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# When Engagement Promises meet Business Realities

## An analysis of strategies, tensions, and roles in the Extractive Industries

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Doctor of Philosophy

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## i. Abstract

Previous research suggests that businesses can contribute to societal welfare by integrating the perspectives of local communities into corporate decision-making processes. However, the need to obtain a Social Licence to Operate (SLO) has pushed firms to implement Corporate Community Engagement (CCE) interventions aimed at achieving consensus, obscuring the contradictory approaches, challenges, and mechanisms that CCE practitioners need to balance when engaging business with local communities.

This dissertation delves into the multifaceted nature of CCE and explores how it manifests at organisational and individual levels of analysis. It contributes to previous Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) literature (including Political CSR (PCSR), agonistic PCSR, and micro-CSR) shedding light on the organisational worldviews, tensions, and governance roles that CCE practitioners experience in their daily lives.

Paper one contributes to the literature of CSR and CCE by conceptualising three organisational worldviews (utilitarian/instrumental, managerial/descriptive, and relational/normative) that shape the CCE continuum. The conclusion drawn from this paper is that advancing along the continuum necessitates a fundamental shift in organisational worldviews, rather than mere changes to community engagement practices.

Paper two contributes to agonistic PCSR by surfacing the tensions that CCE practitioners face when engaging with extractive industries and marginalised local communities. The conclusion of this paper is that practitioners navigate them employing agonistic politics, a political approach that enables them bring to the forefront the legitimacy of opposing alternatives. Embracing an agonistic approach allows CCE practitioners to engage with both companies and local communities while actively acknowledging the tensions that may arise in the process.

Paper three contributes to micro-CSR and governance literature by introducing an individual-level of analysis into the formation of governance spheres. The paper concludes identifying four governance roles (negotiator, mediator, interpreter, and transformer) that practitioners need to balance in order to generate and maintain governance spheres among private, public, and social actors.

Through these papers, this dissertation provides a more nuanced perspective that goes beyond the conventional business case for CCE.

## ii. Lay Summary

The lay summary is a brief summary intended to facilitate knowledge transfer and enhance accessibility, therefore the language used should be non-technical and suitable for a general audience. Guidance on the lay summary in a thesis. (See the Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study, General Postgraduate Degree Programme Regulations. These regulations are available via: www.drps.ed.ac.uk.)

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|---|---|---|---|
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| Degree sought: | PhD, Management | No. of words in the main text of thesis: | 59,391 |
| Title of thesis: | When engagement promises meet business realities. An analysis of strategies, tensions, and roles in the extractive industries | | |

Insert the lay summary text here - the space will expand as you type.

This dissertation explores the multifaceted nature of Corporate Community Engagement (CCE). It delves into the various aspects of CCE, examining its manifestations not only at the organisational level but also at the individual level of analysis. This dissertations is comprised of three primary studies, each presented as a journal paper. Each of these papers is dedicated to investigating a specific research question. 1) What approaches inform an organisation's CCE strategy? 2) How do CCE practitioners experience CCE? And 3) How do CCE practitioners navigate the tensions they experience?

In the first paper, this dissertation explores three organisational worldviews which shape the CCE continuum. A key takeaway from this paper is that companies progressing along this continuum necessitate a profound shift in their organisational worldviews.

The second paper surfaces the challenges that CCE practitioners face when engaging with extractive industries and local communities. One important insight from this paper is the agonistic manner in which CCE practitioners handle these tensions. By embracing this approach, CCE practitioners can engage with both companies and local communities while proactively managing the tensions that emerge throughout the engagement process.

The third paper adds depth to micro-CSR and governance literature by introducing an individual-level analysis into the formation of governance spheres. This paper surfaces four distinct governance roles (negotiator, mediator, interpreter, and transformer) that practitioners must balance to establish governance spheres among private, public, and social actors. Through these papers, this dissertation offers a comprehensive exploration of the organisational worldviews, tensions, and governance roles within the realm of CCE.

### iii. Signed declaration

This work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification. All of the literature review, data analysis, findings and discussion chapters were completed entirely by Eduardo Hernandez Melgar. The three papers included as Chapters 4, 5, and 6 were drafted and primarily written by myself, with guidance from my supervisory team. The following chapters are planned to be submitted to academic journals as co-author papers.

| **Thesis section** | **Co-authored papers** |
|---|---|
| Chapter Four: Exploring The Continuum of Corporate Community Engagement | Hernández, E. & Ivory, S. (2023). Exploring The Continuum of Corporate Community Engagement. *Journal of Business Ethics.* Intended submission, November 2023. |
| Chapter Five: Antagonism In PCSR: Exploring Tensions in Corporate Community Engagement Interventions | Hernández, E; Cervi, L; Ivory, S. (2023). Exploring Tensions in Corporate Community Engagement Interventions. *Journal of Business Ethics.* Intended submission, November 2023. |
| Chapter Six: Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Exploring Governance Roles of CCE practitioners | Hernández, E.; Cervi, L; Ivory, S. (2023). Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Exploring Governance Roles of CCE practitioners. Journal of Business Ethics. Intended submission, November 2023. |

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

Current economic growth has been marked by an intensification of a series of grand challenges, such as Climate Change, which are increasingly impacting the way society interacts. Consequently, over the course of the past three decades, an important shift has been unfolding. Private entities, most notably Multinational Corporations (MNC), have been taking a central position in the global discourse on Sustainable Development (SD) (Ferns & Amaeshi, 2019). In this transition, businesses have assumed a more profound political role, positioning themselves as key players in the definition and pursuit of SD goals. This new position has placed them alongside conventional actors, including governments and civil society organisations, as vital players to addressing SD challenges.

The adoption of this "new" political role by private entities can also be interpreted as a response to a series of industrial disasters that have led to severe environmental and social catastrophes. Examples abound, but some of them are the Niger Delta Oil Pollution (1976), the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill (1989), and the Deepwater Oil Spill in the Gulf of Mexico (2010). These incidents have played a significant role in raising global awareness about the consequences of irresponsible MNC actions, with the extractive industries becoming a focal point of increased scrutiny. Over the past 15 years, the number of national and international safeguards promoting responsible businesses and resource development in these industries has surged (Owen & Kemp, 2017). Among the topics gaining increasing prominence as a form of regulation is Corporate Community Engagement (CCE).

CCE is used in this dissertation as the range of both formal and informal practices that businesses undertake to achieve a Social Licence to Operate (SLO) and develop relationships with the communities in which they operate. This dissertation engages with this topic through an integrative exploration of the phenomenon implemented by extractive industries. It examines this phenomenon from two distinct levels of analysis: the meso-organisational level, which affects MNCs approaches, and the micro-individual level, which shapes the experiences of those at the frontline of bringing extractive companies and local communities together, namely CCE practitioners.

Previous studies investigating the engagement of businesses in SD issues have examined the corporate capacity of businesses to deliberate within multi-stakeholder initiatives (Arenas et al., 2020; Dawkins, 2021a, 2021b; Pek et al., 2023). For instance, scholars have shed light on the diverse strategies that businesses employ to engage with collective stakeholders such as local communities (Bowen et al., 2010; Delannon et al., 2016; Morsing & Schultz, 2006; Voort et al., 2009). Furthermore, some researchers have delved into the challenges that practitioners navigate when reconciling business interests with societal well-being (Brès & Gond, 2014; Brès et al., 2019; Fontana et al., 2023; Mitra & Buzzanell, 2016).

However, while this research has enriched our understanding of private engagement in SD issues, there remains an underexplored terrain. Firstly, existing research has focused on the material aspects of CCE, overlooking the investigation of organizational worldviews informing the implementation of CCE strategies. Secondly, while prior research has acknowledged the corporate capacity to interact with local communities, the emphasis on deliberations has overlooked the analysis of power asymmetries, antagonisms, and tensions. Thirdly, whereas previous research has explored the mechanisms used by practitioners, it has focused on those situated within corporate headquarters, omitting the voices of those directly engaged in addressing the demands and concerns of affected local communities, herein referred to as CCE practitioners.

To address these research gaps, this dissertation examines CCE from both the organizational and individual perspectives. The primary research objective is:

- To investigate the different organisational approaches, individual challenges, and roles taken by frontline CCE practitioners when navigating and developing relationships between mining, oil & gas corporations, and the local communities where they operate.

