot start with its structural changes. And, of course, also a factory tells me that ‘if I have to make major structural changes here, I’m not going to build a fire door here now, if I know that it may have to be ripped out again in half a year, or a quarter of a year or sometime soon’. And I do not lay electrical wires, if I know that it may well be that the wall will have to be torn down. So and this is an argument that the Accord does not share. The saying, ‘no, you can start out with Electric and Fire Safety and structural improvements will come later. But nonetheless these are Open Items in the Contract of Action Sense, which will not become less.</p>	<p>Providing technical justifications for CAP delays</p>	
Company F, I7	<p>So we previously discussed who we want to nominate, just to be able to counter accordingly. [...] A few members were nominated and we then could choose. Also there interestingly were many meetings with other companies, where we discussed and coordinated prior to the election, ‘hm, maybe this person isn’t so good’. There were again those ones that are more associated with the labour side. So you can actually say that there is a larger camp, which is really brand-oriented and a smaller one which is a little bit more on the labour side.</p>	<p>Forming coalition with companies with skeptical attitude towards unions</p>	
Company G, I8	<p>Of course, we also put [this person] in the Steering Committee for political reasons because, in the first year, there were CR Representatives, who had represented the brand side in the Steering Committee. But they found themselves confronted by a team of professional lawyers. [...] This is why we decided, at that time, we also need more lawyers or people with a legal background in the Steering Committee, so that it can be averted, that every discussion turns legal at some point. So and that was one of the reasons and of course it is always more comfortable when you are in the driver’s seat instead of being driven.</p>	<p>Placing colleagues with legal expertise and defensive attitude towards unions in positions of power within the Accord</p>	
Company G, I9	<p>[...] because we have to be careful, I believe, not to engage in social colonialism, because this is what it is after all. I say, ‘your opinion is of no interest to me, because I know what is right and</p>	<p>Criticizing lack of inclusion of other business stakeholders</p>	<p>delegitimizing</p>

	<p>this is why I am pushing through with this, and I do not even take you into the steering bodies that decide what I can force through in your country because we in the western hemisphere know exactly what is good for you.</p>	<p>by invoking frame of social colonialism</p>		
Company O, I17	<p>This makes the Accord basically a kind of Trojan horse, where actually we have a country with a basic issue, i.e. fire safety and building security, which is also subject matter of the document, but there are many many trade union interests that can be read between the lines.</p>	<p>Discussing union behavior by employing Trojan horse metaphor</p>		
Company G, I9	<p>And then it is quite fundamental for me [...], it is a question about democracy, in how far I can with my convictions of the western world, as justified and as ethically motivated as they may be, simply push through in other countries which are a completely different in cultural terms, societal and political terms and that have a completely different view on the world and if, to put it bluntly, they actually have a right to regulate their community autonomously in a democratic manner, so this is where one somehow runs a little halt into a conflict and that is what the Accord currently does.</p>	<p>Raising doubts about the democratic legitimacy of the Accord in Bangladesh</p>		
Company G, I9	<p>And when I approach [the supplier] with this position, and say that you can only install fire doors that meet the highest US standards [...] you reach the limits of what this country is capable of achieving both intellectually and technically. And, of course, it is then up to the companies to reach an understanding, also among trade unions: 'Dear people, now we have to get a bit pragmatic in the matter'. And we all agree where we want to go, but to achieve this sustainably, I have to take the others with me.</p>	<p>Demanding pragmatic approach to problem-solving from unions</p>		
Company M, I15	<p>We are very much in favor of that something happens in Bangladesh, such that the conditions will improve, not only through the Accord, but also through the BSCI – we are fully in favor of this. Our accession into this initiative, i.e. into the Accord, however was induced by the pressure from our customers.</p>	<p>Justifying Accord engagement with sole reference to market pressures</p>	<p>economic reasoning</p>	<p>Trajectory 4: Affirmative construction of conservative PCSRI</p>
Company H, I10	<p>I have to tell you honestly, our first priority is to take care of our business. That's the most important thing. We have to get orders first. This is the most difficult aspect of all. Once we have them,</p>	<p>Prioritizing financial interests of the firm</p>		

