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2014

http://hdl.handle.net/10539/20562

Berger, L., Bergman, M.M., Bergman, Z., Leisinger, K., & Ojo, E. (2014). The influence of context and culture on corporate responsibility expectations in South Africa. Journal of International Business Ethics, 7(2), 3-21.

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The Influence of Context and Culture on Corporate Responsibility Expectations in South Africa

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

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

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

Keywords: corporate responsibility, culture, multidimensional scaling, Hermeneutic Content Analysis, South Africa

Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

Contextual and Cultural Background of South Africa

Transitions toward a Democratic South Africa

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

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

Corporate Expectations

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

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

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

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

Ubuntu

Public and state expectations toward private corporations were fostered and reinforced by South African cultural values. One of the most important values in the complex cultural landscape of the country is Ubuntu. It combines the core values of respect, caring, and solidarity, and it is characterized by a strong belief in

reciprocity, connectedness, and interdependence (Murithi, 2006). Applied to business, Ubuntu emphasizes "fair resource distribution" and "sharing of the earth's resources for the benefit of all" (Murithi, 2006, p.32). Corporations managed along lines of Ubuntu are expected to share wealth and make "(at the very least) basic services, such as food, housing access to health and education accessible and visible to all members of … [the] global family" (Nussbaum, 2003, p.3). The downside of Ubuntu in a corporate and government setting is its potential link to opportunism and entrenched corruption.

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

Responsibilities of Corporations

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

CR Approaches and Their Link to Context and Culture

Responsibilities covered by CR theories are diverse and numerous (Garriga & Melé, 2004; Melé, 2009), encompassing value maximization (Friedman, 1970), citizenship rights (Matten & Crane, 2005), ethical responsibilities (Carroll, 1979), production (Preston & Post, 1981), advancing the social good (McWilliams & Siegel, 2001), and others. Most approaches share a common characteristic in that they clearly distinguish between economic responsibilities and non-economic responsibilities, the latter including legal, ethical, philanthropic, and social responsibilities. For example, McGuire (1963) differentiates between economic responsibilities, legal obligations, and responsibilities to society exceeding economic and legal obligations. Relations between economic and non-economic responsibilities are presented in three ways. First, their relationship is thought to be independent and hierarchical (e.g. Steiner, 1971; Tuzzolino & Armandi, 1981). Linked to this, economic responsibilities are usually presented as antecedent, fundamental, or superior to non-economic responsibilities. For example, Carroll (1979) presents a model consisting of four types of responsibilities: economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary (later termed philanthropic). Here, economic responsibilities are fundamental and all other responsibilities are predicated on these. Second, authors focusing on non-economic responsibilities often detach them from economic responsibilities.

In these approaches, economic responsibilities are assumed or taken for granted. Even though Davis (1960), for example, implies economic responsibilities, he does not elaborate on them but, instead, emphasizes responsibilities emanating from the power of corporations. Third, theories focusing on responsibilities of one type often present these in opposition, antagonistic, and incommensurable to other responsibilities (e.g. Friedman, 1970; Visser, 2010). For example, Friedman emphasizes profit generation (i.e. economic responsibility) and presents spending on social expenditures (i.e. non-economic responsibilities) as unethical and contradictory to corporate goals. Similarly, writers focusing on ethical responsibilities often present these as antagonistic or at least independent to economic interests – as a form of necessary additional costs that need to be incurred for a corporation to be considered responsible.

Contextual and cultural influences on corporate responsibility are rarely covered in the CR literature. Of course, a plethora of studies exists in which statistical differences of responses (e.g. managers from different

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

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

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

Sustainable Development Approaches to CR and their Link to Context and Culture

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

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

dimensions must be understood as non-hierarchically interdependent.

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

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

Methods

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

We analyzed the essays using Hermeneutic Content Analysis (HCA; Bergman, 2010), which consists of three steps. The first step consists of an initial qualitative content analysis to identify thematic dimensions within the texts. For this, we used Content Configuration Analysis (CCA; Bergman, 2011; Bergman, Bergman, & Gravett, 2011) to explore the thematic dimensionality of CR as conceptualized by our study participants. There were 261 responsibilities identified in the essays. Examples of responsibilities included "maximize shareholder value," "develop and improve people's standard of living," "invest in initiatives related to schools," or "alleviate poverty." Inductive coding of these responsibilities yielded 12 dimensions and sub-dimensions, namely finance and profits, employment, throughput, business relations, the national economy, leadership and decision-making, ethics, skill development, community development, social development, environment, and unspecified mentions of CR. In the second step of HCA, a quantitative dimensional analysis was used to explore the structures underlying the dimensions identified in the first step, which are based on the