To achieve this objective, this dissertation addresses three research questions. These questions seek to add a more nuanced understanding to the current study of the CCE phenomenon.

1. What approaches inform an organisation's CCE strategy?
2. How do CCE practitioners experience CCE?
3. How do CCE practitioners navigate the tensions they experience?

The research problem that this dissertation addresses is the lack of a deeper investigation of the contradictory approaches, challenges, and mechanisms that CCE practitioners need to balance when engaging business with local communities. Consequently, this dissertation is interested in exploring how CCE manifests at organisational and individual levels of analysis in order to contribute to previous CSR literature by shedding light on the organisational worldviews, tensions, and governance roles that CCE practitioners experience in their daily lives.

This dissertation connects the CCE phenomenon with broader theoretical underpinnings. Firstly, at the organisational level, this dissertation investigates the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Stakeholder Engagement approaches utilised by firms to implement three types of CCE strategies. This investigation is important because the lack of understanding of organisational worldviews can create a disconnection between the community engagement function and the overarching corporate decisions that affect the entire business model.

Secondly, this dissertation engages with agonistic Political Corporate Social Responsibility (PCSR) to repoliticise the work of CCE practitioners by identifying the tensions that they must navigate during their on the ground interventions. This approach is significant because failing to acknowledge the various tensions faced by CCE practitioners can lead to a superficial understanding of their role. Furthermore, this oversight could result in the neglect of the political in its dimension of conflict.

Thirdly, this dissertation delves into micro-CSR and Governance literature to discuss the governance roles that CCE practitioners adopt, to bring and maintain public, social, and private actors together in governance spheres. This approach is important because neglecting the insights from CCE practitioners obstructs our comprehension of the roles they employ to manage potential conflicts between businesses and local communities.

To address the three research questions and delve into the individual level of analysis, this dissertation gathered qualitative data from 51 CCE practitioners with working experience in oil and gas and mining companies. The formulation of these three specific questions and the data-gathering method selected was motivated due to ontological and epistemological reasons.

Ontologically, the personal interest of this research centred in investigating the different perspectives that constitute the phenomenon of CCE. Therefore, this dissertation adopted the philosophical paradigm of constructivism, where the social world is continuously constructed by the interactions of people, material objects, and nonhuman actors. This research adopted an epistemology of interpretation, interested in exploring the meanings that CCE practitioners attach to their CCE interventions.

This dissertation is organised as follows. Chapter Two provides the Theoretical Framework that connects the CCE phenomenon with broader theories and concepts discussed in management literature. It begins by tracing the historical background of the Business and Nature relationship, introducing the concept of Corporate Sustainability and delving into the various viewpoints contributing to its discussion. This Chapter then explores the Business and Society relationship, introducing the concept of CSR and its different perspectives such as PCSR, agonistic PCSR, and micro-CSR. In Chapter Three, this dissertation introduces the methodological approach, inspired by Huff (2008), who suggests a model to align the researcher's personal purpose with the epistemological, ontological, data-gathering, and analytical choices made during the research process.

The next three chapters address the three specific research questions. Chapter Four engages with RQ1, investigating from a conceptual perspective, firms' approaches to CSR and stakeholder engagement which inform their CCE strategies. Chapter Five introduces an empirical perspective, to explore how CCE practitioners experience CCE. Its conclusion – related to the tensions they experience – leads in to the empirical analysis of Chapter Six. This chapter focuses on how practitioners navigate these tensions. Finally, Chapter Seven is the Discussion chapter which links the findings from the three papers to emphasise the theoretical and empirical contribution of this research related to our understanding of CCE at the organisational and individual levels of analysis.

# 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

For a long time, concerns surrounding sustainability were absent from mainstream global discourses (Dalby, 2002). However, a shift began to occur in the early 1990s. This movement was sparked when the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (UNWCED) published the Brundtland Report (1987). Through this report, the United Nations (UN) emphasized the critical aspect of global environmental degradation, highlighting its potential threat not only for present but also for upcoming generations (Brundtland, 1987).

This declaration served as a wake-up call for diverse organisations, including business, to begin making changes towards greater sustainability. In this chapter, I present the theoretical and conceptual conversations that have been accompanying this shift. I split this chapter in three subsections. In the first one, I introduce the literature on Sustainable Development (SD) and its link with the more business oriented concept of Corporate Sustainability (CS). In the second subsection, I delve into the related literature on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), a concept with a longer history in the business literature, but one that has often been treated as a peripheral aspect in business decision making. Lastly, in the third subsection, I introduce the topic of Corporate Community Engagement (CCE) as a specific example of how businesses have been implementing their CSR initiatives at the local level. This section highlights the importance of businesses' engagement with their stakeholders, particularly local communities and the complexities involved in fostering interactions with them.

Overall, these three distinct yet interconnected bodies of literature serve as the theoretical foundation for the papers that comprise this dissertation. They provide the perspectives, concepts, frameworks, and arguments to address three research questions that will be further discussed in the Methodology chapter of this thesis.

## 2.1.Business and Nature

### 2.1.1. Technocentric vs. Ecocentric paradigms

The publication of the Brundtland Report (1987) played a pivotal role in increasing the prominence of the sustainability debate. In this report, the UN emphasized the imperative of integrating environmental factors into the planning and decision-making of government and

industries, stressing the need to ensure higher environmental awareness across all organisational levels (Brundtland, 1987).

Furthermore, the concept of sustainable development (SD), introduced alongside the Brundtland Report, started to gain acceptance in governmental, industrial, and academic discussions. The concept emphasizes the importance of addressing present and future needs while simultaneously considering ecological, economic, and social conditions. Within the concept of SD, ecological, economic, and social conditions are seen as both limits and opportunities for human relations (Lélé, 1991). The 1987 report provided the following definition for SD:

> "[…] development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It contains within it two key concepts: the concept of 'needs', in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs" (Brundtland, 1987, p. 41) .

As the concept of SD gained traction, public, social, and private actors began employing it in two distinct yet interrelated ways. Firstly, as a means to initiate capacity building and organisational change (Shrivastava & Hart, 1995). Secondly, as a goal focused on achieving harmony between humans and their broader ecological systems (Wainger & Costanza, 1991). In contrast to the incremental approach embodied in the first view, the second approach took a more radical stance since it "focuses attention where it should be placed, on the ability of humans to continue to live within environmental constraints" (Robinson, 2004, p. 370).

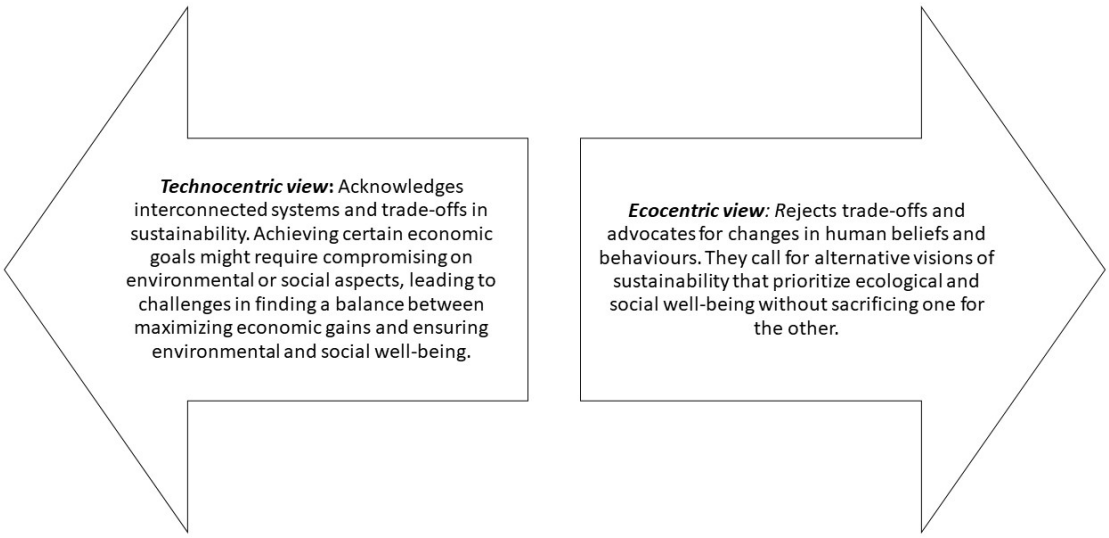
Within the academic discussion, the concept of Sustainable Development has taken two alternative directions. One of these directions is framed by the concept of *Sustainable Economic Development* (SED), coined by neoclassical economists. Scholars in this field recognise the interconnectedness of biological, economic, and social systems, but they also acknowledge the inevitable presence of trade-offs that can only be addressed through a continuous and careful analytical process (Barbier, 1987; Stern, 1997). For instance, when businesses or governments face the challenge of balancing capital maximisation and ecological conservation, according to neoclassical economists, they need to maximise both goals through an adaptive process of trade-offs (Barbier, 1987).

