The business responsibility matrix: a diagnostic tool to aid the design of better interventions for achieving the SDGs

Noemi Sinkovics
Business School, The University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand
Rudolf R. Sinkovics
Business School, The University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand and LUT University, Lappeenranta, Finland, and
Jason Archie-Acheampong
Rush Group Limited, London, UK

Received 22 July 2020
Revised 7 September 2020
14 September 2020
Accepted 20 September 2020

Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to propose an integrative framework that enables the mapping of firm activities along two dimensions of responsible business behavior: a width and a depth dimension. Width includes associative, peripheral, operational and embedded responsibility. In terms of depth, we identify delinquent, neutral, nascent, enhanced and advanced levels of responsibility.

Design/methodology/approach – The responsibility matrix is developed by drawing on the literature and the ambition to provide a more nuanced map of a firm's activities and its contributions toward the sustainable development goals (SDGs).

Findings – The matrix enables the classification of firm activities into different functional categories based on how they relate to a firm's business model. Further, the meaningfulness of each activity can be identified by determining its depth.

Research limitations/implications – Mapping all the relevant activities of a multinational firm onto the responsibility matrix enables managers and policymakers to identify areas where transformation is most needed. Further, multinational firms can use the matrix to map the activities of their value chain partners and design more effective standards and interventions.

Practical implications – The business responsibility matrix represents a diagnostic tool that enables the detailed mapping of firm capabilities and the identification of areas where further capacity building is necessary and where pockets of excellence exist.

Social implications – The responsibility matrix offers a benchmarking tool for progress that can be used in conjunction with existing guidelines and initiatives such as the United Nations (UN) Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, the UN Global Compact and the Global Reporting Initiative.

The authors gratefully acknowledge comments received from Rob van Tulder (Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University), Heinz Tüselmann (Manchester Metropolitan University and UNCTAD) and participants at the AIB 2019 annual conference in Copenhagen. Financial support was received from the University of Manchester 2014 ESRC Impact Acceleration Account [ES/M500392/1] and the Alliance Manchester Business School (AMBS) Lord Alliance strategic research investment fund [LA-SRIF AA14179].

Conflicts of interest: No conflicts of interests.

Multinational Business Review
Vol. 29 No. 1, 2021
pp. 1-20

1525-383X
DOI 10.1108/MBR-07-2020-0154

Originality/value – The responsibility matrix acknowledges that firms can engage with the SDGs through different types of activity (width dimension). Simultaneously, it recognizes that activities in the same category can have varying levels of effectiveness (depth dimension).

Keywords SMEs, MNEs, Suppliers, Responsible business, Corporate social responsibility (CSR), Sustainable development goals (SDGs), Multinational enterprise (MNE), Responsibility matrix, Small and medium-sized enterprise (SME)

Paper type Viewpoint

1. Introduction

The *global sustainable development report* prepared by an independent group of scientists (2019) concludes that despite initial efforts, there has been limited success in terms of progress toward achieving the sustainable development goals (SDGs). The scientists posit that quick and substantial action is necessary to bring about transformation without which the SDGs cannot be achieved. The analysis in the report further reveals several trends including "rising inequalities, climate change, biodiversity loss and increasing amounts of waste from human activity that are overwhelming capacities to process them" (UN, 2019: xx). The modeling undertaken by the Stockholm Resilience Center (Randers *et al.*, 2018) shows that without transformative policy action, the SDGs cannot be achieved within the planetary boundaries that represent the safe operating space for human beings within the earth system. As a consequence, there is a pressing need to decouple economic activity from its adverse social and environmental impacts (UN, 2019).

However, while economic incentives and regulatory pressures can play a key governing role when it comes to firm-level decision-making, a number of behavioral and contextual factors can counterbalance or even over-ride such incentives and pressures (Kolk *et al.*, 2018; Sinkovics *et al.*, 2016; Soundararajan *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, a more nuanced approach to analyzing the actions of firms is needed (Pisani *et al.*, 2017). This is all the more important as the agency of private sector firms – small or large, domestic or international – is predominantly viewed in a rather polarized way. With some notable exceptions, studies tend to either focus on the dark side of business agency and highlight their wrongdoing (Burmester *et al.*, 2019) or focus on the light side and emphasize their positive contributions (Yunus *et al.*, 2010). However, as several empirical and thought pieces demonstrate, the dark side of the business does not always stem from malicious intent (Sinkovics *et al.*, 2016, 2014).

There are many layers of complexity that can have unintended, negative outcomes despite the best of intentions (Sinkovics *et al.*, 2016, 2015). For example, Kolk (2016) points to challenges surrounding compliance in the international business arena when companies operate in multiple institutional environments with varying laws and regulations. This is a very important observation, given that standards and regulatory compliance are still regarded as an important measure of multinational enterprise (MNE) engagement with sustainable development and the SDGs (Topple *et al.*, 2017). However, even if the SDGs are incorporated into sustainability reporting, MNEs tend to focus on internally actionable and mostly passive goals with the aim of avoiding harm, as opposed to externally actionable, more meaningful goals targeted at doing good (van Zanten and van Tulder, 2018). Sinkovics *et al.* (2016) provide further evidence by demonstrating how a high level of supplier compliance with corporate social responsibility (CSR) standards can destroy previously existing social value and trigger unintended consequences. An example, they provide is suppliers discontinuing the provision of free, cooked lunches to workers because of the high cost of compliance. The unintended consequence was the increased risk of workers' ill health due to malnutrition. This is in line with Wettstein *et al.*'s (2019) observation that there is a gap between the adoption of standards and their translation into actual, meaningful impact.

An explanation that goes beyond the assumption of malicious intent highlights the fact that alleviating social and environmental constraints is not simply a matter of financial resources. Firms also require the capability to identify and alleviate such constraints (Sinkovics *et al.*, 2015; Wettstein, 2012). As a consequence, when it comes to achieving the SDGs, it is not sufficient to design economic policy instruments or to apply regulatory pressures to bring about the "right" kind of firm behavior, including the adoption of standards. While firms, especially large MNEs, can be a vehicle for capacity building across several SDGs, they also need to be at the receiving end of capacity building efforts. This is all the more important because responsible behavior is not binary. Sinkovics *et al.* (2019) suggest thinking of such behavior as a continuum between two extremes; that is, maliciously irresponsible firm behavior and behavior that is responsible in every possible way. In this paper, we take this suggestion one step further and argue that organizations' activities can be mapped onto two continua. Inspired by Fujita's (2011) capabilities matrix, we propose a responsibility matrix that allows firm activities to be classified in terms of a width dimension and a depth dimension (Figure 1). Accordingly, a firm can engage in a range of activities, each of which may be at a different level of responsibility.

The resulting responsibility matrix represents a generic diagnostic tool that enables the detailed mapping of firm activities and the identification of areas where further capacity building is necessary. Additionally, we argue that the responsibility matrix represents a multi-purpose benchmarking tool for tracking sustainable development progress. It can be used in conjunction with existing guidelines and initiatives such as the United Nations (UN) *Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights*, the UN *Global Compact* and the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI). Furthermore, the responsibility matrix can aid the examination and comparison of outcomes and consequences of standards in sectors where a multiplicity of standards exist (Fransen *et al.*, 2019). In sectors dominated by de-standardized CSR practices (Fransen *et al.*, 2019), the responsibility matrix can be used to meaningfully evaluate their impact and compare them to the outcomes of the local or global standard implementation.

While the diagnostic tool is generic and can be used by firms of all scopes and scales, it is especially relevant for MNEs, both for internal and external use. Internally, the tool can help MNEs meaningfully map and compare activities in subsidiaries spread across diverse institutional environments (Topple *et al.*, 2017). Externally, this tool can facilitate the

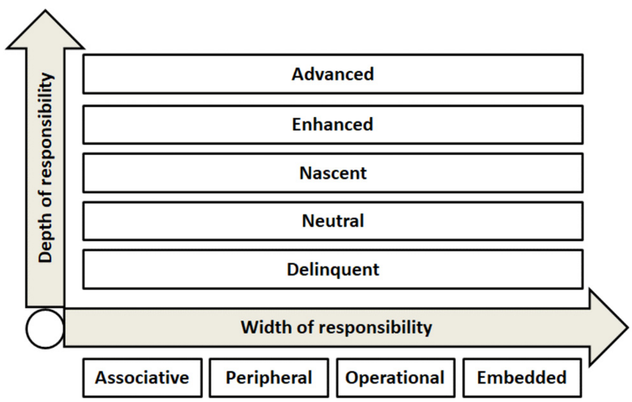

Figure 1.
Conceptual dimensions of the responsibility matrix

mapping of supplier activities connected to their value chains and thus identify their capacity building needs. As a consequence, our proposed responsibility matrix represents an integrative framework of corporate responsibility that can account for complexities in the international domain (Pisani *et al.*, 2017).