261 responsibilities subsumed within the 12 dimensions. We examined the structures underlying these dimensions by applying multidimensional scaling (MDS). MDS is a quantitative technique to visualize relationships between objects. Co-occurrences of dimensions were calculated using the Association Strength Index (Van Eck & Waltman, 2009). The MDS figure was computed by applying a primary approach for ties and a non-metric procedure, using NewMDSX (Roskam, Coxon, Brier, & Hawkings, 2001-2012). The third step of HCA improves on the interpretation of the structures identified in the second step (Bergman, 2010). This third step consists of a recontextualizing qualitative analysis. More precisely, we return to the results of the CCA, as well as the raw data, the essays, in order to better interpret the MDS maps calculated in Step 2, to either confirm or elaborate on the structures identified with MDS, and to gain a deeper understanding of the meaning of the MDS structures.

Results

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

Structures of Corporate Responsibility Expectations

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

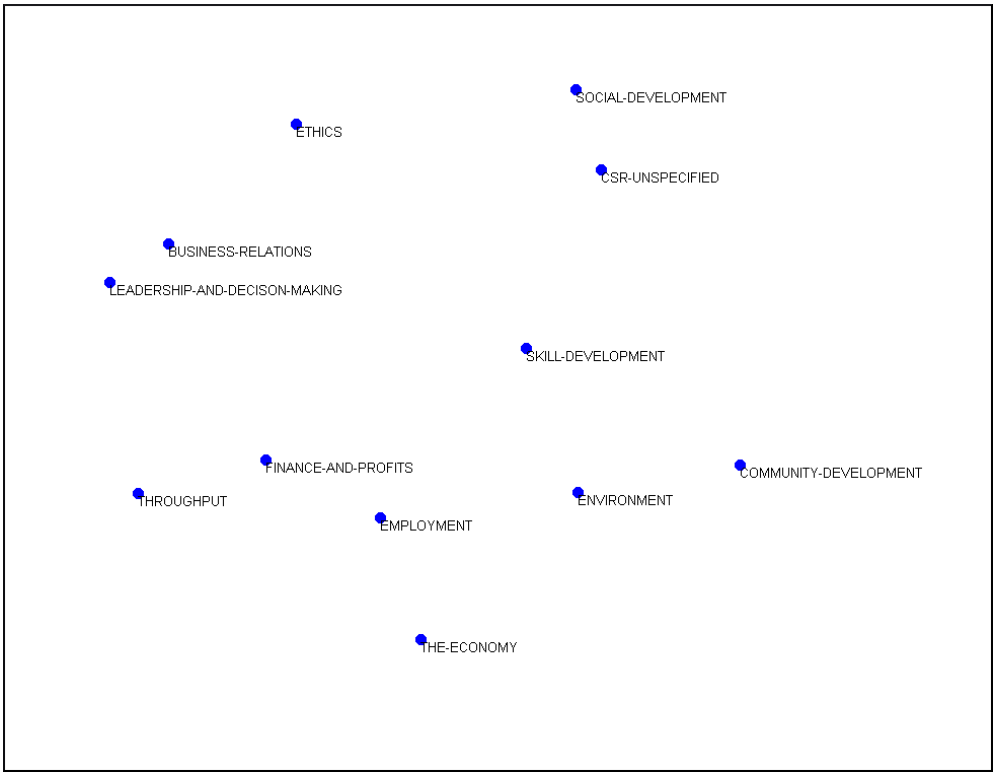

Figure 1. Co-occurrences of the 12 dimensions in the data

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

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

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

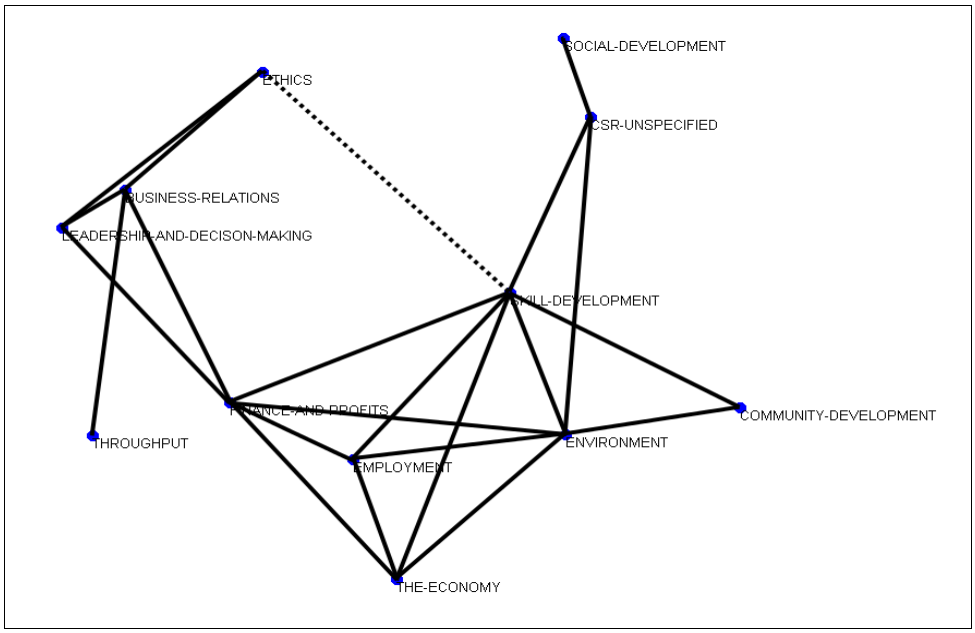

Figure 2. MDS dimensions of corporate responsibility expectations, including ties between the 22 most frequent co-occurrences.

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

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

The environmental dimension plays a particularly interesting role here. Even though it is an underdeveloped dimension (not even 6% of the expectations relate to the environment, and environmental issues, where mentioned, were vague and undeveloped in the narratives), it nevertheless plays an important role in connecting the economic and the social development sphere. According to the mental map of the respondents, environmental issues are not a third pillar but, instead, connect the economic with the social sphere. Thus, we can state that, first, environmental issues play a subordinate role in relation to corporate responsibility expectations, far weaker than expectations relating to the social development, and, second, that

