



**Doctoral School of  
Social Communication**

**THESIS BOOKLET**

of the PhD thesis

of

**Bálint Molnár**

with the title

**The Forms of Cooperation Between Corporations and  
Stakeholders – Analysis with the Approach of Communication  
Studies'**

**Supervisor:**

**Prof. József Mészáros**

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**Institute of Behavioural Studies and Communication Theory  
Doctoral School of Social Communication**

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# 1. Previous studies, background for and an explanation of the topic

## 1.1. Explanation of the topic

The principle of sustainable development, corporate social responsibility and companies' stakeholders are all widely known terms today. Their definitions are commonly used in the literature of management and organization studies, and they are indicators of changes in expectations towards businesses.

The communications of businesses have undergone major changes over the past few decades. The success of businesses no longer depends on the products and services they provide, but it increasingly depends on the relationship they build with the community and also on whether they set values which the management identifies with and which help make the business acknowledged by employees and other connections.

Businesses widely use a three-faceted approach to sustainable development, meaning that, in striving to achieve sustainability, businesses must focus on business, social and environmental aspects. In this essay I will *focus on the concept of sustainability and social responsibility* since these two encompass all three aspects the accord of which may determine the entire operation of any business.

The principle of sustainable development and the concept of corporate social responsibility are well-known terms for those familiar with the operations of businesses. These principles also have functions that go well beyond the business activities of large corporations. Numerous studies have attempted to analyze these functions from an economic perspective in the past few decades. **A need to understand expectations towards business players as well as the method of institutionalization and the social role of these expectations explain why this study attempts to analyze businesses' corporate social responsibility and stakeholder relationship practices from a perspective of the role they play in social communication.**

The theoretical analysis in this paper provides an **overview of the social communication theories that can be connected with the literature of sustainability and corporate social responsibility practices.** The study also investigates **which institutionalized forms and communication forums in the practices of businesses**

**are connected to sustainability and corporate social responsibility, and how these institutions strengthen the cooperation between businesses and their stakeholders, and what community-building function they have.**

In addition to outlining a theoretical framework, the **study also aims to introduce new findings on the present day corporate social responsibility practices and stakeholder relationships in Hungary and to showcase examples of community cooperation in the practices of businesses.**

Therefore, on the basis of practical experience and following an analysis of the theoretical background from a communications perspective in my study, I will present an applied study that can be used to draw practical conclusions.

The theoretical overview in the dissertation takes the theories about the norm-creating role of social communication as the conceptual background of the study. The clarification of the role of communication was important since there are numerous approaches to the relationship between communication and ethics. These include, for example, communicative ethics; the concept of traditional corporate communications aimed unilaterally at improving reputation; and a mutually and strategically built relationship with stakeholders, the essence of which is cooperation. *This paper aims to analyze and separate these three facets in order to identify the motivations behind stakeholder cooperation from the side of businesses and to point out how these forms of cooperation can be interpreted as new scenes of social communication.*

## **1.2. Previous studies and background of the research**

The investigation of ethical concerns that can be raised in connection with the environmental and social impact of the operations of business players has been a common topic in the literature of economic science for decades. The roots of the concept of sustainable development can be traced back to a 1972 report of the Club of Rome titled *The Limits to Growth*. Commissioned under the lead of American environmental scientist Donella Meadows, the report simulated possible interactions between the Earth's carrying capacity and global economic and social processes. The authors concluded that, at the growth rate of that time, a global environmental disaster would take place by the middle of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Meadows et al [1972], quoted by Ransburg, 2011). The stakeholder theory was first developed by R. Edward Freeman who pointed out corporations' responsibility in establishing cooperation with the communities impacted by their operations. This paper provides an overview of some of

the major studies regarding stakeholder theory and various theories on corporate social responsibility.

In addition to providing an overview of the literature of and an investigation of the relationship between communication theory and business ethics from a perspective of presenting theoretical connections between business ethics and stakeholder theory, as well as between communication theory and the preservation of social values and norms, the dissertation aims to investigate the communication mechanisms and institutions of business practices.

