

Special Issue – *critical perspectives on international business* “Social value creation in MNEs”

Guest Editors

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Introduction to the Special Issue

This special issue adds to contemporary, critical, debates in international business (IB) regarding developmental issues and the role of multinational enterprises' (MNEs') activities in relation to social development.

The theme is intended to ignite a debate around a set of fascinating but ambiguous features of the modern MNE which may have significant ramifications for future IB research and scholarship. First, the MNE is an extraordinary vehicle for creating economic wealth. The economic prosperity of the last decades has been driven to a large extent by corporate success in national and international markets. However, increasingly it is recognised that this success also triggers increasing inequality, inappropriate technological choices and environmental destruction (Wilks, 2013). Second, the MNE operates within the market and follows market principles. But in itself it is organized as a political hierarchy and as the MNE grows, there is potential to subdue and dominate markets, which leads to a 'corporatization of the market' (Harrod, 2006) and a potential for reduced consideration of the requirements/demands of the societies within which the MNE operates. Third, in its progression from a historical position in which corporations were licensed by the state, MNEs have evolved to institutions that are increasingly characterized as footloose (Yamin and Sinkovics, 2009) or 'externalization machines' (Bakan, 2004). Recent developments in the political economy suggest that a politically induced decline of MNEs (The Economist, 2017a; The Economist, 2017b) will add to legitimation pressures.

To this end, issues of corporate social responsibility (CSR) have begun to resonate with the corporate sector, governments and non-governments organizations over the last decade. We now witness renewed attempts to draw attention to issues of 'corporate citizenship' or 'corporate stewardship' (Crane, Matten, and Moon, 2008; Hoffman, 2016), specifically when environmental considerations are concerned. The MNE is no longer seen as an economically and politically important actor, its role is now assessed in terms of a social institution. This means, how does the MNE operate as a legitimate actor within the institutional settings in which it operates (Reimann, Ehergott, Kaufmann, and Carter, 2012) and to which extent is it concerned with not only the generation of profit but making contributions to generating social value (Sinkovics, Sinkovics, and Yamin, 2014).

This special issue intends to foster debate and illuminate the broader roles and responsibilities of MNEs in society that goes beyond traditional CSR as well as aims to develop a theoretical base upon which future empirical research in IB can potentially be built. The

special issue invites a number of theoretical perspectives, e.g. the ‘business network’ perspective, the ‘business-society’ interface, and emerging views on and approaches to ‘social value’ amongst others, and how this can be extended to frame the social value creation discussion in MNEs, that is the general strive to balance profits and public/societal good. It is about new economic- and business models, new non-market-based problem solving and solutions and spans across both research disciplines as well as corporate activities. Hence, this special issue invites contributions that intend to bring issues of social value creation and sustainability to the fore as well as highlight how a reconfiguration and reconceptualization of social value creation as constraint alleviation may open up space for future IB research to enhance this area.

Conceptual and Empirical Topics of Particular Interest

The special issue of *cpoib* provides an opportunity to scholars from different academic disciplines and sub-disciplines around IB to submit their work on the social involvement of MNEs in the creation of value above and beyond the financial bottom-line (Auerswald, 2009). Indicative research questions invited for submission are:

- How can social value creation in MNEs be conceptualised?
- How is social value creation reflected in the economic- and business models of modern MNEs?
- How do notions of ethics, CSR, sustainability, triple-bottom line and social value connect and interact?
- How does social entrepreneurship look like in MNEs and how does this co-evolve with social value creation in MNEs?
- How do different academic disciplines and sub-disciplines within and outside of IB engage with the topics of social value creation, and notions of business ethics, CSR, transnational governance?
- What are the differences and similarities in various institutional environments in terms of how MNEs contribute to the creation of social value?
- Do MNEs continue to expand and cater only to those who have or are they also providing value to the lives and aspirations of those who have-not?
- Is it appropriate to think of MNEs as political actors that are expected to take on government-like roles and responsibilities? If so, why? If not, why not?
- Are social multinationals an oxymoron (Zanfei, 2012), and do they/can they co-exist next to commonly observed MNEs
- To what extent and how does sustainability in global value chains and supply chain management in MNEs tackle environmental and societal challenges?
- How do global value chains have to be reconfigured in a political environment that may be more protectionist in the future, in order to continue to create social value?

Submission Process and Deadlines

Guidelines for submission

- Authors should refer to the *cpoib* website and the instructions on submitting a paper. For author guidelines and more information see:
<http://www.emeraldinsight.com/cpoib.htm>
- Submissions to *cpoib* are made using ScholarOne Manuscripts
<http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/cpoib>
- All papers will be subjected to double-blind peer review and papers will be reviewed in accordance with *cpoib* guidelines.
- The guest editors welcome informal enquiries related to proposed topics.
- Submission deadline: 30 June 2017
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