2. Conceptualizing the width of responsible business behavior

The width of responsible business behavior refers to a functional categorization of activities. Traditionally, business and management scholarship has combined the social and environmental responsibilities of firms toward their stakeholders under the broad umbrella of CSR. In his seminal contribution, Bowen (1953) makes an early attempt to normatively define social responsibility as the obligations of business people toward meeting society's objectives and values. When discussing the development of CSR approaches, studies highlight the multidimensional nature of CSR (Garriga and Melé, 2004) and acknowledge the inherent diversity of practices (Lindgreen and Swaen, 2010). This can be partially explained by differences in institutional norms and stakeholder priorities in geographically dispersed production networks (Lucea and Doh, 2012; Purdy *et al.*, 2010; Rathert, 2016), as well as stakeholder groups' level of influence over a firm's activities (Mendelow, 1981; Reed *et al.*, 2009). Individual characteristics of decision-makers including their ethical disposition, awareness of issues and ability to address them also shape the range of activities in which firms may engage (Sinkovics *et al.*, 2016; Soundararajan *et al.*, 2018). Additionally, there is inherent diversity in CSR activities in terms of formal (codes, standards and certifications) and informal measures (Russo and Tencati, 2009).

In terms of attempts at CSR activity categorization, Carroll's (1991) pyramid of CSR identifies a number of broad CSR categories. The economic strand denotes the provision of goods and services that bring about benefits to society. The legal category relates to compliance where a firm pursues economic activities in accordance with the legal framework in which it operates. In the ethical category, firms go beyond legal requirements to meet stakeholders' expectations and standards. Finally, the philanthropic category describes activities where firms go beyond their aforementioned duties to adopt voluntary philanthropic practices (Carroll, 1991). Frynas and Stephens (2015) differentiate between activities aimed at the micro (individual employee level), meso (relationships between firms and organizations) and macro levels (the role of the firm in relation to society). Similarly, Matten and Moon (2008) distinguish between implicit and explicit forms of CSR. The former relates to firm activities that fulfill their wider legal and societal obligations, while the latter denotes voluntary initiatives that are detached from the core operations and serve societal needs. McWilliams *et al.* (2006) characterize CSR as behavior that goes beyond compliance, with activities including human resource development, strategies that reduce a firm's environmental impact, supporting community interest groups and delivering products and services that address a social and environmental issue. Finally, Aguinis and Glavas (2013) place CSR behavior into two categories: embedded and peripheral. The embedded category classifies CSR activities that are internal to a firm's operations, whereas peripheral activities are external practices unrelated to the core competencies and operations of the firm (e.g. philanthropy and volunteering).

Based on the above discussion, we propose the following four width categories that can be applied to firm activities: "associative," "peripheral," "operational" and "embedded." *Associative activities* encompass the engagement of a firm in partnerships and/or networks that were formed to further a specific cause. *Peripheral activities* denote voluntary action in support of a cause that is outside of a firm's core activities. *Operational activities* represent a firm's core activities linked to day-to-day operations. Finally, *embedded activities* encompass firms' products and services. Each of these categories of activity can be directly linked to one or several SDGs. Whether the performed action makes a positive, negative or neutral contribution to the related SDGs will depend on the depth of the activity, as conceptually delineated in the next section.

3. Conceptualizing the depth of responsible business behavior

The depth dimension of responsibility seeks to capture the degree of responsibility reflected in a particular action. As with the width dimension, studies have attempted to categorize various degrees of responsibility. For example, Sethi (1975) proposes three distinct dimensions of corporate social performance in terms of a firm's adaptation to social needs; namely, social obligation (proscriptive stage), social responsibility (prescriptive stage) and social responsiveness (adaptive or preventative stages). Carroll (1991) discusses three forms of firm behavior projected onto a moral scale. "Immoral" firms engage in exploitative behavior, whereas "amoral" firms comply with legal requirements but do not actively pursue ethical behavior. In contrast, "moral" firms take an active leadership role in pursuing ethical behavior. Jones *et al.* (2007) describe five stakeholder cultures: agency, corporate egoist, instrumentalist, moralist and altruist. They then discuss how these cultures map onto a continuum from individually self-interested to completely other-focused. Maon *et al.* (2010) build on the scheme of Jones *et al.* (2007) and propose a three-phase, seven-stage consolidative model of CSR development. The seven stages progress from completely dismissing any form of CSR activity beyond financial gain to embedding "CSR principles into every aspect of the organization and its activities" (Maon *et al.*, 2010, p. 33).

While these frameworks do capture degrees of responsible behavior to an extent, their main aim is to explain the overall stance a firm takes toward its stakeholder responsibility and how this stance may evolve over time. In contrast, Wettstein's (2012) distinction between "respecting," "protecting" and "realizing" human rights offers a more advanced representation of the degrees of responsibility. Firm actions at each stage embody an increase in involvement in activities working toward fulfilling human rights. Finally, when discussing firm action toward creating social value, Sinkovics *et al.* (2015) differentiate between "symptom treatment" and "constraint alleviation." They propose that while treating symptoms may be important to gain time until the root causes of issues can be addressed, real change can only happen when these root causes are consciously and effectively targeted (Sinkovics *et al.*, 2015). Based on the above discussion, we propose five depth dimensions: "delinquent," "neutral," "nascent," "enhanced" and "advanced." When an activity qualifies as delinquent it results in negative societal, labor or environmental outcomes. Neutral activities neither create harm nor result in positive outcomes. Activities that are classified as nascent can be described as reactive with a marginal impact. Enhanced responsible activities can be characterized as more proactive and have a more significant impact. Nevertheless, these activities will still be targeted at symptom treatment rather than at the alleviation of root causes. Finally, activities classified as advanced specifically target the root causes of issues. The underlying idea is similar to the scoring model proposed by Nilsson *et al.* (2016) to map the interaction between individual SDGs or targets. However, in our case, the focus is not on interactions between SDGs. Instead, we consider individual activities performed in a given category (width dimension) and examine how meaningfully (depth dimension) they contribute to the achievement of one or more SDGs. The next section brings together these continua (width and depth of responsibility) into an integrative framework.

4. The responsibility matrix: an integrated framework

Similarly to Fujita's (2011) capability matrix, our proposed responsibility matrix provides a nuanced map of a firm's activities and their contributions toward the SDGs. The matrix enables the classification of activities into different functional categories based on how they relate to the firm's business model; specifically, whether they relate to a firm's core activities and raison d'être or whether they are on the periphery. Further, the depth dimensions provide information about the impacts of activities. The underlying assumption is that the more depth there is to an activity the stronger its contribution to the achievement of the SDGs is going to be. Table 1 provides an overview of the width and depth dimensions, as well as examples that we identified from the literature.

4.1 Associative activities

Associative activities refer to firms' engagement in partnerships or networks that support a specific cause. Examples include multi-stakeholder initiatives, business networks/associations, business – non-governmental organization (NGO) partnerships and business – university research engagement. Multi-stakeholder initiatives represent a form of private self-regulation (Zeyen *et al.*, 2016) and offer a platform for sharing best practices (Baumann-Pauly *et al.*, 2017).

The engagement of firms with NGOs can aid in the process of addressing their societal, labor and environmental responsibilities. Forms of engagement include partnerships with NGOs, dialogue with NGOs or the sponsorship of NGOs (Kourula, 2010). Business – community engagement can be an important platform for capacity building with the ultimate goal of fostering a supportive environment to address social issues (Loza, 2004). Further, business networks can be a source of relevant knowledge that can be leveraged to facilitate positive sustainable development outcomes (Camisón, 2008; Sakarya *et al.*, 2012). Moreover, participation in partnerships and networks can be used for collective action (Besser, 1998). For example, collective engagement and governance in clusters can result in the promotion of equitable standards and healthy food education (Donald and Blay-Palmer, 2006). However, the outcomes of firms' engagement in partnerships and networks with respect to their contribution to the SDGs can vary greatly; some associative partnerships are formed to achieve illegal and/or damaging outcomes. In the remainder of this section, we provide examples of each depth category.