Critics of the neoclassical approach (Eckersley, 1992; Egri & Pinfield, 1999; Martínez Alier, 2002) to Sustainable Development (SD) oppose the idea of achieving economic maximization through balancing trade-offs. They argue that by sacrificing biological goals, the neoclassical perspective perceives nature merely as a resource that can be exploited, quantified, and offset. In other words, these scholars critique neoclassical economists for neglecting the inherent value of nature, and reducing it to a mere economic commodity. Moreover, these critics call for a more comprehensive approach to SD that acknowledges the interconnectedness of ecological, social, and economic systems while safeguarding the long-term health and well-being of the natural environment.

As a result, scholars have presented different interpretations of sustainability, labelled as *ecocentrism, deep ecology, spiritual ecology, social ecology* (Egri & Pinfield, 1999). Although these positions can be distinguishable from each other, overall they call for a more radical reconception of humanity's role in the world. These visions do not accept the notion of trade-offs or rely solely on technological innovations; instead, they emphasize the need for changes in the underlying individual human beliefs and behaviours. According to these perspectives, "there is no valid basis to the belief that humans are the pinnacle of evolution and the sole locus of value and meaning in the world" (Eckersley, 1992, p. 28).

The clash between neoclassical SED with alternative sustainability approaches can be understood as what Egri and Pinfield (1999) named the encounter of the *Social Paradigm* and the *Radical Environmentalism*. This clash is also described by Gladwin et al. (1995) as the struggle between the *technocentric* vs. *ecocentric* paradigm. The problem, as highlighted by these authors, is that both paradigms, due to their ideological differences, give rise to counteractive forces that hinder both development and the conservation of nature (Gladwin et al., 1995).

Figure 1 Two Sides of the Sustainability Debate




### 2.1.2. Sustaincentrism and Corporate Sustainability

In response to the ideological opposition presented above, scholars have proposed a middle ground paradigm. Egri and Pinfield (1999) call it *reform environmentalism* and Gladwin et al. (1995) s*ustaincentrism.* Overall, these paradigms recognise the natural limits to economic growth and the significance of biocentric values and natural capital for the well-being of our planet. However, rather than advocating for the conservation of pristine environments, they emphasize the importance of systemic thinking as means to identify optimal trade-offs. According to this paradigm, when trade-offs cannot be tolerated, regulatory measures, prudence, moderation, and precatory principles should be employed (Egri & Pinfield, 1999; Gladwin et al., 1995).

> "[… the biosphere represents a global common, the potential for a 'tragedy of the unmanaged commons' necessitates that formal government involvement and regulation be instituted to develop and manage natural resources" (Egri, 1996, p. 466)

Proponents of this middle ground paradigm assert that economic, human activities, and natural systems are inextricably linked, and they suggest economic development should be centred in the interests of the people from today and tomorrow. Consequently, sustaincentrism broadened the scope of the sustainability debate to encompass various organisational contexts, including businesses.

Although management and organisational scholars initially paid minimal attention to sustainability issues (Gladwin et al., 1995), this gap began to be addressed in the late 1990s with the emergence of the Corporate Sustainability (CS) concept. Aligned with the principles put forth in the Brundtland Report, CS has been defined as:

> "[…] meeting the needs of a firm's direct and indirect stakeholders (such as shareholders, employees, clients, pressure groups, communities etc.), without compromising its ability to meet the needs of future stakeholders as well" (Dyllick & Hockerts, 2002, p. 131).

> "Corporate sustainability focuses on managing and balancing an enterprise's embeddedness in interrelated ecological, social, and economic systems so that positive impact is created in the form of long-term ecological balance, societal welfare, and stakeholder value" (Rasche et al., 2023, p. 8).

The CS concept, akin to the sustaincentrism paradigm, acknowledges the interrelation of ecological, social, and economic systems. It emphasizes the need for intergenerational and balancing criteria as a fundamental consideration for making profits and improving societal welfare. Proponents of this agenda argue that CS can lead firms to increase business profits by reducing regulatory costs, accessing new markets, and gaining a competitive advantage (Shrivastava & Hart, 1995). Moreover, there are other benefits such as reducing financial capital costs and enhancing corporate reputations (McWilliams & Siegel, 2011).

While focusing on competitive advantages initially helped to legitimize sustainability within business environments, some critics have emerged, highlighting the prevalence of instrumental reasons behind the adoption of this agenda. For instance, some scholars have criticized the abundance of win-win and trade-off discourses within CS studies (Hahn & Figge, 2011). They argue that the instrumental language adopted in these discourses contradicts the holistic thinking approach advocated by the sustaincentrism paradigm.[1] Additionally, these critiques point to the fact that the instrumental focus taken in win-win approaches aligns more with the ideas emphasized in the Sustainable Economic Development (SED) concept.

More examples of these critiques are in the work of Van Der Byl and Slawinski (2015), who highlighted that the win-win and trade-off approaches may lead managers to sacrifice one

[1] As this dissertation discusses in section 2.2, the emergence of the business developed both in the CS and the CSR literatures. This parallel is particularly clear during the 1990s, a period when various CSR authors advocated for the integration of social and environmental considerations into a company's decision-making processes, with the purpose to create mutual benefits for both business and society (Carroll, 1998; Elkington, 1999; Porter & Kramer, 1999).

sustainability element over other, rather than seeking a holistic integration of economic, social, and environmental dimensions. Another critique comes from the work of Ivory and Brooks (2017), who caution against the potential dilution of proactive sustainability efforts when a win-win approach focuses on measuring and reporting negative externalities. Finally, Bansal (2002) further critiques the win-win approach, arguing that it may encourage managers to prioritize short-term gains over long-term sustainable decision-making.

In response to these shortcomings, scholars have proposed alternative visions for the CS discussion. These visions call for a paradoxical approach (Smith et al., 2017). This approach recognises that in sustainability decisions conflicts are the rule rather than the exception (Hahn et al., 2010). Consequently, there are always contradictory effects after any type of balancing decision (Smith et al., 2010). The paradox approach calls to abandon the pursuit of definitive answers and the use of linear thinking logics (Ivory & Brooks, 2017), and instead it emphasizes the importance of acknowledging the multiple and contradictory aspects involved in sustainability.

The paradox approach shifts the focus towards embracing contradictions at different levels (Hahn et al., 2015), time horizons (Slawinski & Bansal, 2012, 2015), and domains (Schad & Bansal, 2018). It recognizes that sustainability challenges are complex and require a more nuanced understanding of the tensions involved. By adopting a paradoxical perspective, scholars encourage a deeper exploration within corporate sustainability, enabling a more context-specific understanding of its challenges and opportunities (Smith et al., 2017).

Although “not all of these tensions are necessarily logical contradictions in the sense that both poles of the tension mutually exclude each other” (Rasche et al., 2023, p. 23), there is recognition that they create discomfort. This is because managers need to cope with their antagonisms at different instances, for example, a) serving shareholders or stakeholders, b) achieving environmental or economic goals, c) internalising or externalising the cost of their negative impacts, d) being consistent with universal or local expectations (Rasche et al., 2023).