environmental concerns form a link between social development (e.g. find sustainable solutions for energy needs of society) and economics (e.g. economic activities put strain on the environment). Thus, even though a weak dimension, it ties the economic and the social sphere together, similar to the skill development dimension. Thus, the collective mental map reveals that even though expectations of corporate responsibility is divided into an economic and a social development sphere, they are interconnected, especially by the well-developed dimension skill development and a less well-developed dimension environment.

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

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

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

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

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

Returning to the narratives also reveals that CRE are less influenced by mainstream CR theory (e.g. legal, ethical, and philanthropic concerns are difficult to discern) but far more guided by a sustainability discourse,

particularly emphasizing the social development dimension, while nearly excluding the environmental. If the environment plays a role at all, is as an interconnector between economic and social development concerns. This finding hints at the influence of context and culture on CRE, the focus of the next set of analyses.

The Role of Context and Culture on CRE

In Figure 1, social development, for example, encompasses the specific expectations "reduce poverty," "lower unemployment," and "foster social welfare." Every dimension in Figure 1 represents a set of explicitly named responsibility expectations. In this final analytic step, we explore sets of expectations that are in close proximity in the horseshoe pattern to understand what these sets have in common. The analyses reveal that proximate dimensions within the horseshoe pattern form groups, which correspond to specific corporate roles. For example, the dimensions social development, CR (unspecified), and skill development cluster within the horseshoe pattern. Exemplars of CRE from these three dimensions refer to corporations as change agents, i.e. actors that are expected to change social structures. They include "poverty eradication" (W12), "tackle some of the issues we are facing" (W6), "minimize the level of crime in the country" (W16), and "uplifting unempowered and uneducated people" (J18).