Examples of associative activities at a delinquent level of responsibility include lobbying that negatively influences the climate agenda (InfluenceMap, 2019) and partnering with intermediaries by administering "corruption payments" to win government contracts (Arnold, 2006). These two activities have a negative impact on the achievement of SDG 13 and 16, respectively. Associative activities at a nascent level do not necessarily lead to positive outcomes in terms of meeting the SDGs or only do so superficially. For example, the global shea alliance promotes guidelines for maintaining sustainability within the shea industry. As a consequence, at face value being a member can be argued to contribute to SDG 12. However, although members agree to these guidelines there are no mechanisms in place to guarantee actual changes in behavior (GSA, 2017). When membership of a network or partnership requires firms to change their behavior, they display an enhanced level of responsibility. For instance, members of the roundtable on sustainable palm oil (RSPO) are required to adhere to an RSPO code of conduct and regularly communicate their actions to improve their responsible business behavior in the palm oil industry (RSPO, 2019). Therefore, being part of this initiative can be expected to make a more significant contribution to SDG 12 than the previous example. Finally, firms display an advanced level of associative action when they facilitate and drive sustainable development-related

			Width of responsibility			
			Associative	Peripheral	Operational	Embedded
Depth of responsibility	Delinquent	Definition	uses its networks and partnerships to knowingly create social and environmental harm	Firm knowingly uses its financial or human capital to fund or invest in causes that create social or environmental harm	Firm knowingly engages in operational activities that create social, labor or environmental harm	Firm knowingly delivers controversial products or services that in and of themselves create social or environmental harm
		Example	Partnership that facilitates bribery (Arnold, 2006) or illegal arms transactions (BHRRC, 2019)	Donations to a hate group (Kotch, 2019)	Tax evasion (Gokalp *et al.*, 2017), hazardous chemicals in fertilizers (Silvestre *et al.*, 2017)	Cigarettes, gambling machines, military weapons, alcohol (MSCI, 2016)
	Neutral	Definition	Firm does not engage in partnerships that create harm or seeks to address social, labor or environmental issues	Firm does not engage in any form of philanthropic activity	Firm does not address social, labor or environmental issues within its operations nor does it cause harm through or within its operations	Firm does not deliver a product or service that creates harm or addresses a social or environmental issue
	Nascent	Definition	Firm forms a partnership or joins a network, where membership does result in positive social, labor or environmental outcomes	Firm makes *ad hoc* one-off donations in response to humanitarian crises and external requests to meet immediate needs	Firm implements operational practices and procedures in response to compliance pressures, actions may not necessarily address social, labor or environmental constraints	Firm responds to pressures by delivering a product or service that in and of itself reduces the impact of its social and/or environmental harm but still creates negative harm
		Example	Global shea alliance (GSA, 2017) business in the community (BITC, 2017)	Companies respond to tsunami disaster (Eweje and Sakaki, 2015)	Audits – reporting – CSR standards (Adelstein and Clegg, 2016; Rodrigue *et al.*, 2013), product recalls (Beamish and Bapuji, 2008), gentrification through regeneration (Cox, 2017), warning labels (Bong, 2013; Torres *et al.*, 2007)	E-cigarettes (Gray and Edgecliffe-Johnson, 2017), sugar-free drinks (Coca Cola, 2017)

(*continued*)

Table 1. The business responsibility matrix – an integrated framework on responsible business behavior with descriptions

Table 1.

		Width of responsibility Associative	Peripheral	Operational	Embedded
Enhanced	Definition	Firm has an active participatory role within a network and/or partnership that tackles the negative effects of problems	Firm regularly engages in philanthropic giving that addresses the symptoms of social or environmental constraints	Firm implements practices and procedures that minimize the negative effects of social, labor or environment problems within its operations	Firm delivers a product or service designed to minimize the negative effects of a social or environmental constraint
	Example	RSPO (RSPO, 2019) Ethical trading initiative (ETI, 2019)	Donations to homeless charity (Barone *et al.*, 2007; Brei and Böhm, 2011), Morgan Stanley giving to Prince's Trust (Prince's Trust, 2019) HSBC funding to cancer research (HSBC, 2015)	Waste management (Chauhan and Singh, 2016), carbon offsetting (Nerlich and Koteyko, 2010), pollution prevention (Hoffren and Apajalahti, 2009)	Electronic waste recycling service (Widmer *et al.*, 2005) affordable housing (MSCI, 2016), reusable bags
Advanced	Definition	Firm takes a leadership role within a network and/or partnership to facilitate industry change to provide long-term solutions to firm level and external constraints (Eweje and Palakshappa, 2009; North and Nurse, 2014; Sinkovics *et al.*, 2015)	Firm establishes a philanthropic initiative or donates on a long-term basis to project(s) that seek to provide a long-term solution to tackling the root cause of a social or environmental constraint (Sinkovics *et al.*, 2015)	Firm adapts its operations to address the root causes of problems and remove social, labor or environmental constraints from its system (Sinkovics *et al.*, 2015)	Firm delivers a product or a service that provides a long-term solution to tackling the root cause of a constraint (Sinkovics *et al.*, 2015)
	Example	Business-university research projects (Trencher *et al.*, 2014) UK plastics pact (Nestle, 2018) Cadbury Cocoa partnership (Russel, 2008)	Microsoft philanthropies (Foley, 2017; Jack, 2017), Walmart Foundation (Walmart, 2019), HSBC funding to cancer research (HSBC, 2015)	Greening transportation (Golicic *et al.*, 2010), reverse logistics chains (Brix-Asala *et al.*, 2016; Kocabasoglu *et al.*, 2007), women on boards (Celis *et al.*, 2015), diversity management (Holck and Muhr, 2017)	Electric vehicles (e.g. Tesla cars) (Clark, 2017), solar panels (Dangelico, 2017)

transformation in and through their networks (Eweje and Palakshappa, 2009; North and Nurse, 2014; Roberts *et al.*, 2006; Rotter *et al.*, 2014).

4.2 Peripheral activities

Peripheral activities are voluntary and free from any regulatory compliance pressures. Specific practices include financial giving, employee volunteering and establishing philanthropic foundations. Firms may provide financial resources to support community events (Razalan *et al.*, 2017) or provide time allowances to encourage their employees to volunteer in their local community (Cycyota *et al.*, 2016; Lorenz *et al.*, 2016). Peripheral activities can be classified as delinquent when they use established foundations or other philanthropic activities as a front for illegal or other damaging activities; for instance, when firms give to charity for the sole purpose of avoiding tax payments (Osborne, 2012) they use philanthropy to mask irresponsible behavior. In this example, the action makes a negative contribution to SDG 16 and 8. Another example is when philanthropy is used to support hate groups that foster discrimination or social unrest (Kotch, 2019), thus making a negative contribution to SDG 16 and 10.

Peripheral activities at a nascent level include one-off donations or short-term temporary involvements in crisis relief (Razalan *et al.*, 2017). For instance, the 2011 tsunami disaster in Japan saw firms respond through one-off financial donations to support affected individuals (Eweje and Sakaki, 2015; Johnson *et al.*, 2011). Although this may address immediate subsistence needs (e.g. a temporary contribution to SDG 2), it does not resolve housing issues or put in place structures to minimize the negative consequences if such a crisis event was to occur again. When firms participate in regular philanthropic giving by addressing the symptoms of a problem but not its root cause, they display an enhanced level of responsibility. An example is water bottle companies who pledge a portion of the profit from the sale of each bottle to support clean water provision in poverty stricken areas (Barone *et al.*, 2007; Brei and Böhm, 2011). While, this initiative makes a positive contribution to SDG 6, using plastic bottles may offset the positive impact by affecting the achievement of SDGs 15, 14 and 12.

Finally, firms display an advanced level of responsible action when they establish a philanthropic initiative or donate on a long-term basis to projects that seek to remove societal or environmental constraints. Company foundations such as the Microsoft and Bloomberg philanthropies are examples of where companies and their founders have sought to combine their resources to undertake more long-term actions to address social and environmental constraints (Foley, 2017; Jack, 2017).

4.3 Operational activities

Operations management deals with the way in which goods or services are produced (Slack and Brandon-Jones, 2019). Therefore, operational activities focus on firm-level activities that alter the way in which inputs are transferred into outputs. Related areas include production and procurement, distribution, human resource management, corporate governance, sales and marketing.

At a delinquent level, firms actively participate in operational activities that cause societal, labor or environmental harm or breach the law. Examples include the negative impact that multinational gas companies have on indigenous communities and their environment (Huambachano, 2014), the pollution of hazardous materials created as a result of oil and gas production (Silvestre *et al.*, 2017), the negative health effects created by carcinogens in weed killers (Munshi, 2015) and hazardous waste created during production and then dumped irresponsibly (Barnes, 2011; Lambrechts and Hector, 2016; Magasin and

Gehlen, 1999; Triantafyllou and Cherrett, 2010). In the aforementioned examples, the effects result in negative health outcomes (negative contribution to SDG 3) or damage to the environment (negative contribution to SDG 6, 12, 13, 15). Moreover, when firms avoid paying the tax they intentionally engage in prohibited accounting practices (Gokalp *et al.*, 2017) and, by extension, negatively impact the achievement of SDG 16. Other delinquent activities such as corruption, bribery, forced labor (Fiaschi *et al.*, 2017) and accounting fraud (Troy *et al.*, 2011) also make negative contributions to SDG 16.