In summary, the management of the business-nature relationship has been greatly influenced by the sustainable development debate that gained traction after the release of the Brundtland Report in 1987. Sustainable development (SD) emphasizes addressing present and future needs while considering ecological, economic, and social conditions. Three main

approaches have emerged: recognizing optimal trade-offs for the economy, building a more harmonic relationship between humans and their ecological systems, and acknowledging the inevitability of tensions. Corporate Sustainability (CS) aligns with sustaincentrism, emphasizing the interrelation of ecological, social, and economic systems. However, CS studies have been criticized for instrumental justifications and a focus on win-win outcomes. More recently, scholars have proposed a paradoxical approach that embraces contradictions and complexities in sustainability decisions, encouraging a nuanced understanding of tensions and context-specific explorations.

In the next section, I shift our focus to the literature that explores the relationship between business and society. I will describe how although this concept that has had a longer history in the business literature, it has frequently been regarded as a secondary consideration in business decision-making processes.

### 2.2.Business and Society

Similar to the Brundtland Report, the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) gained traction following the publication of the book *Social Responsibilities of the Businessman* (sic) (Bowen, 1953). In this book, the author introduces the notion of social responsibility as corporate tool to achieve economic prosperity and social justice by acknowledging the business impacts on society. This book encourages business to adopt practices that promote welfare, and over time, various perspectives have emerged to guide private entities in such pursuit. In the next section, I introduce various CSR perspectives and employ the literature reviews conducted by Garriga and Melé (2004), Secchi (2007), and Carroll and Brown (2018).

#### 2.2.1. Instrumental, Relational, and Political CSR approaches

Scholars such as Friedman (1970), Jensen (2010), and McWilliams and Siegel (2011) have presented the argument that, while businesses conform with the legal rules of society, their primary responsibility is to generate profits. This perspective, referred to as the instrumental perspective by Garriga and Melé (2004) and the utilitarian perspective by Secchi (2007), emphasizes that the only mechanism for contributing to welfare is when managers maximise shareholder value. Grounded in the economic contractarian view of the firm (Margolis & Walsh, 2003), the instrumental/utilitarian perspective places CSR as a strategic tool for

creating profits (Friedman, 1970), achieving competitive advantages (Barney, 1991), externalising social costs (Coase, 1960), and enhancing corporate reputation (Minor & Morgan, 2011).

Critiques to the instrumental-utilitarian view of CSR argue that when firms focus on the achievement of economic objectives, they may satisfy consumer needs but compromise their long-term survival (Galbreath, 2014). Furthermore, scholars argue that when firms follow instrumental reasons to drive their CSR agenda, they run the risk of legitimising a manifesto for social negligence and ultimately taking a path towards corporate social irresponsibility (Rasche et al., 2023).

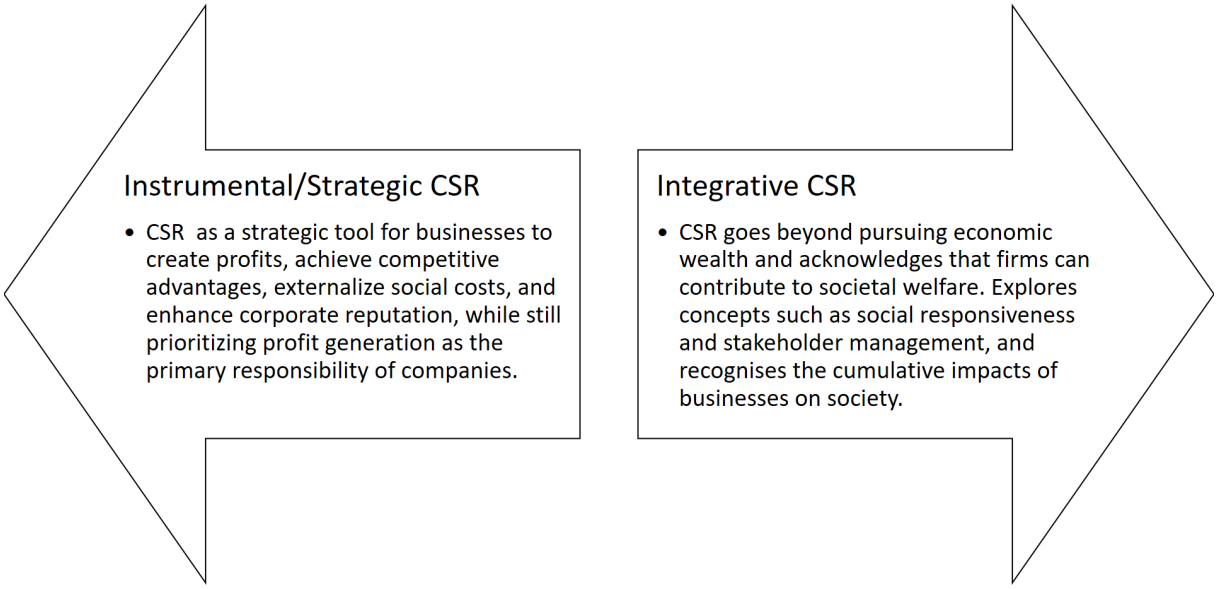
In an effort to shift away from the utilitarian belief that businesses exist solely for creating economic wealth, and instead, building on the idea that firms can contribute to societal welfare, Garriga and Melé (2004) identify an *integrative CSR perspective*, referred to by Secchi (2007) as the *relational CSR perspective*. Within this perspective, scholars have developed concepts to recognise that businesses are not isolated entities, but rather actors embedded within complex systems (Secchi, 2007).

Examples of these concepts are social responsiveness (Ackerman, 1973; Pater & Van Lierop, 2006) and stakeholder engagement (Freeman, 2010). While these concepts exhibit certain distinctions, overall they call for a holistic exploration of the cumulative impacts that business have on society. Social responsiveness emphasizes the importance for business to be adaptive and responsive to evolving social demands (Ackerman, 1973), and stakeholder management calls for a deep exploration of how corporations can address the needs of various groups who are affected by or have an interest in the activities of the business (Freeman, 2010; Phillips et al., 2003).

Critiques highlight the failure of integrative CSR approaches to address power relations and the conflicts that arise when certain stakeholders lack equal influence within the engagement framework (Blowfield & Frynas, 2005; Frynas, 2009). For example, Banerjee (2003) argues that theories on stakeholder management are complicit with colonialist attitudes and values. This is because, although corporations engage with stakeholders such as local and aboriginal communities, they retain control and restrict the meaning of what qualifies as a legitimate impact. This control allows corporations to shape the narrative of their actions, potentially

marginalizing the concerns of affected communities. “Thus, while aboriginal stakeholders are positioned as legitimate stakeholders whose needs will be constructively addressed, the stakes that are involved for Aboriginal communities affected by mining are somehow positioned as illegitimate or against national interest” (Banerjee, 2003, p. 271).

Figure 2 Two sides of the CSR debate




Source: Adapted from Garriga and Melé (2004) and Secchi (2007)

Lastly, Garriga and Melé (2004) identify the emergence of a *political perspective* on CSR. This perspective, similarly to the integrative perspective, sees firms as vehicles for contributing and promoting social welfare. Within this view, authors develop concepts such as *corporate citizenship, corporate accountability, and political CSR (PCSR).*

Corporate citizenship (CC) emerged as a management concept in the 1990s. This concept advocates for firms to actively engage in political processes with the aim of protect the social and civil rights of their stakeholders (Matten & Crane, 2005)[2]. Whereas previous notions of corporate citizenship had existed in the business literature (Carroll, 1991), the reconfiguration that this concept had during the 2000s expanded the model of CC to consider businesses not only as citizens but also as enablers of citizenship, rights and duties (Crane et al., 2008).

[2] During the 2002 World Economic Forum, chief executive officers (CEOs) from 34 multinational corporations (MNCs) collectively issued a statement titled 'Global Corporate Citizenship – The Leadership Challenge for CEOs and Boards', which foster the adoption of the CC concept.

Building upon this expanded notion of CC, other concepts also started to emerge. Among these is the concept of Corporate Accountability (CA), which emphasizes the principle that businesses ought to be held accountable for both their actions and their lack of action in society (Aguilera et al., 2007; Utting, 2008). This notion includes establishing "measures that require more systematic disclosure of information and reporting; independent monitoring and verifications and the establishment of complaints procedures" (Utting, 2008, p. 969).