	we try to handle them on time. And then, of course, we try to make the factories better. But if the factory does not cooperate, what are we to do about that? [...] We cannot save the world that is not our approach.			
Company N, I16	But I think, it is also necessary to find a balance, with regards to what else we are imposing on factories. To be blunt, I think, our customers are also continuously imposing on us new programmes that we have to implement and if we continue to impose new things on our supplying factories, after a while, one could say that it gets a little bit too much. And I think that then one cannot concentrate on the actual business.	Perceiving Accord engagement as distraction from core business		
Company K, 13	In our case it depends very, very much on our main customers. And the question simply is what the next thing is that they compel us to participate, if I may be quite open and honest. There are relatively few possibilities of influence.	Emphasizing limited leeway due to competitive pressures	contextualizing	
Company M, I15	For our company, it [the Accord] takes us a bit of competitiveness. So we as a small supplier, we have these requirements, we can barely keep up with. In this respect we hardly have the chance to keep up with the big importers, which are simply always on the ground, which then also have the finger on it and that have the production site under control.	Stressing small firm size and limited financial and managerial capacities in comparison to bigger Accord signatory companies		
Company H, I10	'Money has to go into my pocket', that is the purpose of politics in Bangladesh. And how am I to make it clear to a factory owner that you have to stick to the rules and laws when everyone else breaks them. This just makes no sense.	Playing down transformative potential of Accord by pointing to systemic deficiencies in Bangladesh		
Company P, I18	We are more or less reserved I would say. We are [...] never really in the focus of anything, cause we are a family-owned company and are in [the middle of nowhere, somewhere in Germany], and therefore we kind of are under the radar, and this is also how we	Displaying passive and purely reactive attitude towards Accord processes	keeping a low profile	

	<p>were acting in the ACCORD. We are not the ones who are pushing to work harder together with unions, we are just wanting our factory to be inspected, we don't want something happening like Rana Plaza again and we think that the ACCORD is also a really good tool to push these goals, but we are not really actively involved in any working groups or any big discussions with other brands.</p>			
Company K, I13	<p>[...] we have signed that thing and now we want to know what is happening there and want to inform us about the current things that will accompany us in our work in the future. We must know what is going on right now and what is expecting us in the future. So we have to go there.</p>	<p>Participating in Accord meetings solely for information and networking purposes</p>		
Company H, I10	<p>I do not know what comes after it [the Accord], but something else will come after it. So this is absolutely normal. Something always precedes and new ideas come up and after a while [...] everyone joins in, why so ever. This is normal. This is simply the standard procedure. No one worries about that. Just in the same manner you always have the customers that means that if we want to produce for [a larger retailer], we must have factories in the pool [of said large retailer] that produce for no- one else. This is much harder, because otherwise you may not place any orders there. This is much more difficult than the Accord, because this is something you simply have to do, go along with it and all is well.</p>	<p>Perceiving Accord as purely external demand on management</p>		
Company K, I13	<p>The Accord has this role, not me.</p>	<p>Emphasizing separation between own firm and Accord</p>		
Company H, I10	<p>This is actually their most fundamental job, to say, ok I have a building law - and they indeed have it - and that simply must be implemented by a government body. This is, in my view, a core task of a state. Bangladesh just doesn't do that. So we are merely providing an auxiliary construct for people; we do the job of someone else, with which we actually have nothing to do with.</p>	<p>Attributing main responsibility to the state</p>	<p>rejecting responsibility</p>	

Company N, II6	I think, in such big projects, as a big player you simply have more power and means to implement and achieve things.	Attributing more responsibility to bigger Accord signatories	
Company N, I 16	I mean, there have been many cases where a factory in Bangladesh said: 'I do not work with Europe, it's too complicated for me, I rather prefer my Chinese customer who doesn't care so much'. And consequently, it does not bring us very far. So, if we could somehow find a standard, that has a worldwide reach and has all act in concert somehow.	Perceiving worldwide standards that are equally shared and enforced among all nations as only real solution	

A10 Interview Transcripts (Confidential)

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