Operational activities at a nascent level of responsibility include activities that create unintended, negative externalities despite bringing about some societal benefit. For instance, a firm may participate in a regeneration investment scheme that may improve housing provision and thus make a positive contribution to SDG 11, but simultaneously creates unintended negative consequences that arise from gentrification (Cox, 2017), canceling out some of the positive contributions to SDG 11. Within the environmental sciences and urban studies literature, the term "social upgrading" is used to describe the process of gentrification where urban redevelopment brings improvements to the physical environment (Lee, 2018). However, research shows that gentrification through the privatization of housing may also result in social downgrading. This occurs when the private development of housing creates ethnic (Borsdorf *et al.*, 2016; Boterman and van Gent, 2014) or urban segregation. The latter occurs when luxury private developers improve the livelihoods of low income families through the provision of social housing but cause urban segregation between low and high income residents when separate entrances or social spaces are created for the two groups (Osborne, 2014). In this case, there is a negative contribution to SDG 10. Moreover, social upgrading through private-led gentrification may lead to displacement (Ye *et al.*, 2015). This is because low income families may not be able to afford private housing and thus can become disconnected from their communities (Podagrosi and Vojnovic, 2008).

Product recalls are another example of operational activity at a nascent level (Beamish and Bapuji, 2008; Chang and Chang, 2015; Cheah *et al.*, 2007; Luo, 2008; Tang and Babich, 2014). They do not necessarily create positive outcomes, but by complying with regulatory measures they can minimize harm to consumers and are thus connected to SDG 12 and 3. Disclosing negative health implications of products to consumers (Jones *et al.*, 2016), following advertising guidelines to protect vulnerable groups (Babor *et al.*, 2017, 2013; McMullan *et al.*, 2012), reporting on firms' societal, labor and environmental activities (Doorey, 2011) are further examples of operational activities at a nascent level of responsibility. The associated SDGs in these examples are SDG 8 and 12.

For example, the United Kingdom *Modern Slavery Act* (UKPGA, 2015) requires firms to demonstrate through a publicly available statement what they are doing to ensure that modern slavery does not occur in their supply chains, but this does not necessarily guarantee that the supply chain is free from exploitation. Further, audits act as a mechanism for monitoring compliance with labor standards (Brender *et al.*, 2015; Cohen *et al.*, 2002) with independent auditing regimes used to help overcome internal audit bias (Brender *et al.*, 2015). However, when audits are conducted by third party NGOs with limited power to challenge firm behavior, their ability to drive change is limited (Kourula and Delalieux, 2016). Moreover, research into the adoption of CSR and sustainability standards reveals that even firms showing high compliance may create negative outcomes for their intended beneficiaries (Barrientos and Smith, 2007; Giri and Singh, 2016; Locke, 2013; Mitiku *et al.*, 2017; Ruwanpura, 2016; Sinkovics *et al.*, 2016).

Operational activities are at an enhanced level of responsibility when they minimize negative effects on social, labor or environmental values. Although such activities may have positive social or environmental outcomes, they do not alleviate the systemic root causes of the issues. Examples include carbon offsetting and emissions trading (Nerlich and Koteyko, 2010) and voluntarily paying a living wage to employees based on the calculated cost of living (LivingWage, 2018). In contrast, operational activities at an advanced level of responsibility include practices that go beyond attempts to minimize risks and proactively seek to tackle the root causes of social, labor or environmental constraints (Sinkovics *et al.*, 2015); for instance, firms addressing the problem of global warming by integrating renewable resources into their value chains (Svensson *et al.*, 2010) or avoiding unnecessary transportation (Golicic *et al.*, 2010). By moving to zero plastic packagings, firms remove the environmental constraint of plastic pollution from within their internal operations (Beitzen-Heineke *et al.*, 2017). Reverse logistics and supply chains are examples of waste management activities aimed at preventing waste creation via the re-use of production materials and their re-integration into the value chain (Brix-Asala *et al.*, 2016; Kocabasoglu *et al.*, 2007). All these examples demonstrate that while some actions can make positive contributions to a specific SDG, the extent of that contribution will vary depending on the depth of the action.

4.4 Embedded activities

Embedded activities encompass firms' product and service offerings. This category is important as products and services – along with the way they are produced and disseminated – are at the core of economic activity. Some products create harm to consumers and the environment through their sheer existence or usage. An example of embedded activities at a delinquent level is the production and distribution of cigarettes. Smoking not only creates negative health effects but also contributes significantly to pollution. As a consequence, selling cigarettes makes a negative contribution to SDG 3 and 13. Embedded activities at a nascent level of responsibility reduce the social and/or environmental harm of a product or service, yet the harm these products create is still present. For example, while e-cigarettes may reduce the negative effects of tobacco-based cigarettes, they still have harmful health outcomes through nicotine consumption (Gray and Edgecliffe-Johnson, 2017). Embedded activities at an enhanced level of responsibility minimize the negative effects of social or environmental constraints but do not alleviate the underlying root cause. For example, firms create shared value when they deliver a product or service that delivers some degree of social value (Darendeli and Hill, 2016; Pfitzer *et al.*, 2013), such as selling affordable medicinal drugs in developing countries (Bruyaka *et al.*, 2013; Ghauri and Rao, 2009). Embedded activities at an advanced level of responsibility are those that involve firms delivering a product or service that addresses the root cause of a sustainable development constraint; for instance, replacing chemical-based products with plant-based products (Rezai *et al.*, 2016) and plastic packaging with compostable packaging.

5. Conclusions

By drawing on the literature we propose an integrative framework that enables the mapping of firm activities along two dimensions; a width and a depth dimension. The significance of this diagnostic tool is manifold. First, it acknowledges that firms can engage with the SDGs through different types of activities (width dimension). Simultaneously, it recognizes that activities in the same category can have varying effectiveness levels (depth dimension). Specifically, while certain activities in a category are detrimental to achievement of the SDGs, other activities may represent neutral, incremental or transformative contributions toward the goals. Mapping all the relevant activities of a multinational firm onto the responsibility matrix enables managers and policymakers to identify areas where transformation is most needed. This would allow the more efficient and effective targeting of capacity building efforts at both the firm and policy level. Further, the responsibility matrix can be used to identify pockets of excellence in the private sector that can be leveraged in multi-stakeholder initiatives and inter-firm relationships. Small and medium-sized enterprises are often portrayed as lacking both awareness of sustainable development issues and capabilities to address them (United Nations Global Compact, 2015). However, while they may lack financial resources because of their embeddedness in local communities they frequently have a superior understanding of the issues (Sinkovics *et al.*, 2014). Moreover, they may already have functioning initiatives in place from which MNEs and policymakers could learn, instead of replacing them with top-down initiatives that are often not sufficiently sensitive to the local context (Sinkovics *et al.*, 2016). Thus, MNEs can use the responsibility matrix to map the activities of their suppliers and identify where capacity building is necessary and what the MNE can learn from suppliers. Finally, the matrix does not simply represent a diagnostic tool; it can also be used as a benchmarking tool to meaningfully track firm progress. To decouple economic activity from environmental impacts (UN, 2019), firms need to profoundly transform their product and service offerings, as well as their operational activities. This is only possible if they reach an advanced level of responsibility in both categories. Reframing reporting standards such as the GRI against the responsibility matrix would make reported progress more meaningful.

References

Adelstein, J. and Clegg, S. (2016), "Code of ethics: a stratified vehicle for compliance", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 138 No. 1, pp. 53-66, doi: 10.1007/s10551-015-2581-9.

Aguinis, H. and Glavas, A. (2013), "Embedded versus peripheral corporate social responsibility: psychological foundations", *Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, Vol. 6 No. 4, pp. 314-332, doi: 10.1111/iops.12059.

Arnold, M. (2006), "Total faces Iran bribery probe [website]", Financial Times, available at: www.ft.com/content/0c99d8d0-8f99-11db-9ba3-0000779e2340 (accessed 29 March 2017).

Babor, T.F., Robaina, K., Noel, J.K. and Ritson, E.B. (2017), "Vulnerability to alcohol-related problems: a policy brief with implications for the regulation of alcohol marketing", *Addiction*, Vol. 112, pp. 94-101, doi: 10.1111/add.13626.

Babor, T.F., Xuan, Z.M., Damon, D. and Noel, J.K. (2013), "An empirical evaluation of the US beer institute's self-regulation code governing the content of beer advertising", *American Journal of Public Health*, Vol. 103 No. 10, pp. E45-E51, doi: 10.2105/ajph.2013.301487.