While Garriga and Melé (2004) as well as Secchi (2007) do not explicitly identify Political CSR (PCSR) concepts in their reviews, it is worth noting that PCSR, much like CC, also perceives businesses as players within governance and policy making systems. However, it is important to recognise that PCSR, in contrast to the CC concept, initially adopted a transnational perspective to legitimise the involvement of businesses in the regulation of global issues (Scherer & Palazzo, 2007). In a nutshell, PCSR is defined as:

> "Those responsible business activities that turn corporations into political actors, by engaging in public deliberations, collective decisions, and the provision of public goods or the restriction of public bads in cases where public authorities are unable or unwilling to fulfil this role (Scherer et al., 2016).

In contrast to instrumental approaches, the PCSR concept recognises that corporations are global actors, with responsibility, capacity and legitimacy to resolve public problems through the provision of public goods in those situations where governments are unwilling or unable to do so. This involves corporations engaging in public sectors like healthcare, education, and infrastructure. It also involves firms enforcing social and environmental standards in supply chains, and addressing grand challenges like climate change, corruption, and inequality (Scherer et al., 2016).

In line with the concept of Corporate Accountability, the concept of PCSR also acknowledges that corporations are subject to public deliberations. Within this context, PCSR scholars argue that enhancing the effectiveness of these deliberations needs commitment from both public and private entities to guarantee transparency and access to less influential stakeholders to participate in these dialogues (Scherer & Palazzo, 2007).

Critiques to the political perspectives of CSR are diverse. Firstly, scholars have argued that democratic will formation processes, which lack dialogue across multiple levels, cannot accommodate the tensions between economic rationalities and the rights of local

stakeholders (Reinecke & Donaghey, 2021). Secondly, scholars have signalled the possibility of businesses manipulating and manufacturing consent within these corporate dialogues. For instance, Maher (2019b) argues that stakeholder engagement can be exploited to advance business interests to the point where agreements can be coerced using co-optation and psychological techniques.

These critiques raise questions about the fairness within deliberative processes, suggesting that power dynamics may undermine the genuine engagement and empowerment of vulnerable stakeholders (Banerjee, 2018). Following on this point, Ehrnström-Fuentes and Böhm (2022) argue that corporate deliberations can impose particular ontologies, or ways of understanding the world, that obscure the diversity of alternative place-making practices.

These critiques draw attention to the limitations of political CSR in addressing power imbalances and embracing plural ontologies within corporate deliberative processes. Acknowledging these critiques, the CMS literature has given rise to alternative approaches. One example is the agonistic notion of PCSR, a political approach that repoliticise business governance, by looking at antagonisms as certainties ruling the corporate and stakeholder interaction (Brand et al., 2020; Dawkins, 2021).

This section has presented an overview of the different approaches that business use to make sense of their social responsibilities. Overall there is an underlying tension between instrumental and relational/integrative approaches. This tension will be further explored in the first paper of this dissertation where I am to delve into the organisational worldviews that firms take into account to engage with local communities. To address the research question of this paper "What approaches inform an organisation's CCE strategy?" this paper interrogates the approaches to social responsibilities (Garriga & Melé, 2004; Secchi, 2007) and stakeholder engagement (Donaldson & Preston, 1995) driving three types of CCE strategies.

In the following section, the chapter introduces the main ideas behind agonistic politics (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985; Mouffe, 2013), an approach that management scholars have undertaken to develop an agonistic notion of PCSR (Banerjee, 2018; Burchell & Cook, 2013; Davidson, 2018; Dawkins, 2021a, 2021b; Fougère & Solitander, 2020; Rhodes & Fleming, 2020).

Furthermore, this section introduces the micro-CSR agenda, a body of literature that has been gaining momentum within the business literature as a response to the macro perspective that has dominated within PCSR agenda (Reinecke & Donaghey, 2021).

### 2.2.2. Agonistic PCSR

The Habermasian perspective of PCSR (Scherer & Palazzo, 2007; Scherer et al., 2016) argues that business play a political role due to their responsibility to enable citizenship by deliberating with stakeholders as a means to solve societal problems and protect the interests of vulnerable stakeholders.

However, several critiques have cautioned against this approach, underscoring that PCSR initiatives do no not amplify the voices of those who lack power. Indeed, according to CMS scholars (Rhodes & Fleming, 2020), PCSR initiatives depoliticise the public sphere by limiting access to dissenting voices. By compromising the principles of open dialogue and reciprocity (Dawkins, 2021a), PCSR ends up neglecting the existence of conflict and it leads to the formation of a universal consensus that obscures the pluriverse of alternative ways of being (Ehrnström-Fuentes & Böhm, 2022). As a response, agonistic PCSR has emerged as an alternative perspective to enlighten the dimension of conflict within PCSR interventions. This perspective draws inspiration from agonistic politics, an approach that embraces the political in its dimension of conflict (Mouffe, 2005).

The term "agonism" derives from the ancient Greek word "*agon*," which refers to a struggle where different ideas may compete and exclude one another, but the opportunity to challenge and contest those ideas remains open to all. Mouffe (2017) has applied this term to the study of the democratic realm, arguing that for democracy to thrive, it must exist in a state of permanent tension between authorities and citizens' dissent.

The state of permanent tension has three purposes. Firstly, it provides to "the marginalised" the opportunity to continue participating in future engagements. This is important because if marginalised groups were to disengage, their discontent could potentially escalate into an antagonistic and even violent dynamic. Secondly, agonism challenges the idea of a rational and universal consensus. This is because it recognises that any form of debate closure is imposed by power relations that create a divisive "us/them" relationship. Lastly, Laclau and Mouffe (1985) also use agonism as a strategy to maintain the centre of politics empty. This

implies that power must consistently remain a subject of contestation rather than being controlled by one single group.

> "When we accept that every identity is relational and that the condition of existence of every identity is the affirmation of a difference, the determination of an "other" that is going to play the role of a "constitutive outside", it is possible to understand how antagonisms arise. In the domain of collective identifications where what it is in question is the creation of a "we" by the delimitation of a "them", the possibility always exists that this we/them relation will turn into a relation of the friend/enemy type" (Mouffe, 2005, p. 2).

Although originally developed as a framework to study the democratic realm, agonistic politics (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985; Mouffe, 2017) has found applications in diverse fields such as international relations (Mouffe, 2013) and management studies. In particular, PCSR studies have adopted this approach to the study of corporate and stakeholder relationships, specifically, at global governance initiatives such as multi-stakeholder initiatives (Arenas et al., 2020; Burchell & Cook, 2013; Castelló & Lopez-Berzosa, 2023; Dawkins, 2021a; Fougère & Solitander, 2020). This adoption is due to the recognition that the political should not be separated from the social and economic realm, as it is a dimension that influences all aspects of human conditions.

Applying these agonistic ideas to the business and society field, management scholars have emphasised that firms, similar to other political actors, construct an "us/them" relationship when defining their approaches to social responsibilities. To avoid organisational identities shifting into a friend/enemy type of antagonism, management scholars have used the notion of conflictual consensus (Mouffe, 2013) to encourage businesses to challenge their values and policies. By constantly contesting the approaches to their social responsibilities, firms may increase their social responsiveness, and accept the coexistence of vulnerable and marginalised social groups (Banerjee, 2018).

> "Agreements, policy, or consensus that arise from rhetorical encounters should trigger a natural scepticism as to whether they should be considered natural or wholly objective, or rather the results of a struggle between competing interests and values. Issues that raise tensions between an organization and its stakeholders should not be considered as merely technical issues awaiting adjudication from experts, but as Mouffe (2013) contended they require a choice to be made between conflicting viewpoints" (Davidson, 2018)

A central element in this agonistic notion of PCSR is the recognition of maintaining a continuous state of conflict as a space to challenge business interpretations of responsible business. For example, Burchell and Cook (2013) apply an agonistic framework to shed light on the divisions inherent in CSR. They reveal that even when social groups participate in

engagement processes, conflict is not eliminated; instead, ongoing battles persist between civil society groups and businesses in their collaboration and resistance efforts. The authors highlight how civil society groups embrace agonistic forms to contest the meaning and language within the CSR discourse.

Dawkins (2021a), similarly, highlights the importance of civil society organisations combining deliberation with some means of coercion. In his study, the author develops an agonistic notion of political CSR that encourages actors to anticipate conflict and appreciate the various forms of stakeholder dissent. For example, he suggests making firms subject to dispute resolution mechanisms that ensure all participants have a fair opportunity to advocate for their positions.