The dissertation investigates into the extent to which stakeholder dialogue, appearing alongside the strategic communications applied by most of the companies, represents the principles of discourse ethics. The study also investigates into the extent to which the communication and interest reconciliation methodology built on Friedman's stakeholder theory leads to the practical realization of Habermas' discourse ethics. The theoretical chapter presents various approaches to ethically and environmentally viable ways of managing the economy, including the economics of spirituality, the economics based on Buddhism and the economics of "well-being". They are all common in that they believe there is a close relationship between the business players and the society (community), and contrary to or supplementing growth theories, they direct the attention of decision makers to personality and individual values.

In addition to the already mentioned alternative economic theories, new approaches to corporate governance are also influenced by criticism around CSR initiatives: some of the critics fundamentally oppose CSR activity because they consider it a concept alien to business. A 1970 article by Milton Friedman in *The New York Times Magazine* is a good example of that. Other papers that criticize CSR activities for diverting attention from the fact that companies still continue to conduct unethical operations do not provide real answers to problems. *The point of the ethics management paradox as put by Luk Bouckaert (2002) is that companies claim to be operating ethically and, therefore, engage in corporate social responsibility activities in order to obtain legitimacy for their operations and achieve their business goals. Thus, they do not operate more ethically; ethical operations are just an instrument they use for business purposes and hence the ethical nature of their operations is questionable.*

In a paper published in 2003, R. Edward Freeman, renowned for the development of the stakeholder theory, and his co-authors point out that the concept of corporate social responsibility further strengthens the aspect of separation between business and society.

In this perspective what happens in the economy is simply business which is fine-tuned and supplemented by corporate social responsibility (Philips et al., 2003).

## **2. Methods used**

### **2.1. Key questions for the study**

1. What forums and solutions have been institutionalized by companies while introducing sustainability and corporate social responsibility initiatives?
2. What toolset do companies build on and as part of what processes do they introduce the so-called nonmarket strategies alongside market strategies?
3. What results have been achieved by the introduction of institutionalized corporate solutions and nonmarket strategies related to stakeholder communications in the fields of community cooperation and novel community problem-solving?
4. Do companies' social communication practices and community cooperation initiatives contribute to the strengthening and successes of social organizations, community initiatives and the civil sector?

### **2.2. Theoretical and primary study**

Following an overview and synthesization of the literature on business ethics, corporate social responsibility, stakeholder relationships and approaches to communication theory and society theory, the dissertation uses qualitative methodology, an important tool of which is an analysis of expert interviews made with professionals responsible for communications and corporate social responsibility functions at a limited sample of 14 companies. The primary study related to the dissertation analyses is based on a sample of 14 companies from a population of about 300 companies and 200 biggest Hungarian corporations taking part in professional CSR contests as well as of communities that were created through the participation and with the membership of companies in the course of corporate social responsibility initiatives in Hungary, from a perspective of what social corporate responsibility practices the companies conduct, to what extent these practices are influenced by public matters and driven by stakeholder relationships and how they provide a problem-solving opportunity based on communication and cooperation.

The *method was selected because*, over and above the numerous available quantitative studies and qualitative studies conducted using other methods, there is a need to hear the

voices of decision-makers responsible for the areas of corporate social responsibility and stakeholder relationships in Hungary's corporate sphere. The in-depth expert interviews allow for a comprehensive dialogue, an understanding of company professionals' work conditions and also for getting a personal impression on these professionals' activities. In this way the interconnections related to cooperation initiatives can also be explored in addition to the key elements of the companies' goals and activities.

In the study I take a look at companies from a perspective of how they manage stakeholder relationships. A company's stakeholder relationships are wide-ranging and comprise numerous elements of its core activities including customer service, supplier relationship management and providing information to journalists. Therefore, for the purposes of the research part of the dissertation, the term *managing and structuring stakeholder relationships* shall mean the processes a company uses, **over and above its core operating processes, to consciously strengthen stakeholder relationships, in an attempt to engage communities that may be outside of the primary stakeholder group of the company.** So, when I use this term, I mean a consciously planned engagement and mobilization of stakeholders which goes beyond a company's core activities.

The sample presents companies that use unique solutions and have major achievements in terms of stakeholder relationships, or there are some lessons that can be learned from the company's stakeholder relationships practice. Selection criteria were that the company should structure stakeholder relationships around strategic aspects so that an investigation of the selected sample population would provide an insight in the considerations used by organizations that are conscious about their stakeholder relationships.

The study aims to provide an overview on how the concept of sustainable development and the idea of business, social and environmental sustainability are represented in corporate communications and whether they are institutionalized in business operations and how, and in what way they result in various forms of cooperation and win-win innovations between businesses and stakeholders.