Barnes, R.L. (2011), "Regulating the disposal of cigarette butts as toxic hazardous waste", *Tobacco Control*, Vol. 20 No. Supplement 1, pp. I45-I48, doi: 10.1136/tc.2010.041301.

Barone, M.J., Norman, A.T. and Miyazaki, A.D. (2007), "Consumer response to retailer use of cause-related marketing: is more fit better?", *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 83 No. 4, pp. 437-445, doi: 10.1016/j.jretai.2007.03.006.

Barrientos, S. and Smith, S. (2007), "Do workers benefit from ethical trade? Assessing codes of labour practice in global production systems", *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 28 No. 4, pp. 713-729, doi: 10.1080/01436590701336580.

Baumann-Pauly, D., Nolan, J., van Heerden, A. and Samway, M. (2017), "Industry-specific multi-stakeholder initiatives that govern corporate human rights standards: legitimacy assessments of the fair labor association and the global network initiative", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 143 No. 4, pp. 771-787, doi: 10.1007/s10551-016-3076-z.

Beamish, P.W. and Bapuji, H. (2008), "Toy recalls and China: emotion vs. evidence", *Management and Organization Review*, Vol. 4 No. 2, pp. 197-209, doi: 10.1111/j.1740-8784.2008.00105.x.

Beitzen-Heineke, E.F., Balta-Ozkan, N. and Reefke, H. (2017), "The prospects of zero-packaging grocery stores to improve the social and environmental impacts of the food supply chain", *Journal of Cleaner Production*, Vol. 140, pp. 1528-1541, doi: 10.1016/j.jclepro.2016.09.227.

Besser, T.L. (1998), "The significance of community to business social responsibility", *Rural Sociology*, Vol. 63 No. 3, pp. 412-431, doi: 10.1111/j.1549-0831.1998.tb00686.x.

BHRRC (2019), "Apartheid banks: civil society groups demand accountability for apartheid profiteers, [online]", Business and Human Rights Resource Centre, available at: www.business-humanrights.org/en/civil-society-groups-file-oecd-complaint-against-european-banks-for-alleged-role-in-human-rights-abuses-during-apartheid-regime-incl-co-responses (accessed 12 August 2019).

BITC (2017), "Business in the community – the prince's responsible business network: contact membership, [online]", available at: www.bitc.org.uk/ (accessed 15 July 2019).

Bong, S. (2013), "US health group warns on chemical in Pepsi, [online]", Financial Times, available at: www.ft.com/content/643498fc-e3e6-11e2-b35b-00144feabdc0 (accessed 03 May 2017).

Borsdorf, A., Hildalgo, R. and Vidal-Koppmann, S. (2016), "Social segregation and gated communities in Santiago de Chile and Buenos Aires. A comparison", *Habitat International*, Vol. 54 No. 1, pp. 18-27, doi: 10.1016/j.habitatint.2015.11.033.

Boterman, W.R. and van Gent, W.P.C. (2014), "Housing liberalisation and gentrification: the social effects of tenure conversions in Amsterdam", *Tijdschrift Voor Economische En Sociale Geografie*, Vol. 105 No. 2, pp. 140-160, doi: 10.1111/tesg.12050.

Bowen, H.R. (1953), *Social Responsibilities of the Businessman*, Harper, New York, NY.

Brei, V. and Böhm, S. (2011), "Corporate social responsibility as cultural meaning management: a critique of the marketing of 'ethical' bottled water", *Business Ethics: A European Review*, Vol. 20 No. 3, pp. 233-252, doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8608.2011.01626.x.

Brender, N., Yzeiraj, B. and Fragniere, E. (2015), "The management audit as a tool to foster corporate governance: an inquiry in Switzerland", *Managerial Auditing Journal*, Vol. 30 Nos 8/9, pp. 785-811, doi: 10.1108/MAJ-03-2014-1013.

Brix-Asala, C., Hahn, R. and Seuring, S. (2016), "Reverse logistics and informal valorisation at the base of the pyramid: a case study on sustainability synergies and trade-offs", *European Management Journal*, Vol. 34 No. 4, pp. 414-423, doi: 10.1016/j.emj.2016.01.004.

Bruyaka, O., Zeitzmann, H.K., Chalamon, I., Wokutch, R.E. and Thakur, P. (2013), "Strategic corporate social responsibility and orphan drug development: insights from the US and the EU biopharmaceutical industry", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 117 No. 1, pp. 45-65, doi: 10.1007/s10551-012-1496-y.

Burmester, B., Michailova, S. and Stringer, C. (2019), "Modern slavery and international business scholarship: the governance nexus", *Critical Perspectives on International Business*, Vol. 15 Nos 2/3, pp. 139-157, doi: 10.1108/cpoib-02-2019-0011.

Camisón, C. (2008), "Learning for environmental adaptation and knowledge-intensive services: the role of public networks for SMEs", *The Service Industries Journal*, Vol. 28 No. 6, pp. 827-844, doi: 10.1080/02642060801990395.

Carroll, A.B. (1991), "The pyramid of corporate social responsibility: toward the moral management of organizational stakeholders", *Business Horizons*, Vol. 34 No. 4, pp. 39-48, doi: 10.1016/0007-6813(91)90005-G.

Celis, I.LR.D., Velasco-Balmaseda, E., Bobadilla, S.F.D., Alonso-Almeida, M.D.M. and Intxaurburu-Clemente, G. (2015), "Does having women managers lead to increased gender equality practices in corporate social responsibility?", *Business Ethics: A European Review*, Vol. 24 No. 1, pp. 91-110, doi: 10.1111/beer.12081.

Chang, S.C. and Chang, H.Y. (2015), "Corporate motivations of product recall strategy: exploring the role of corporate social responsibility in stakeholder engagement", *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, Vol. 22 No. 6, pp. 393-407, doi: 10.1002/csr.1354.

Chauhan, A. and Singh, A. (2016), "A hybrid multi-criteria decision making method approach for selecting a sustainable location of healthcare waste disposal facility", *Journal of Cleaner Production*, Vol. 139, pp. 1001-1010, doi: 10.1016/j.jclepro.2016.08.098.

Cheah, E.T., Chan, W.L. and Chieng, C.L.L. (2007), "The corporate social responsibility of pharmaceutical product recalls: an empirical examination of US and UK markets", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 76 No. 4, pp. 427-449, doi: 10.1007/s10551-006-9292-1.

Clark, P. (2017), "Bt moves to phase out diesel and petrol-only vehicles, [online]", Financial Times, available at: www.ft.com/content/2a1ee496-94be-11e7-bdfa-eda243196c2c (accessed 12 December 2017).

Coca Cola (2017), "8 popular drinks from the coca-cola system and their low or no sugar alternatives, [online]", Coca-Cola, available at: www.coca-cola.co.uk/stories/8-drinks-from-coca-cola-gb-and-their-no-or-low-sugar-alternative (accessed 13 July 2019).

Cohen, J., Krishnamoorthy, G. and Wright, A.M. (2002), "Corporate governance and the audit process", *Contemporary Accounting Research*, Vol. 19 No. 4, pp. 573-594, doi: 10.1506/983m-epxg-4y0r-j9yk.

Cox, H. (2017), "London's dalston draws in city workers, [online]", Financial Times, available at: www.ft.com/content/33bc05fa-a3a1-11e7-8d56-98a09be71849 (accessed 12 December 2017).

Cycyota, C.S., Ferrante, C.J. and Schroeder, J.M. (2016), "Corporate social responsibility and employee volunteerism: what do the best companies do?", *Business Horizons*, Vol. 59 No. 3, pp. 321-329, doi: 10.1016/j.bushor.2016.01.004.

Dangelico, R.M. (2017), "What drives green product development and how do different antecedents affect market performance? A survey of Italian companies with eco-labels", *Business Strategy and the Environment*, Vol. 26 No. 8, pp. 1144-1461, doi: 10.1002/bse.1975.

Darendeli, I.S. and Hill, T.L. (2016), "Uncovering the complex relationships between political risk and MNE firm legitimacy: insights from Libya", *Journal of International Business Studies*, Vol. 47 No. 1, pp. 68-92, doi: 10.1057/jibs.2015.27.

Donald, B. and Blay-Palmer, A. (2006), "The urban creative-food economy: producing food for the urban elite or social inclusion opportunity?", *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, Vol. 38 No. 10, pp. 1901-1920, doi: 10.1068/a37262.

Doorey, D.J. (2011), "The transparent supply chain: from resistance to implementation at Nike and Levi-Strauss", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 103 No. 4, pp. 587-603, doi: 10.1007/s10551-011-0882-1.