Arenas et al. (2020) also employ agonistic politics to develop a contestatory deliberative approach that values the internal contestations occurring in private governance initiatives. In this case, authors highlight the internal tensions that exist in Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives (MSIs) and encourages firms to value them as signs of democratic quality and as an opportunity to stimulate further deliberations. Drawing from agonistic pluralisms, internal tensions in MSIs help disputants to clarify their positions, challenge governance rules, and discuss the inclusion of possible members. Lastly, Fougère and Solitander (2020) also utilise agonistic politics to bring back the political dimension in PCSR by understanding MSI as hegemonic projects. In their work, authors examine the role of dissensus and map different kinds of adversarial relationships that pragmatically contribute to incremental improvements in their schemes.

While these studies have contributed empirical studies to the realm of dissensual CSR (Whelan, 2012), from our literature review, we observe that current academic discussions have mostly focused on the analysis of tensions at transnational levels. Although these studies have paid attention to a diverse set of industry settings, such as forestry (Arenas et al., 2020; Fougère & Solitander, 2020), garment (Burchell & Cook, 2013; Dawkins, 2021a; Fougère & Solitander, 2020), and oil and gas (Arenas et al., 2020; Arond et al., 2019), there has been less attention to the analysis of tensions experienced in micro settings. To recover the emancipatory aspect of contested local spaces, researchers have called for more studies that

bring back our attention on deliberation practices that take place at the coalface (Reinecke & Donaghey, 2021) and micro level of analysis (Girschik et al., 2022; Gond & Moser, 2021).

Thus, in the second paper of this dissertation, I aim to address this gap by examining the tensions that have remained silent at the heart of PCSR interventions. Specifically, in the second paper, I address the research question "How do practitioners experience CCE?, exploring the tensions by those at the frontline of bringing business and society together, namely Corporate Community Engagement (CCE) practitioners.

### 2.2.3. Micro-CSR

Recent management literature has recognised the need to further explore the implementation of CSR at the individual level of analysis (Girschik et al., 2022; Gond & Moser, 2021). Scholars have particularly focused on paying attention to the psychological and sociological underpinnings driving the implementation of CSR initiatives. Consequently, a significant body of the current literature has emphasised the tensions and mechanisms that practitioners face as they act as agents of social change (Brès et al., 2019; Carollo & Guerci, 2018; Fontana et al., 2023; Mitra & Buzzanell, 2017, 2018; Risi & Wickert, 2017; Wright et al., 2012).

However, most of the recent micro-CSR research has focused on the experiences of practitioners who approach CSR from an activist-like perspective while operating within corporate structures (Girschik et al., 2022). This approach tends to give less attention to the on-the-ground and frontline CSR implementation experiences, where practitioners may need to adopt alternative approaches to address the demands of marginalized stakeholders such as local communities. Thus, in the second and third papers of this dissertation, I aim to address this gap by examining the front-line perspective in micro-CSR research. Specifically, in the second paper, I explore the tensions experienced by those at the frontline of bringing business and society together, namely Corporate Community Engagement (CCE). Additionally, in the third paper I investigate how these practitioners navigate the potential conflicts between business interests and the interests of local communities by adopting a dynamic set of governance roles.

To shed more light on the topic of Corporate Community Engagement, the next subsection introduces the concept of CCE, illustrating how private entities carry out this practice by

following instrumental (business continuity), integrative (stakeholder engagement), and political (deliberative) ideas.

### 2.3.Business and Local Communities

As discussed in section 2.2, the argument that private actors can support or even replace public actors in the provision of goods has gained attention among PCSR scholars. This perspective suggests that businesses have the potential to contribute to societal welfare by filling governance gaps (Scherer & Palazzo, 2007) in order to address the needs of marginalised, vulnerable, and at-risk local communities (Gibson, 2022).

One example in which firms can intervene in the public sphere is by investing their financial resources and organisational skills in the construction of non-profitable public infrastructures such as hospitals, schools, and roads. By taking on responsibility for these projects, firms can contribute to the improvement of public services in the communities where they operate. Furthermore, while governments traditionally have responsibility in protecting human rights, PCSR scholars also argue that firms can play a key role in safeguarding these rights (Crane et al., 2004; Dirk & Andrew, 2005).

As such, community engagement can be viewed as a public service that allows individuals to participate in the decision-making processes that impact their lives. From a political science perspective, community engagement is seen as a form of public deliberation to connect individual experiences to the political decisions that affect them (Ritchie, 2015). According to Arnstein (1969), community engagement serves as a mechanism for redistributing power and making the voices of citizens stronger.

Following these ideas, community engagement transcends the traditional boundaries of governance between governed-governors. In its theoretical conception, it holds the potential to fulfil the promise of power redistribution by providing space for diverse voices to be taken into account. Consequently, under specific circumstances it might be desirable that different political actors, including businesses, participate and even take on responsibility on community engagement processes. The rationale behind involving businesses in community engagement stems from the recognition that addressing complex challenges requires a collective effort (Ferraro & Beunza, 2018; Reed et al., 2018). In this regard, community

engagement aims to increase participation and address societal challenges. As the following quote underscores, CCE touches both on instrumental and normative grounds:

> "Engagement improves productivity; it produces trust; it is the right way to go about things because it is in the spirit of democratic governance, or it is the right thing to do because it restores the ethical unity of social and business domains around humanist values" (Pieczka, 2018, p. 559).

In the management literature, particularly in the field of CSR, Corporate Community Engagement (CCE) is broadly defined as those formal and informal practices that business conduct to develop relations with the communities in which they operate (Delannon et al., 2016). Formal CCE practices encompass codes of conducts, corporate policies and legal agreements such as Community Development Agreements (CDA) (O'Faircheallaigh, 2013). In contrast, informal CCE practices involve more spontaneous interactions, for example, casual conversations between employees and community members, or informal gatherings that contribute to the development of their relationships (Anguelovski, 2011).

Within the realm of CCE, there are three related concepts such as Community Relations and Development (CRD), Corporate Community Involvement (CCI), and Corporate Community Investment (CCInv). Altogether, these concepts share the purpose of generating positive outcomes for business, although some of them differ in their scope and approaches[3]. To clarify, this dissertation utilises the acronym CCE as an umbrella term that encompasses a range of interconnected concepts. I will briefly introduce some key assumptions and distinctions between these three related concepts. Detailed information and references are presented in Table 1 for further clarification.

CRD refers to a formalised corporate function responsible for nurturing harmonious relationships with communities neighbouring the areas where a company carries out its activities. The main purpose of a CRD department revolves around facilitating positive business outcomes, especially in complex contexts where mining, oil and gas and other extractivist projects take place (Kemp, 2010a; Kemp & Owen, 2013). These employees, named CRD practitioners, are tasked with negotiating agreements with various community members

[3] From the three different concepts, CRD is the term that closely aligns to the concept of CCE. However, a key distinction lies in the formalised character often attributed to CRD practitioners in existing literature. In contrast, the CCE literature recognises the role of informal practices in cultivating relationships with local communities.

including community leaders and landowners. However, the specialised nature of CRD has led some scholars to critique this function, as it can result in a disconnection between CRD practitioners and the strategic decision-makers within organisations (Zandvliet, 2004, 2009). For example, the next quote illustrates the semi peripheral status that some firms might assign to the CRD function.

> "CRD may well be described as peripheral because it does not have the same measure of influence or perceived importance relative to other business functions. However, CRD can also be said to be core because without this function, mining companies would be unable to acquire or maintain access to land and other key resources" (Kemp & Owen, 2013, p. 529).

From the previous quote, it is interesting to notice that the semi-peripheral status that firms assign to CRD tasks could potentially lead to additional issues. Local communities might perceive this corporate behaviour as hypocrite. Specifically, when corporations heavily invest financial and human resources in developing initial relations with community members, only to reduce them one regulatory permits or other corporate deadlines are granted.