These are presented through an investigation of the following main aspects:



- the place of the institutional owner of the sustainability concept and the place of the expert group responsible for structuring stakeholder relationships within the organization;
- the process of the creation, motivations and main objectives of the strategy related to the sustainability concept and the structuring of stakeholder relationships;
- can and how can the corporate strategy be connected to any public matter;
- the method and practice of structuring stakeholder relationships;
- methods for measuring the success of the strategy, reporting, method of communicating the results;
- the role of social media, introduction of brands related to social corporate responsibility activities;
- community cooperation initiatives and innovations; how stakeholder relationships offer a problem-solving opportunity built on communication and cooperation;
- how company experts responsible for the area interpret their roles.

The study was conducted on a sample of 14 companies, by analyzing in-depth expert interviews conducted with *professionals responsible for the communications, sustainability and corporate social responsibility functions and also with some major stakeholders*. The some one-hour discussions focused on the companies' commitment to public matters, their toolset for stakeholder relationships, the roles of communications experts and major corporate social responsibility programs. The in-depth expert interviews do not involve completion or polling of questionnaires; they involve an informal discussion of the above mentioned topics along a consistent interview framework. Notes were made on the interviews, and, if the interviewee consented, the interviews were sound-recorded. In the chapter that analyses the interview I highlight key thoughts in the forms of quotes, based on the notes and sound recordings.

During the interview, corporate communications experts first discussed their jobs in connection with a current event. It was followed by an introduction of the role that the communications and CSR functions play within the organization. The next step involved an introduction of the methodology of stakeholder engagement and the operation of key corporate social responsibility programs by the responsible leaders. A key element of the interviews was the introduction of the decision-making system around sustainability, communications and corporate social responsibility. At the end of each interview, interviewees talked about the difficulties and challenges they faced in their relevant functions and also discussed how they see their roles within the company.

The dissertation provides a *detailed analysis, based on the above defined main aspects, of what was said during the interviews*. Following an overview of the position of the corporate social responsibility and stakeholder relationships functions within the company I describe the process of developing strategies, the methods of maintaining stakeholder relationships. The main topics were defined in line with the key questions of the dissertation. The interviews help explore the goals and motivations of strategic communications and stakeholder dialogues and the related decision-making system, contributing to an exploration of the applied connections of theoretical chapters describing the relationship between stakeholder theory and discourse ethics. The introduction of the programs implemented in cooperation with stakeholders provides information on the emergence of new economic and corporate governance concepts in company practices.

### **3. Dissertation findings**

#### **3.1. Key findings of the theoretical study**

In most cases of stakeholder engagement it is the companies that decide on the stakeholders whom they initiate a dialogue with. At the same time, these dialogues and other corporate social responsibility practices, such as volunteer initiatives and employee engagement, as well as the use of social media as a tool to strengthen stakeholder relationships are all solutions that offer an opportunity, by the terms of Habermas, for the *life-world* and the *systems world* to meet through the creation of internal organizational publicity. During the management of their stakeholder relationships, companies engage in communicative actions, and thus, in addition to instrumental and strategic types of actions characteristic of companies, they also acquire a *compromise-seeking* or even *consensus-seeking* communicative behavior aimed at establishing cooperation among equal parties, as put by Habermas. It helps create a dialogue characteristic of the *life-world* in an institutional world traditionally characteristic of companies. So why it is important to have corporate social responsibility programs and maintain stakeholder relationships? Because they make the values characteristic of the *life-world* available in the *systems world*. A good example is corporate volunteer programs or social-purpose initiatives where a leading commercial chain initiates cooperation with civil organizations in order to deliver its products to those in need. These solutions also drive institutions to give preference to ideal speech situations and morally driven discussions, in the sense of Habermas' concept (Alvesson and Deetz, 1998).

During an overview of the literature on business ethics, the study also took a look at the relationships established with stakeholders. The overview of the literature describes the interpretations of the terms social responsibility and sustainable development. Furthermore, the theoretical chapter provides an introduction into the main business ethics thoughts and current opinions critical of classic economics that can be connected to stakeholder engagement practices described in the literature of management.