ETI (2019), "How to apply, [online]", Ethical Trading Initiative, available at: www.ethicaltrade.org/ (accessed 29 March 2019).

Eweje, G. and Palakshappa, N. (2009), "Business partnerships with nonprofits: working to solve mutual problems in New Zealand", *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, Vol. 16 No. 6, pp. 337-351, doi: 10.1002/csr.192.

Eweje, G. and Sakaki, M. (2015), "CSR in Japanese companies: perspectives from managers", *Business Strategy and the Environment*, Vol. 24 No. 7, pp. 678-687, doi: 10.1002/bse.1894.

Fiaschi, D., Giuliani, E. and Nieri, F. (2017), "Overcoming the liability of origin by doing no-harm: emerging country firms' social irresponsibility as they go global", *Journal of World Business*, Vol. 52 No. 4, pp. 546-563, doi: 10.1016/j.jwb.2016.09.001.

Foley, S. (2017), "Billionaire donors agree to pool philanthropic resources, [online]", Financial Times, available at: www.ft.com/content/b9487e30-c951-11e7-aa33-c63fdc9b8c6c (accessed 10 December 2017).

Fransen, L., Kolk, A. and Rivera-Santos, M. (2019), "The multiplicity of international corporate social responsibility standards: implications for global value chain governance", *Multinational Business Review*, Vol. 27 No. 4, pp. 397-426, doi: 10.1108/MBR-08-2019-0083.

Frynas, J.G. and Stephens, S. (2015), "Political corporate social responsibility: reviewing theories and setting new agendas", *International Journal of Management Reviews*, Vol. 17 No. 4, pp. 483-509, doi: 10.1111/ijmr.12049.

Fujita, M. (2011), "Value chain dynamics and local suppliers' capability building: an analysis of the Vietnamese motorcycle industry", in Kawakami, M. and Sturgeon, T.J. (Eds), *The Dynamics of Local Learning in Global Value Chains: Experiences from East Asia*, Palgrave Macmillan UK, London, pp. 68-99, doi: 10.1057/9780230281783_4.

Garriga, E. and Melé, D. (2004), "Corporate social responsibility theories: mapping the territory", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 53 Nos 1/2, pp. 51-71, doi: 10.1023/b:busi.0000039399.90587.34.

Ghauri, P.N. and Rao, P.M. (2009), "Intellectual property, pharmaceutical MNEs and the developing world", *Journal of World Business*, Vol. 44 No. 2, pp. 206-215, doi: 10.1016/j.jwb.2008.05.008.

Giri, A.K. and Singh, S.P. (2016), "Labour standards in global value chains in India: the case of handknotted carpet manufacturing cluster", *Asian Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 5 Nos 1/2, pp. 37-52, doi: 10.1007/s13520-016-0052-8.

Gokalp, O.N., Lee, S.H. and Peng, M.W. (2017), "Competition and corporate tax evasion: an institution-based view", *Journal of World Business*, Vol. 52 No. 2, pp. 258-269, doi: 10.1016/j.jwb.2016.12.006.

Golicic, S.L., Boerstler, C.N. and Ellram, L.M. (2010), "Greening' transportation in the supply chain", *MIT Sloan Management Review*, Vol. 51 No. 2, pp. 47-55.

Gray, A. and Edgecliffe-Johnson, A. (2017), "Big tobacco prepares to fight proposed ban on menthol cigarettes, [online]", Financial Times, available at: www.ft.com/content/56ac9180-ea02-11e8-885c-e64da4c0f981 (accessed 10 December 2017).

GSA (2017), "Become a member, [online]", Global Shea Alliance, available at: https://globalshea.com/register/step_1 (accessed 18 December 2017).

Hoffren, J. and Apajalahti, E.L. (2009), "Emergent eco-efficiency paradigm in corporate environment management", *Sustainable Development*, Vol. 17 No. 4, pp. 233-243, doi: 10.1002/sd.387.

Holck, L. and Muhr, S.L. (2017), "Unequal solidarity? Towards a norm-critical approach to welfare logics", *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, Vol. 33 No. 1, pp. 1-11, doi: 10.1016/j.scaman.2016.11.001.

HSBC (2015), "Cancer research UK and HSBC join forces in usd25 million partnership", HSBC, available at: www.hsbc.com/media/media-releases/2015/cancer-research-uk-and-hsbc-join-forces-in-usd25-million-partnership (accessed 11 July 2019).

Huambachano, M. (2014), "Business and sustainability: the Camisea project in the Peruvian amazon basin", in Eweje, G. (Ed.), *Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainability: Emerging Trends in Developing Economies*, Vol. 8, Emerald Group Publishing, Bingley, pp. 215-240, doi: 10.1108/s2043-905920140000008012.

InfluenceMap (2019), "Big oil's real agenda on climate change: how the oil majors have spent $1bn since Paris on narrative capture and lobbying on climate, [webpage]", InfluenceMap, available at: https://influencemap.org/report/How-Big-Oil-Continues-to-Oppose-the-Paris-Agreement-38212275958aa21196dae3b76220bddc (accessed 1 September 2020).

Jack, A. (2017), "Michael Bloomberg talks tough on health and junk food, [online]", Financial Times, available at: www.ft.com/content/77d2280c-7eb0-11e7-ab01-a13271d1ee9c (accessed 12 December 2017).

Johnson, B.R., Connolly, E. and Carter, T.S. (2011), "Corporate social responsibility: the role of fortune 100 companies in domestic and international natural disasters", *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, Vol. 18 No. 6, pp. 352-369, doi: 10.1002/csr.253.

Jones, T.M., Felps, W. and Bigley, G.A. (2007), "Ethical theory and stakeholder-related decisions: the role of stakeholder culture", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 32 No. 1, pp. 137-155, doi: 10.5465/amr.2007.23463924.

Jones, S.C., Wyatt, A. and Daube, M. (2016), "Smokescreens and beer goggles: how alcohol industry CSM protects the industry", *Social Marketing Quarterly*, Vol. 22 No. 4, pp. 264-279, doi: 10.1177/1524500415621558.

Kocabasoglu, C., Prahinski, C. and Klassen, R.D. (2007), "Linking forward and reverse supply chain investments: the role of business uncertainty", *Journal of Operations Management*, Vol. 25 No. 6, pp. 1141-1160, doi: 10.1016/j.jom.2007.01.015.

Kolk, A. (2016), "The social responsibility of international business: from ethics and the environment to CSR and sustainable development", *Journal of World Business*, Vol. 51 No. 1, pp. 23-34, doi: 10.1016/j.jwb.2015.08.010.

Kolk, A., Rivera-Santos, M. and Rufín, C. (2018), "Multinationals, international business, and poverty: a cross-disciplinary research overview and conceptual framework", *Journal of International Business Policy*, Vol. 1 Nos 1/2, pp. 92-115, doi: 10.1057/s42214-018-0004-1.

Kotch, A. (2019), "America's biggest charities are funneling millions to hate groups from anonymous donors, [online]", Sludge, available at: https://readsludge.com/2019/02/19/americas-biggest-charities-are-funneling-millions-to-hate-groups-from-anonymous-donors/ (accessed 22 April 2019).

Kourula, A. (2010), "Corporate engagement with non-governmental organizations in different institutional contexts-a case study of a forest products company", *Journal of World Business*, Vol. 45 No. 4, pp. 395-404, doi: 10.1016/j.jwb.2009.08.010.

Kourula, A. and Delalieux, G. (2016), "The micro-level foundations and dynamics of political corporate social responsibility: hegemony and passive revolution through civil society", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 135 No. 4, pp. 769-785, doi: 10.1007/s10551-014-2499-7.

Lambrechts, D. and Hector, M. (2016), "Environmental organised crime: the dirty business of hazardous waste disposal and limited state capacity in Africa", *Politikon*, Vol. 43 No. 2, pp. 251-268, doi: 10.1080/02589346.2016.1201727.

Lee, S.Y. (2018), "Cities for profit: profit-driven gentrification in Seoul, South Korea", *Urban Studies*, Vol. 55 No. 12, pp. 2603-2617, doi: 10.1177/0042098017727712.

Lindgreen, A. and Swaen, V. (2010), "Corporate social responsibility", *International Journal of Management Reviews*, Vol. 12 No. 1, pp. 1-7, doi: 10.1111/j.1468-2370.2009.00277.x.

LivingWage (2018), "What is the real living wage, [webpage]", Living Wage Foundation, available at: www.livingwage.org.uk/ (accessed 23 April 2019).