In comparison to the CRD literature, the CCI literature follows a distinct path by not confining the community engagement responsibility to a singular department. Instead, the CCI literature underscores the dynamic involvement that senior management personnel can have in community development endeavours, alongside underscoring the pivotal significance of employee volunteering. Finally, this literature also highlights the integration of these projects with the overall corporate strategy (Burke et al., 1986; Liu et al., 2013; Voort et al., 2009)

Another concept that is similar to CRD is CCInv. However, unlike CRD and CCE, CCInv often adopts a more pronounced transactional approach as it involves the allocation of financial resources that "implies an expectation of return and signals that community development is typically viewed like any other investment" (Gibson, 2022, p. 932).

Acknowledging the connections, similarities and differences among these interrelated concepts, in this dissertation I employ the acronym CCE as an umbrella term to refer to those broad practices, both formal and informal, that companies implement to develop relationships with local communities affected by corporate operations. This definition encompasses both instrumental practices such as the negotiation of Community Development

Agreements (CDA) and more relational practices such as casual conversations between all type of firm employees and community members.

Table 1 CCE and related terms

| Concept | Main assumptions | Illustrative papers |
|---|---|---|
| Community Engagement (CCE) | It entails those activities that firms conduct to prevent conflicts and work collaboratively with individuals and community groups to address issues affecting their social well-being.<br><br>It encompasses particular phenomena such as philanthropy, employee volunteering, project planning consultation, and collaboration with civil society groups. | (Bowen et al., 2010; Dare et al., 2014; Davis & Franks, 2014; Delannon et al., 2016) |
| Corporate Community Involvement (CCI) | An evolved form of corporate philanthropy, which entails the process of actively devoting significant firm's resources and competencies to support projects within communities, in such a way that contributes to a healthier economy, and positive business outcomes such as employees loyalty or an enhanced corporate image.<br><br>CCI recognises specific community needs, and it is guided by top management. It takes on aspects associated with corporate strategy and it is frequently measured and assessed. | (Burke et al., 1986; Gold et al., 2018; Hess et al., 2002; Muthuri et al., 2009; Voort et al., 2009) |
| Corporate Community Relations and Development (CRD) | A formalised corporate function to provide the firm with the mechanisms to engage and manage their relationship with key stakeholder groups. In particular, the most immediate geographical communities. CRD aims to maintain amicable relationships and to provide to the firm with positive business outcomes in very complex contexts.<br><br>CCI involves mechanisms such as conflict resolution, grievance mechanism, negotiation, and mediation. | (Idemudia & Ite, 2006; Kemp & Owen, 2013; Waddock & Boyle, 1995; Zandvliet, 2009) |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Corporate Community Investment (CCInv) | CCI refers to the obligations of firms to promote quality-of-life improvements by helping communities to address their priorities, and by offsetting any negative impacts in ways that are sustainable and generate business value.<br><br>CCInv emphasizes the term investment, which implies an expectation of return such as reputational benefits, risk reductions, and productivity gains. | (Esteves & Barclay, 2011; Gibson, 2022; Rowe et al., 2014) |

Although CCE research has witnessed significant growth over the past two decades (Bowen et al., 2010), scholars have called for studies that delve into these interventions with a higher level of complexity and critical analysis. Specifically, scholars have called to refocus research attention on the diverse dynamics, challenges, and motivations that arise within these types of private interventions (Banerjee, 2018; Blowfield & Frynas, 2005; Voort et al., 2009).

In response to this call, scholars have undertaken critical reflections that purposely challenge prevailing notions concerning CCE interventions. For example, Idemudia (2014) contests the idea that communities behave as passive recipients of business aid. Instead, his paper highlights the active roles of communities in the Niger Delta, who proactively assume reciprocal responsibilities. This includes providing feedback on their specific needs and offering free labour to foster a favourable business environment.

In a similar vein, Anguelovski (2011) challenges the idea that local communities are opposed to corporate-driven dialogue tables (*mesas de diálogo*) by shedding light on how the business approach to these tables conflicts with community mind-sets. While communities engage in dialogue using open and inclusive perspectives, firms restrict their interactions by limiting the number of participants to a well-structured and "efficient" group. Likewise, Luning (2012) contests the assumption that all CCE interventions aim to foster amicable relationships. This article suggests that when firms choose communities' gatekeepers, their selection can lead to shifts in alliances and potentially trigger tensions and conflicts within and between communities.

Finally, contesting the idea that CCE is successful when it attains a Social Licence to Operate (SLO), Demuijnck and Fasterling (2016) have discussed different types of SLOs. On the one hand, a pragmatic SLO that engages with the most vocal and powerful stakeholders and on

the other hand, a normative SLO focused on mitigating company impacts as a means to increase the company shared value. Building on this distinction, Vanclay and Hanna (2019) have identified different tactics that firms may employ to obtain each type of SLO. For example, firms aiming to attain a pragmatic SLO, might co-opt local people, criminalise protests, and attempt to discredit protesters. On the other hand, firms pursuing a normative SLO would prioritise transparency, practice responsible sourcing, and even allocate a share of their profits to community projects.

To conclude, this section has delved into the concept of CCE. It has explored that CCE interventions, instead of functioning as neutral political practices, they encompass power imbalances, tensions, and impacts that often can lead to unethical outcomes, with both short-term and long-term negative consequences. Despite the increasing attention that researchers have devoted to exploring interactions between corporations and local communities, much of the current research has predominantly concentrated on the organisational level of analysis. This emphasis, in turn, has led to a limited exploration of the individual level of analysis. This gap is addressed in two different papers of this dissertation (Paper Two and paper three).

### 2.4.Summary of the Theoretical Framework

The escalating social and environmental challenges have forced various organisations, including businesses, to adopt new frameworks to address their responsibilities in mitigating the adverse operational effects in nature and society. The SD debate, sparked by the Brundtland Report, has impacted how businesses approach their relationship with the environment. The concept of CS recognizes the interconnectedness of ecological, social, and economic systems. However, the implementation of CS has been criticized for its emphasis on instrumental and win-win outcomes. Similarly, the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), which gained prominence after the publication of "Social Responsibilities of the Businessman" (Bowen, 1953), has also faced criticism for prioritizing profit maximization and using CSR as a strategic tool.

The literature has advocated for the adoption of integrative perspectives. In the CS literature, scholars have proposed a paradoxical approach to embrace contradictions, tensions and complexities. On the other hand, in the CSR literature, scholars have discussed stakeholder engagement and Political CSR, including agonistic politics, as means to recognize the conflicts

arising from business operations. These approaches aim to foster a more nuanced understanding of the challenges businesses face in addressing societal and environmental concerns while promoting meaningful and positive impacts. While much research has focused on transnational levels, the CSR literature has started to move and explore micro-level CSR implementation, particularly through Corporate Community Engagement (CCE).

With this understanding of the different conceptual lenses surrounding CS and CSR (PCSR, agonistic PCSR, micro-CSR), and their interplay within the realm of CCE, the subsequent chapter delves into the methods employed to formulate the research questions, select research participants, and analyse the generated data.