### **3.2. Aspects of building corporate strategy**

Corporate social responsibility practices become institutionalized as an attitude that defines the overall activities of a company. In accordance with the triple bottom line principles, nonmarket strategic goals become integral part of a company's business strategy and are measured and controlled by indicators. Based on the hypothesis the analysis looked at the ways in which companies integrated nonmarket strategies built on dialogues and interest-reconciliation in their strategies in addition to the market goals of the organization.

Based on the study described above, companies that use a strategic approach to their sustainability and corporate social responsibility activities choose to strengthen these areas for business reasons.

According to Baron (1995), a company's strategy for the environment in which it operates should be an integrated strategy since it needs to address both the market and nonmarket goals and issues (Pataki, 2000). In addition to market factors, leaders must also take nonmarket factors into consideration. A strategy for the nonmarket environment focuses on structuring stakeholder relationships and the improvement of the organization's overall performance, exercising influence on the organizational field in which it operates (Pataki, 2000, p.39).

At companies where these business interests are recognized, the recognition may dynamize activities related to sustainability, corporate social responsibility and stakeholder relationships.

The study points out that there are differences in the level of depth to which companies elaborate their strategies. While the principle of sustainability is embedded as a core value in the activities of Duna-Dráva Cement Kft. and compliance with this value is a key requirement in everyday operations, the goals of the company do not include either a strategic structuring of corporate social responsibility activities or cooperation with

social organizations since the management has not realized the competitive edge these activities could give them. On the other hand, at companies like Magyar Telekom, Vodafone and MOL corporate social responsibility is not just a tool for structuring and strengthening local relationships, but it is an activity that defines the entire business strategy and is measured by metrics. It is because of these companies believe that these activities support and strengthen their investor and shareholder relationships and also reinforce their market position.

The study also points out that companies do not perform corporate social responsibility activities merely for philanthropic purposes and the related communication does not serve the sole purpose of improving the company's reputation, and thus the communication by the company is not simply a unilateral strategic provision of information. *Companies put high priority on certain public matters and form their own standpoints regarding these matters, contributing to social dialogue.* At the same time, the standpoint expressed by a representative of Vodafone during the interview, according to which it is not the company's goal to shape public matters, is quite typical. *They believe it is important to represent certain values and want to use their expertise and resources, connected to these values, for the benefit of the public.*

The established channels of stakeholder dialogues (Sustainability Roundtable, Stakeholder Forum, etc.) all demonstrate that Hungarian companies identify their stakeholders and consciously interact with them, and this conscious interaction has already resulted in an established institutional system. According to a Telekom employee, roundtables and similar discussions are forums to discuss general issues only and do not provide solutions to specific practical problems. On the contrary, a Coca-Cola HBC employee highlighted the importance of similar forums. "We will probably never agree with the representatives of healthcare and civil organizations regarding the role of energy drinks. But it is important to get to know each other and create an opportunity for face-to-face negotiations and a joint discussion of the debated issues." While these formal channels do not per se result in consensus, they still help *institutionalize consensus-seeking behaviors.*

### **3.3. Managing stakeholder relations**

The mutuality of stakeholder relationships and a balanced partnership with the relevant organizations are ensured by institutionalized practices by the companies.

Companies may use various ways to institutionalize sustainability and corporate social responsibility practices, including institutionalizing them in business processes, in various form of cooperation between the company and others, or in the goals set by the company. Detailed strategies and regulated processes are typically developed by companies that also involve stakeholders in the controlling of these strategies and processes. Companies that have elaborated and detailed corporate social responsibility institutions also use them to ensure transparency and accountability of their business processes.

Companies announce call for proposals to encourage civil organizations to step up their activities, provide expertise to help their operations and cooperate with them in win-win initiatives.

Encouraging initiatives that are independent from the government is an important element of social engagement by companies. These initiatives may include individual initiatives without an organizational background and initiatives built on the collaboration of multiple social organizations and companies. An important element of these initiatives is the encouragement of civic responsibility through the engagement of the company.

The study confirmed that supporting initiatives that are independent from the government, be they either individual initiatives or other initiatives connected to social organizations, is an important objective of corporate social responsibility. Companies provide both infrastructure and financial resources to support civic initiatives.

Finding an area of cooperation that brings mutual benefits to companies and social organizations alike gives strategic perspective to companies' sustainability and corporate social responsibility activities.