Locke, R.M. (2013), *The Promise and Limits of Private Power: Promoting Labor Standards in a Global Economy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Lorenz, C., Gentile, G.C. and Wehner, T. (2016), "Exploring corporate community engagement in Switzerland: activities, motivations, and processes", *Business and Society*, Vol. 55 No. 4, pp. 594-631, doi: 10.1177/0007650313482549.

Loza, J. (2004), "Business–community partnerships: the case for community organization capacity building", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 53 No. 3, pp. 297-311, doi: 10.1023/b:busi.0000039415.90007.56.

Lucea, R. and Doh, J.P. (2012), "International strategy for the nonmarket context: stakeholders, issues, networks, and geography", *Business and Politics*, Vol. 14 No. 3, pp. 1-30, doi: 10.1515/bap-2012-0018.

Luo, Y. (2008), "A strategic analysis of product recalls: the role of moral degradation and organizational control", *Management and Organization Review*, Vol. 4 No. 2, pp. 183-196, doi: 10.1111/j.1740-8784.2008.00104.x.

McMullan, J.L., Miller, D.E. and Perrier, D.C. (2012), "I've seen them so much they are just there': exploring young people's perceptions of gambling in advertising", *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*, Vol. 10 No. 6, pp. 829-848, doi: 10.1007/s11469-012-9379-0.

McWilliams, A., Siegel, D.S. and Wright, P.M. (2006), "Corporate social responsibility: strategic implications", *Journal of Management Studies*, Vol. 43 No. 1, pp. 1-18, doi: 10.1111/j.1467-6486.2006.00580.x.

Magasin, M. and Gehlen, F.L. (1999), "Case study - unwise decisions and unanticipated consequences", *Sloan Management Review*, Vol. 41 No. 1, pp. 47-60.

Maon, F., Lindgreen, A. and Swaen, V. (2010), "Organizational stages and cultural phases: a critical review and a consolidative model of corporate social responsibility development", *International Journal of Management Reviews*, Vol. 12 No. 1, pp. 20-38, doi: 10.1111/j.1468-2370.2009.00278.x.

Matten, D. and Moon, J. (2008), "'Implicit' and 'explicit' CSR: a conceptual framework for a comparative understanding of corporate social responsibility", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 33 No. 2, pp. 404-424, doi: 10.5465/AMR.2008.31193458.

Mendelow, A.L. (1981), "Environmental scanning - the impact of the stakeholder concept", *ICIS 1981 Proceedings*, Vol. 20, pp. 407-417.

Mitiku, F., de Mey, Y., Nyssen, J. and Maertens, M. (2017), "Do private sustainability standards contribute to income growth and poverty alleviation? A comparison of different coffee certification schemes in Ethiopia", *Sustainability*, Vol. 9 No. 2, p. 246, doi: 10.3390/su9020246.

MSCI (2016), "Msci acwi sustainable impact index methodology, [webpage]", Morgan Stanley Capital International, available at: www.msci.com (accessed 16 December 2019).

Munshi, N. (2015), "Monsanto rejects claim weedkiller contains 'probable carcinogen', [online]", Financial Times, available at: www.ft.com/content/22c32558-d248-11e4-ae91-00144feab7de (accessed 10 October 2017).

Nerlich, B. and Koteyko, N. (2010), "Carbon gold rush and carbon cowboys: a new chapter in green mythology?", *Environmental Communication*, Vol. 4 No. 1, pp. 37-53, doi: 10.1080/17524030903522389.

Nestle (2018), "Nestlé is a founding member of the UK plastics pact, [webpage]", Nestlé, available at: www.nestle.co.uk/media/newsfeatures/nestle-is-a-founding-member-of-the-uk-plastics-pact (accessed 29 March 2019).

Nilsson, M., Griggs, D. and Visbeck, M. (2016), "Policy: map the interactions between sustainable development goals", *Nature*, Vol. 534 No. 7607, p. 320, doi: 10.1038/534320a.

North, P. and Nurse, A. (2014), "War stories': morality, curiosity, enthusiasm and commitment as facilitators of SME owners' engagement in low carbon transitions", *Geoforum*, Vol. 52, pp. 32-41, doi: 10.1016/j.geoforum.2013.12.007.

Osborne, H. (2012), "How the wealthy avoid paying tax, [online]", available at: www.theguardian.com/money/2012/apr/24/how-avoid-paying-tax-maximise-income (accessed 10 December 2017).

Osborne, H. (2014), "Poor doors: the segregation of London's inner-city flat dwellers, [webpage]", The Guardian, available at: www.theguardian.com/society/2014/jul/25/poor-doors-segregation-london-flats (accessed 18 December 2017).

Pfitzer, M., Bockstette, V. and Stamp, M. (2013), "Innovating for shared value", *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 91 No. 9, pp. 2-9.

Pisani, N., Kourula, A., Kolk, A. and Meijer, R. (2017), "How global is international CSR research? Insights and recommendations from a systematic review", *Journal of World Business*, Vol. 52 No. 5, pp. 591-614, doi: 10.1016/j.jwb.2017.05.003.

Podagrosi, A. and Vojnovic, I. (2008), "Tearing down freedmen's town and African American displacement in Houston: the good, the bad, and the ugly of urban revival", *Urban Geography*, Vol. 29 No. 4, pp. 371-401, doi: 10.2747/0272-3638.29.4.371.

Prince's Trust (2019), "About the prince's trust, [webpage]", Morgan Stanley, available at: www.princes-trust.org.uk/about-the-trust/success-stories/morgan-stanley (accessed 14 July 2019).

Purdy, J.M., Alexander, E.A. and Neill, S. (2010), "The impact of national institutional context on social practices: comparing Finnish and US business communities", *European J. Of International Management*, Vol. 4 No. 3, pp. 234-256, doi: 10.1504/EJIM.2010.033002.

Randers, J., Rockström, J., Stoknes, P.E., Golüke, U., Collste, D. and Cornell, S. (2018), *Transformation is Feasible: How to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals within Planetary Boundaries*, Stockholm Resilience Centre, Stockholm.

Rathert, N. (2016), "Strategies of legitimation: MNEs and the adoption of CSR in response to host-country institutions", *Journal of International Business Studies*, Vol. 47 No. 7, pp. 858-879, doi: 10.1057/jibs.2016.19.

Razalan, D.M., Bickle, M.C., Park, J. and Brosdahl, D. (2017), "Local retailers' perspectives on social responsibility", *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management*, Vol. 45 No. 2, pp. 211-226, doi: 10.1108/ijrdm-01-2016-0006.

Reed, M.S., Graves, A., Dandy, N., Posthumus, H., Hubacek, K., Morris, J., Prell, C., Quinn, C.H. and Stringer, L.C. (2009), "Who's in and why? A typology of stakeholder analysis methods for natural resource management", *Journal of Environmental Management*, Vol. 90 No. 5, pp. 1933-1949, doi: 10.1016/j.jenvman.2009.01.001.

Rezai, G., Sumin, V., Mohamed, Z., Shamsudin, M.N. and Sharifuddin, J. (2016), "Implementing green practices as sustainable innovation among herbal-based SME entrepreneurs", *Journal of Food Products Marketing*, Vol. 22 No. 1, pp. 1-18, doi: 10.1080/10454446.2015.1048030.

Roberts, S., Lawson, R. and Nicholls, J. (2006), "Generating regional-scale improvements in SME corporate responsibility performance: lessons from responsibility northwest", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 67 No. 3, pp. 275-286, doi: 10.1007/s10551-006-9184-4.

Rodrigue, M., Magnan, M. and Cho, C.H. (2013), "Is environmental governance substantive or symbolic? An empirical investigation", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 114 No. 1, pp. 107-129, doi: 10.1007/s10551-012-1331-5.

Rotter, J.P., Airike, P.E. and Mark-Herbert, C. (2014), "Exploring political corporate social responsibility in global supply chains", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 125 No. 4, pp. 581-599, doi: 10.1007/s10551-013-1927-4.

RSPO (2019), "RSPO membership, [online]", Roundtable on sustainable palm oil, available at: https://rspo.org (accessed 29 March 2019).

Russel, J. (2008), "Cadbury hopes investing in Ghana's cocoa farms will stop young workers deserting for the city, [webpage]", Reuters, available at: www.ethicalcorp.com/business-strategy/development-cadbury-invests-flaking-supply-chain (accessed 17 July 2019).

Russo, A. and Tencati, A. (2009), "Formal vs. Informal CSR strategies: evidence from Italian micro, small, medium-sized, and large firms", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 85, pp. 339-353, doi: 10.1007/s10551-008-9736-x.

Ruwanpura, K.N. (2016), "Garments without guilt? Uneven labour geographies and ethical trading-Sri Lankan labour perspectives", *Journal of Economic Geography*, Vol. 16 No. 2, pp. 423-446, doi: 10.1093/jeg/lbu059.