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

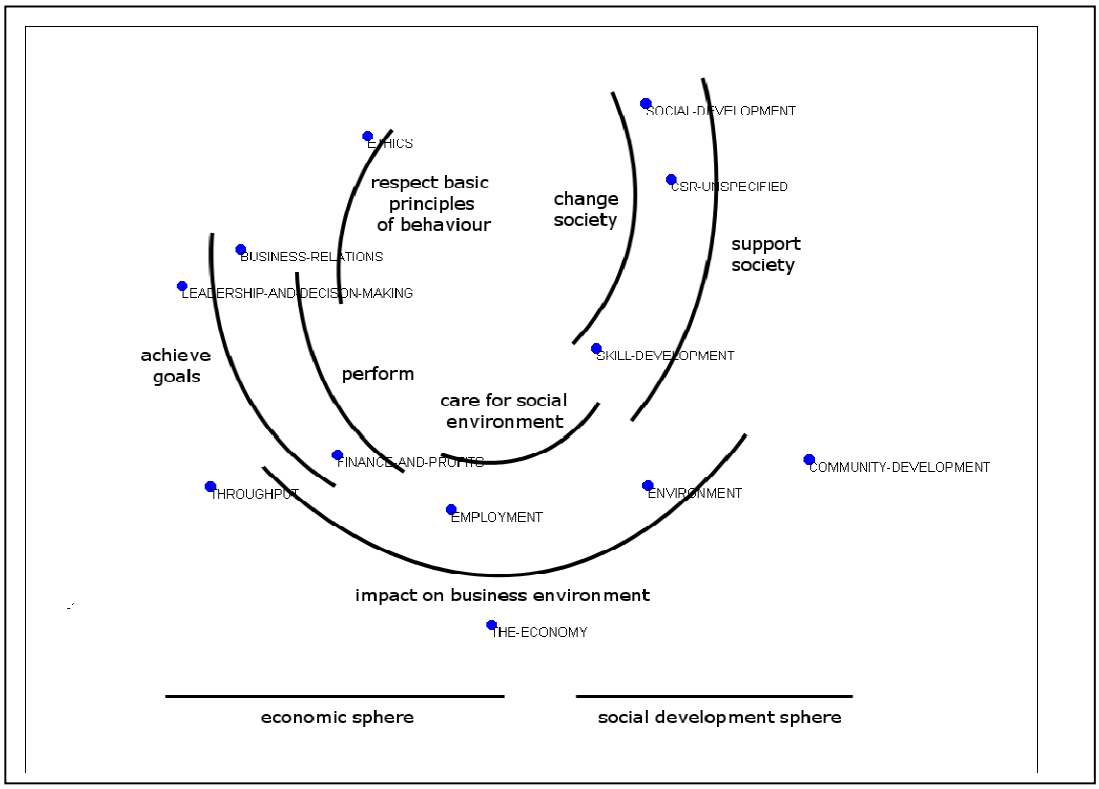

Figure 3. MDS output of the dimensions of corporate responsibility expectations including corporate roles

Notes of figure 3. The figure is based on NewMDSX calculations (Roskam, Coxon, Brier, & Hawkings, 2001-2012) and additional programs: For data preparation, we used R, e.g. to calculate similarity matrices, for plotting and some minor computations (e.g. find the highest similarities), we used MATLAB, to add lines, texts, etc., we used GIMP.

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

Here are two excerpts of narratives associated with this role:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Here are two additional excerpts: To ensure the welfare of their employees … It would be unethical for a corporation to not advance any form of support to the people who are the reason for their continued success. (W10). Large corporations have the responsibility of producing efficiently by not using material that will harm the environment. (J2)

The final set of analyses revealed the intricate links between CRE, context, and culture, which is particularly pronounced in responsibilities associated with social development. Connections of this kind are in accordance with the government's economic model, in which economic growth associated with employment leads to higher standards of living and the eradication of poverty and inequality. Thus, our advanced economic students, when reflecting on responsibilities of large corporations in South Africa, are reproducing the government's social development narrative, imbued in its historical context and in cultural values.

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

Discussion and Conclusion

In this paper, we explored the influence of context and culture on CRE among advanced economics and management students from South Africa. More specifically, we explored the structures underlying CR

dimensions and the meaning of these structures, as well as their links to context and culture in South Africa. With this study, we have made a number of contributions.

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

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

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

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

In this article, we showed how the perspectives of individuals on the responsibilities of large corporations are systematically structured. Context and culture contribute considerably and fundamentally to the shape and interpretation of these structures. To achieve this, we developed a research design that permits investigations of

context and culture using non-numeric data, i.e. data that is much closer to human reasoning and interaction. Even though much research still needs to be conducted in order to comprehensively understand the role of contextual and cultural characteristics on expectations of different agents toward corporate responsibilities, in this study we presented a new approach and some relevant patterns, which we hope may inspire future research in this field.

Acknowledgement

We would like to thank Prof. Gordon Pirie, University of Cape Town, for his incisive comments on an earlier version of this paper.

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