*The past decade saw the emergence of alternative CSR approaches on the grounds of criticism regarding companies' social responsibility practices. Michael Porter, for example, has introduced the concept of Creating Shared Value. In the case of CSV, the value is created by the combination of social and business values. The Base of the Pyramid model, as referred to by C. K. Prahalad, shows a close connection to Porter's approach. The main point of Prahalad's approach is that large companies must provide products suitable for 3 billion people living in poverty around the world. In his book published in 2011, Wayne Visser describes the model of CSR 2.0. He argues that, on*

the analogy of web 2.0, CSR should also go beyond the initial stage and undergo a radical renewal to be able to provide answers to social problems.

A collaborative business model can provide an answer to several challenges that cannot be addressed with a competitive approach, argue Antonio Tencati and László Zsolnai in their article titled the *Collaborative Enterprise* (Tencati and Zsolnai, 2008). The study takes a look at solutions where companies are mindful of all stakeholders and cooperate with them to implement a sustainable business practice.

The purpose of creating shared value and other novel business concepts is to have stakeholder groups really work together in addressing specific issues.

Companies described numerous initiatives where the cooperation between the stakeholders and the company resulted in innovative solutions. It is all the more important as studies point out that an increased interest from the public and the media can be expected when corporate social responsibility initiatives result in innovative solutions. Programs found during the research and presented in case studies (Dreher – King of Silence; TESCO and Food Bank collaboration; Romaster program) are all initiatives that were created through the cooperation of the relevant companies and their stakeholders, and they should not be considered merely a form of support that is independent from the companies' core activities, but programs that are connected to and support the core activities and that support an important public matter. Thus the study confirmed that programs implemented in the spirit of alternative CSR models, described as part of the theoretical chapters, such as the Creating Shared Value initiative can also be found in Hungary.

Case studies developed on the basis of half-structured interviews showcase three typical corporate approaches to stakeholder relationships. They include an approach that builds on traditional corporate practices and focuses on supporting local communities rather than engaging in joint cooperation; a strategy that builds on the cooperation between the business and the civil spheres and on mutual relationships; and social enterprises the core activities of which are based on stakeholder cooperation.

It is clear from the study that it is the mutual benefits that lead to strategic cooperation. In the case of TESCO and the Food Bank, the interests of the business, the social organization and the community have met. It, however, required a history in the relationship between TESCO and the organization so that a cooperation built on mutual

trust can be started, which also involved the creation of organizational conditions (modification of processes and training of employees).

### **3.4. Social communication as a form of social responsibility**

#### **3.4.1. Methods to support corporate social responsibility**

New media and new communications technologies have reformed the approach of companies to media and content. Content creation has become a key tool in structuring stakeholder relationships and ensuring transparency. Large companies are gradually integrating social media and new communications platforms in their operations, which, in the lack of an established practice, do not per se contribute to the intensification of stakeholder cooperation. It is important to note that *there is an increasing need for innovative solutions in stakeholder cooperation connected to corporate social responsibility*. It provides an opportunity for a joint problem solving during which the company and its stakeholders can utilize their respective complementary resources and expertise.

With regard to companies' sustainability and social responsibility practices, social media is a tool of information provision and community building which follows the development of communities strengthened by other tools.

Companies are present in the social media with their corporate social responsibility activities, but in their case the information provided through the social media follows the actual cooperation, so the social media follows or intensifies the otherwise established sustainability and social responsibility practices.

#### **3.4.2. The role of the communication expert**

The role of corporate communications experts is transitioning from unilateral strategic communications to becoming a key agent of discourse ethics, making the communications expert a mediator between the company and stakeholders.

The communications team plays a key role within the organization. In addition to professionals responsible for public relations, the team also consists of *experts, who, by virtue of their role, are responsible for being aware of stakeholders' interests and making these interests known to the senior management*. Companies typically operate a communications team focusing on products and a communications team focusing on the

organization's communications activities, but while the latter is a direct part of the senior management, professionals responsible for the communications regarding products and services work as part of the sales function. The communications function represents the concepts of consensus-seeking, cooperation and responsibility towards the senior management and thereby towards the entire organization.

In order to achieve profitable operations, business activities involve regular conflicts and fights. At the same time it can also be observed that corporate communications are increasingly being built on mutuality, cooperation and consensus-seeking. And while the analysis of certain conflict situations shows the contrary, the study points out that consensus-seeking is becoming a norm in businesses' stakeholder relationships.