Sakarya, S., Bodur, M., Yildirim-Oktem, O. and Selekler-Goksen, N. (2012), "Social alliances: business and social enterprise collaboration for social transformation", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 65 No. 12, pp. 1710-1720, doi: 10.1016/j.jbusres.2012.02.012.

Sethi, S.P. (1975), "Dimensions of corporate social performance: an analytical framework", *California Management Review*, Vol. 17 No. 3, pp. 58-64, doi: 10.2307/41162149.

Silvestre, B.S., Gimenes, F.A.P. and Neto, ReS. (2017), "A sustainability paradox? Sustainable operations in the offshore oil and gas industry: the case of Petrobras", *Journal of Cleaner Production*, Vol. 142, pp. 360-370, doi: 10.1016/j.jclepro.2016.07.215.

Sinkovics, N., Hoque, S.F. and Sinkovics, R.R. (2016), "Rana Plaza collapse aftermath: Are CSR compliance and auditing pressures effective?", *Accounting, Auditing and Accountability Journal*, Vol. 29 No. 4, pp. 617-649, doi: 10.1108/AAAJ-07-2015-2141.

Sinkovics, N., Sinkovics, R.R. and Archie-Acheampong, J. (2019), "An overview of social responsibility dimensions in international business", in Leonidou, L.C., Katsikeas, C.S., Samiee, S. and Leonidou, C.N. (Eds), *Socially Responsible International Business: Critical Issues and the Way Forward*, Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham, pp. 29-72, doi: 10.4337/9781788114127.00009.

Sinkovics, N., Sinkovics, R.R. and Yamin, M. (2014), "The role of social value creation in business model formulation at the bottom of the pyramid – implications for MNEs?", *International Business Review*, Vol. 23 No. 4, pp. 692-707, doi: 10.1016/j.ibusrev.2013.12.004.

Sinkovics, N., Sinkovics, R.R., Hoque, S.F. and Czaban, L. (2015), "A reconceptualisation of social value creation as social constraint alleviation", *Critical Perspectives on International Business*, Vol. 11 Nos 3/4, pp. 340-363, doi: 10.1108/cpoib-06-2014-0036.

Slack, N. and Brandon-Jones, A. (2019), *Operations Management*, 9th ed., Pearson, Harlow.

Soundararajan, V., Jamali, D. and Spence, L.J. (2018), "Small business social responsibility: a critical multilevel review, synthesis and research agenda", *International Journal of Management Reviews*, Vol. 20 No. 4, pp. 934-956, doi: 10.1111/ijmr.12171.

Svensson, G., Wood, G. and Callaghan, M. (2010), "A corporate model of sustainable business practices: an ethical perspective", *Journal of World Business*, Vol. 45 No. 4, pp. 336-345, doi: 10.1016/j.jwb.2009.08.005.

Tang, C.S. and Babich, V. (2014), "Using social and economic incentives to discourage Chinese suppliers from product adulteration", *Business Horizons*, Vol. 57 No. 4, pp. 497-508, doi: 10.1016/j.bushor.2014.03.009.

Topple, C., Donovan, J.D., Masli, E.K. and Borgert, T. (2017), "Corporate sustainability assessments: MNE engagement with sustainable development and the SDGs", *Transnational Corporations*, Vol. 24 No. 3, pp. 61-71, doi: 10.18356/2ae5911c-en.

Torres, I.M., Sierra, J.J. and Heiser, R.S. (2007), "The effects of warning-label placement in print ads - a social contract perspective", *Journal of Advertising*, Vol. 36 No. 2, pp. 49-62, doi: 10.2753/joa0091-3367360203.

Trencher, G., Yarime, M., McCormick, K.B., Doll, C.N.H. and Kraines, S.B. (2014), "Beyond the third mission: exploring the emerging university function of co-creation for sustainability", *Science and Public Policy*, Vol. 41 No. 2, pp. 151-179, doi: 10.1093/scipol/sct044.

Triantafyllou, M.K. and Cherrett, T.J. (2010), "The logistics of managing hazardous waste: a case study analysis in the UK retail sector", *International Journal of Logistics Research and Applications*, Vol. 13 No. 5, pp. 373-394, doi: 10.1080/13675567.2010.512150.

Troy, C., Smith, K.G. and Domino, M.A. (2011), "CEO demographics and accounting fraud: who is more likely to rationalize illegal acts?", *Strategic Organization*, Vol. 9 No. 4, pp. 259-282, doi: 10.1177/1476127011421534.

UKPGA (2015), "Modern slavery act, [online]", UKPGA, available at: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/30/pdfs/ukpga_20150030_en.pdf (accessed 15 June 2019).

UN (2019), "Global sustainable development report 2019: the future is now – science for achieving sustainable development", United Nations, New York, NY, available at: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/24797GSDR_report_2019.pdf

United Nations Global Compact (2015), "Support your SME suppliers, [webpage]", United Nations, available at: www.unglobalcompact.org/library/1771 (accessed 15 June 2020).

van Zanten, J.A. and van Tulder, R. (2018), "Multinational enterprises and the sustainable development goals: an institutional approach to corporate engagement", *Journal of International Business Policy*, Vol. 1 Nos 3/4, pp. 208-233, doi: 10.1057/s42214-018-0008-x.

Walmart (2019), "Who we are, [webpage]", Walmart, available at: https://walmart.org/ (accessed 11 July 2019).

Wettstein, F. (2012), "CSR and the debate on business and human rights: bridging the great divide", *Business Ethics Quarterly*, Vol. 22 No. 4, pp. 739-770, doi: 10.5840/beq201222446.

Wettstein, F., Giuliani, E., Santangelo, G.D. and Stahl, G.K. (2019), "International business and human rights: a research agenda", *Journal of World Business*, Vol. 54 No. 1, pp. 56-65, doi: 10.1016/j.jwb.2018.10.004.

Widmer, R., Oswald-Krapf, H., Sinha-Khetriwal, D., Schnellmann, M. and Böni, H. (2005), "Global perspectives on e-waste", *Environmental Impact Assessment Review*, Vol. 25 No. 5, pp. 436-458, doi: 10.1016/j.eiar.2005.04.001.

Ye, M., Vojnovic, I. and Chen, G. (2015), "The landscape of gentrification: exploring the diversity of 'upgrading' processes in Hong Kong, 1986-2006", *Urban Geography*, Vol. 36 No. 4, pp. 471-503, doi: 10.1080/02723638.2015.1010795.

Yunus, M., Moingeon, B. and Lehmann-Ortega, L. (2010), "Building social business models: lessons from the Grameen experience", *Long Range Planning*, Vol. 43 Nos 2/3, pp. 308-325, doi: 10.1016/j.lrp.2009.12.005.

Zeyen, A., Beckmann, M. and Wolters, S. (2016), "Actor and institutional dynamics in the development of multi-stakeholder initiatives", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 135 No. 2, pp. 341-360, doi: 10.1007/s10551-014-2468-1.

About the authors

Rudolf R. Sinkovics (PhD, WU-Vienna, Austria) is a Professor of International Business in the Graduate School of Management at The University of Auckland and Visiting Professor at LUT University, Finland. His research writing covers issues of inter-organizational governance and the role of ICT, with a current focus on responsible business. His work is published in journals such as *Journal of International Business Studies, Management International Review, Journal of World Business, International Business Review, Journal of International Management, Journal of Business Research, Journal of International Marketing* and *International Marketing Review.* He is co-editor-in-chief for *critical perspectives on international business*, Consulting editor for *Journal of World Business,* Associate editor for *Transnational Corporations* and serves on a number of editorial boards. Rudolf R. Sinkovics is the corresponding author and can be contacted at: rudolf.sinkovics@auckland.ac.nz

Noemi Sinkovics (PhD, University of Manchester) is a Senior Lecturer in Management and International Business at The University of Auckland, Business School in New Zealand. Prior to that, she worked at Alliance Manchester Business School, The University of Manchester, UK. She holds a master's degree from the Vienna University of Economics and Business (WU-Wien). Her research interests are theoretical and practical issues around entrepreneurship (including international and social entrepreneurship) and social, environmental and economic upgrading in global value chains. Her work has been published in *International Business Review, International Marketing Review, Journal of Business Research, Journal of World Business, Management International Review, Journal of International Management, European Journal of International Management, Journal of Interactive Marketing, Critical perspectives on international business* and as chapter contributions to edited volumes.

Jason Archie-Acheampong (PhD, University of Manchester) is Head of CSR at Rush Group Limited, London, UK. Before completing his PhD at Alliance Manchester Business School, he obtained a master's degree in entrepreneurship and worked on issues related to SMEs' responsible behavior in global value chains.