

Socio-Economic Review

Special Issue on “Corporate Social Responsibility and Institutional Theory: New Perspectives on Private Governance”

Guest Editors:

Steve Brammer, University of Bath

Gregory Jackson, Freie Universität Berlin

Dirk Matten, Schulich School of Business, York University, Toronto

Deadline:

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Rationale:

One notable feature of corporate social responsibility (CSR) is its fundamentally contested and socially constructed nature. While CSR has been typically seen in terms of voluntary and firm-specific phenomena in prior research, what constitutes responsible or irresponsible corporate behaviour depends very much on the wider institutional setting and how it defines and regulates legitimate corporate action. Corporations are embedded in wider societal and political arrangements and participate in local, national, and transnational polities. While CSR research widely acknowledges the importance of stakeholder salience and institutional context in shaping CSR, the role of institutions and processes of institutional change for CSR has remained under-explored. A second, less studied, aspect of the comparative, and therefore collective, character of CSR concerns the importance of norms, conventions, and expectations of appropriate conduct that originate outside of firms' organisational field. Such norms and standards of behaviour often relate to differences between countries in formal regulatory institutions or in normative or cultural conventions regarding business conduct.

Researchers have recently shown particular interest in the intersection of CSR and institutional theory (Aguilera & Jackson, 2003; Campbell, 2006; Matten & Moon, 2008). The study of institutions brings light to how responsible and irresponsible behaviour of corporations is framed by wider social and political frames. Apart from mapping out new conceptual space in the understanding of CSR, an institutional perspective beyond the immediate organisational fields of individual companies has recently generated interest through the developments in the world economy in the late 2000s. The so-called 'financial crisis' has not only surfaced novel forms of corporate irresponsibility but in fact has unmasked the pivotal role of private corporations for a host of issues hitherto seen as core expectations on governments. The institutional embeddedness and governance mechanisms with which business and societies are mutually interdependent have given rise to novel ways of thinking not only about CSR, but in fact about the role of the institution of the modern (global) corporation (Crouch, 2004, 2009).

While institutions shape how firms respond to a variety of social and environmental issues, research has shown that companies are not passive actors in processes of institutional entrepreneurship and development, particularly in contexts characterised by weak, underdeveloped, or unenforced institutional arrangements. The presence of such 'institutional voids' presents particular opportunities and challenges for understanding and enacting corporate responsibilities. Multinational companies face particular difficulties in developing and implementing approaches to the management of their social responsibilities when operating across diverse institutional environments.

The goals of this Special Issue are to (a) stimulate innovative research on the social and political embeddedness of CSR within a variety of local, sectoral, national, and international settings; (b) develop conceptual tools for understanding the intersection of CSR with regulatory institutions, as well as diverse institutions of economic governance or “varieties of capitalism”; and (c) advance our understanding of CSR as a process of governance, whereby responsible and irresponsible behaviour is socially defined, contested, and sanctioned by various stakeholders with different degrees of power and influence over corporate decision-making. We invite theoretical and empirical papers from a variety of traditions in thinking about and studying institutions. The following is a list of indicative, but not exhaustive, topic areas:

- CSR in cross-national comparison: institutional diversity and CSR; varieties of capitalism and corporate responsibility; implicit vs. explicit forms of CSR
- CSR and state regulation: the implications of liberal or interventionist forms of state intervention for defining the social space of CSR; framing of CSR in the context of different forms of statehood; CSR as a substitute for formal regulation; the role of CSR within “institutional voids” or areas of limited statehood
- Diffusion of CSR: understanding the spread and form of CSR initiatives; regulative, normative, and mimetic forms of isomorphism
- Standard setting: standard setting with regard to social, environmental or governance standards; use of social branding and labelling; regulation of social and environmental disclosure
- Stakeholder power and influence: local actor constellations and power dynamics; the role of unions in implementing CSR initiatives; forms of influence by NGOs, media, or other civil society actors
- Reputation as a governance mechanism: role of responsible and irresponsible behavior in shaping reputation;
- Historical perspectives on CSR: origins of CSR in different countries or sectors; long-term changes in the relationship between the state, civil society and corporations.

Submissions

Socio-Economic Review (SER) aims to encourage work on the relationship between society, economy, institutions and markets, moral commitments and the rational pursuit of self-interest. The journal seeks articles that focus on economic action in its social and historical context. In broad disciplinary terms, papers are drawn from sociology, political science, economics and the management and policy sciences. The journal encourages papers that seek to recombine disciplinary domains in response to practically relevant issues, while at the same time encouraging the development of new theory. Papers should be submitted by email to Gregory Jackson (email: gregory.jackson@fu-berlin.de).

Please prepare manuscripts according to the guidelines shown at ser.oxfordjournals.org. The maximum length of articles including references, notes and abstract is 10,000, and the minimum length is 6,000 words. Articles must be accompanied by an abstract of no more than 150 words. The main document has to be anonymous and should contain title, abstract, and strictly avoid self references.

Papers will be reviewed following the journal's normal review process and criteria. Papers accepted into the revision stage will be presented and discussed with the Guest Editors at a workshop which will be organized in conjunction with the SASE annual conference on June 23-25, 2011 held at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Spain (for details, see www.sase.org).

For further information please contact any of the Guest Editors for this Special Issue:

Steve Brammer: mnssjab@management.bath.ac.uk

Gregory Jackson: gregory.jackson@fu-berlin.de

Dirk Matten: dmatten@schulich.yorku.ca

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