Based on key messages of corporate communication and the relevant literature, it is an objective that the practice of responsible and sustainable operations is integrated in companies' everyday operations. Some of the relevant literature and studies argue that the role that social responsibility and sustainability play at companies is played down by giving the responsibility for the management of these areas to communications professionals. The communications function is responsible for engaging all stakeholders and working with them to really integrate the corporate social responsibility approach in the company's operations. The study assumes that the communications function will be able to authentically represent a company's corporate social responsibility activities by looking at them – in the spirit of communicative ethics – as a tool that helps support dialogues between the different stakeholder groups rather than looking at them as a strategic communications (PR) responsibility. As it was raised during the studies and focus group interviews, outsiders often claim that the authenticity of corporate social responsibility activities is damaged by the fact that the function belongs to the communications team at the company. To support their claim interviewees argue that in this case the company's primary goal is communication to put the organization in a more favorable light and not the renewal of real processes in the spirit of corporate social responsibility. In connection with this hypothesis I take a look at the role that communications professionals play in corporate social responsibility practices and how their role impacts stakeholder relationships.

Both the overview of the relevant literature and the interviews with companies confirmed that, according to experts, both the approach to and practical forms of corporate social responsibility and stakeholder relationships should ideally be integrated in every aspect of a company's operations. Nevertheless, apart from a few exceptions,



the responsibility for these activities belongs to the communications function for both professional and organizational reasons. From the study it can be seen that this approach does not diminish the importance of corporate social responsibility within a company because the communications function plays a coordinating role, bringing together the activities of the various fields and committees responsible for the relevant fields.

Similarly to environment protection, communication is an inherently important and essential element of corporate social responsibility. In the case of Hungarian companies, the strong role of communications contributes to a consensus-seeking collaborative communications approach. Corporate communications, as the communication of the organization, is in fact a moral and ethical activity aimed at ensuring the transparency of the organization and ensuring dialogues with stakeholders. Companies that take responsibility for their actions identify their stakeholders and engage in dialogues with them. Engagement practices, however, have not yet become an integral part of companies' operations.

### **3.4.3. Various typical models of corporate social responsibility activities and concepts**

Companies can be categorized in various groups based on the intensity of their stakeholder relationships, and *these groups can be considered as different levels of development in stakeholder cooperation. Carroll (1991) depicted the corporate social responsibility practice in a pyramid model.* The stakeholder relationships of companies go beyond relationships related to business transactions. Beyond business relations, an active cooperation is created with all stakeholders which the company has an impact on and which have an impact on the company.

Interviews with and analyses of Hungarian companies allow for categories to be set up in the field of corporate social responsibility practices. Companies can be compared based on their corporate social responsibility practices and they themselves go through a development path. Amongst the companies that were active in terms of stakeholder relationships and social engagement, three typical approaches to stakeholders were identified during the study: *traditional CSR approach, strategic approach and value-based corporate strategy.*

The approach that builds on traditional corporate practices and focuses on supporting local communities rather than engaging in joint cooperation was typical of the activities of DDC Group and Holcim. The strategic approach that builds on the cooperation between the business and the civil spheres and on mutual relationships was typical of

the activities of Telekom, MOL, Vodafone and KPMG. The third category comprises social enterprises the core activities of which are based on stakeholder cooperation. From the studied sample MagNet Bank comes closest to this approach as it structures its core activities around ethical principles.

#### **4. Possible topics of further research and ways of application**

Through the description of the theoretical background and the typical model in practice the thesis enable the corporations to functions with respect to the stakeholders not only in case of business as usual but also in crises and critical situations. The overview of typical models and alternative practices of stakeholder relations can inspire new methods of the Hungarian corporate functions. While introduction of the pyramid model of Carroll as a possible interpretation of the typical Hungarian CSR and stakeholder relation approaches can urge companies to reach the even higher and more stakeholder oriented standards.

Further research projects of the topic can lead to detailed exploration of the role of media in the stakeholder relations of the companies. While the stakeholder and CSR activities and role models of public (state owned and led) companies and institutions can also be described in depth. The characteristics of the functioning of multi-stakeholder organizations, like e.g.: the Knowledge Innovation Communities (KICs) of the European Institute of Technology (EIT) can lead to relevant findings on how different interests can be mediated and directed in order to realize synergies.

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### **Selection of dissertation-related publications**

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