# 3. METHODOLOGY

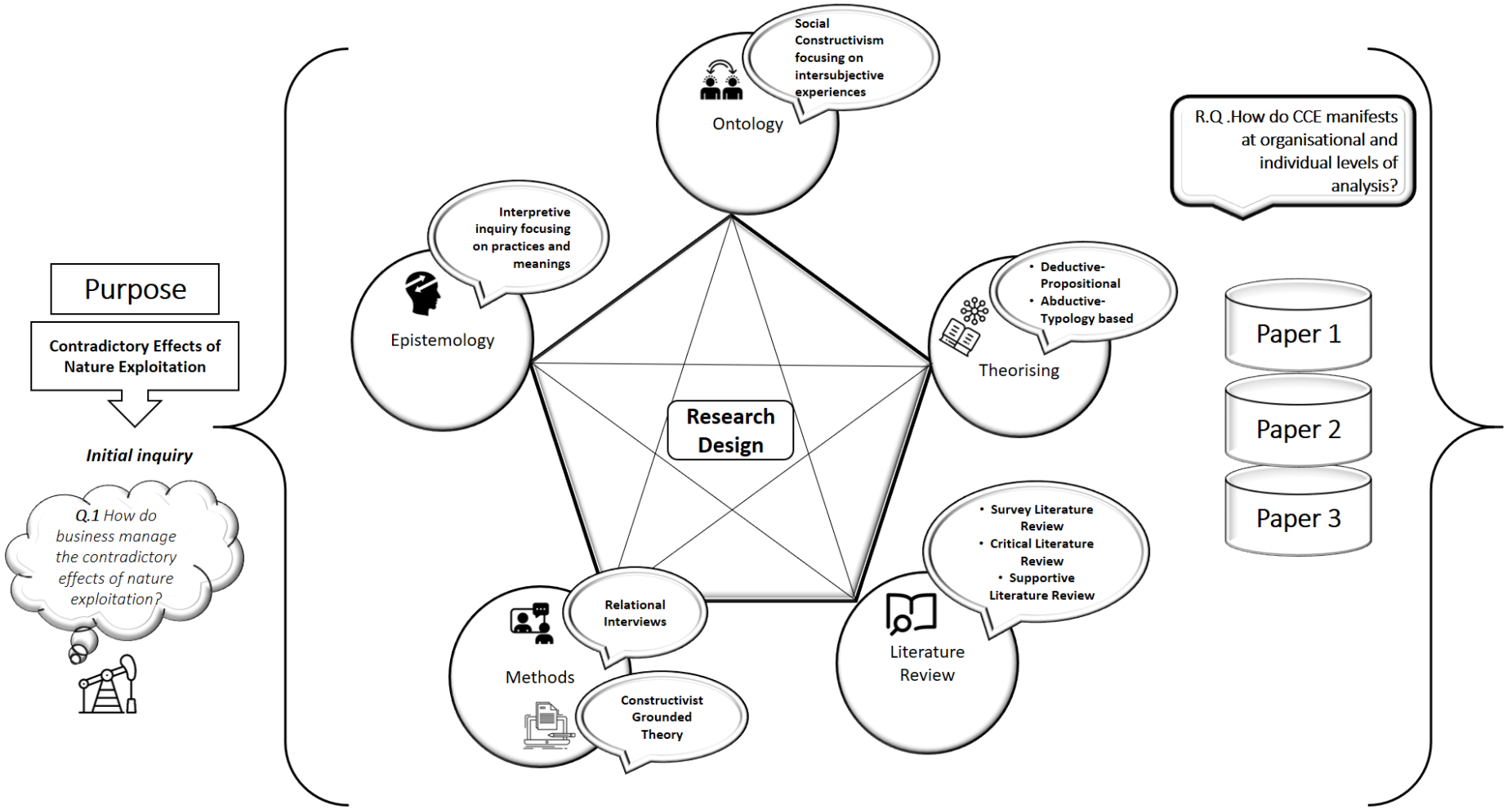
To structure the research design for this dissertation, I adapted the *Purpose and Outcome Framework* introduced by Huff (2008). This framework introduces a set of five organic decisions that researchers can follow to align their personal interests in empirical phenomena with a number of coherent and broader academic elements such as ontology, epistemology, theory, literature review, methods. By acknowledging that academic research is an interactive and collective activity, the Huff's model provided a visual representation that assisted me in linking my personal interest of studying the management of negative business impacts with three academic outputs clearly positioned in the management discipline and more specifically in the business and society field.

In the following section, I explain each of the five elements introduced in Huff's framework (Figure 7). The first element is called *purpose,* and there I reflect back on my personal and professional experiences as sources of inspiration and interest for this research project. In the second element, labelled epistemology, I make explicit the interpretivist position that guides my research inquiry, and I contrast it with other epistemologies identified in the literature. The third element is labelled ontology, and similarly to the previous point, I make explicit the assumption of what I understand by reality. Then, I briefly comment on the theoretical underpinnings that accompanied my research project and their connection with the literature reviews that I conducted. Finally, I expand on the methods for data generation and the approaches that I utilised to analyse the empirical phenomenon of interest for this project.

## 3.1.Purpose

At the early stage of this journey, my focus was centred on understanding the mitigation strategies that firms utilise to address their negative impacts in society, specifically those that were associated with the exploitation of natural resources such as fossil fuels. Furthermore, I specifically centred my attention towards examining how oil and gas companies operating in Mexico were navigating their regulatory responsibilities and negative impacts during their day to day operational activities.

Figure 3 Research Design Decisions




Source: Adapted from Huff (2008), Chapter Five.

This research interest emerged from my experience working for three years (2016-2019) in the hydrocarbons sector in Mexico, specifically during the period when the market opened up to private companies. After 2013, the energy sector in Mexico experienced a notable shift in its sustainability agenda, which had previously been less emphasized because the National Oil and Gas Company (Pemex) maintained a low profile with regards their sustainability reporting initiatives. However, during 2015 and 2019, notable institutional developments such as the creation of the Agency for Safety and Environmental P9rotection in 2016, and the publication of regulations on social impact assessments in 2018 brought about a renewed focus on sustainability strategies within the hydrocarbons sector in Mexico (Cruz et al., 2019; Rousseau, 2017).

Given this specific research context, my personal interest was sparked by the need to understand how these broad institutional changes could impact the strategies of oil and gas companies operating or about to start drilling operations in Mexico. Having this context as a source of inspiration, I aimed to investigate how companies, especially those embedded in the global sustainability landscape, worked to implement local sustainability practices as a mechanism to mitigate their negative impacts. For example, I was particularly interested in looking at their engagement initiatives with specific stakeholders such as governments and local communities.

While this personal purpose initially provided some direction towards the factors and actors requiring further investigation, the research process unfolded with careful considerations of the epistemological, ontological, and theoretical elements. Through this gradual progression, a research question emerged, shaping the subsequent stages of the study. In the following sections, I elaborate on the considerations, reflections and decisions that I made during the research process.

### 3.2.Epistemology and the Limits of our Knowledge

Scholars (Bryman, 2007; Huff, 2008) have argued that explicating philosophical upfront of a research project provides researchers with guiding points to facilitate follow-up methodological decisions. Specifically, having philosophical underpinnings clear allows researchers to maintain a stronger consistency between research questions, data analysis, and even writing approaches. Moreover, it also enhances the legitimacy and even

rigorousness when discussing research findings against broader theoretical elements (Rubin, 2005).

Philosophy, broadly understood as the science that answers questions about our place within the world (Neesham et al., 2022), has been historically divided across a variety of epistemological and ontological positions (Burrell & Morgan, 2019). While epistemology is the stream in philosophy that deals with the limits of our cognition, the ontological stream is the one that deals with what we consider our existing reality (Fujii, 2018).

To bring some clarity on the broad range of alternatives about what humans can know, scholars have grouped four distinct epistemological orientations: epistemologies of representation, epistemologies of interpretation, epistemologies of imagination, and epistemologies of interventions (Neesham et al., 2022).

This dissertation adopts an *epistemology of interpretation*. This epistemology is interested in disclosing the meanings that both individuals and organisations attach to their practices (Neesham et al., 2022). Approaching to the research problem from an epistemology of interpretation, this dissertation delves into the contradictory yet interrelated meanings that both practitioners and corporations attach to their community engagement practices. This is key because rather than seeking an objective truth interested in the generalisation of research findings, this dissertation utilises interpretation as a tool to understand how management practices are socially constructed and reproduced by private, public, and social actors through their multiple and often contradictory experiences.

In an interpretivist epistemology, "empirical phenomena are understood as open to and in need of interpretation" (Blagoev & Costas, 2022, p. 85) and because of that it is the work of researchers to reconstruct the meanings on how actors experience reality. This work requires that researcher delves in the practitioner's own and unique specific contexts. In contrast to other epistemologies interested in the quantification of patterns, for example positivism or realism, an interpretivist inquiry remains open to surprises as is more interested in communicating unexpected ways of dealing with a socially constructed reality.

> "Positivist methodology assumes that the social, like the physical, world is objectively knowable: the "truth" exists "out there," waiting for researchers to "discover" it. An interpretivist methodology, by

> contrast, assumes that social phenomena do not claim any "real existence independent of how people think of them" The world is what people make of it" (Fujii, 2018, p. 2)

Contrary to epistemologies of representation, interpretivism believes in the power of hermeneutics. One key issue related to hermeneutics is the fact that no human description is free from interpretation and no interpretation is free from prejudices. Therefore, under this interpretivist epistemological approach, researchers agree that while we interact with different meanings and contexts, "we never arrive at the one true interpretation of something because all interpretive activity takes place in a historical situation, which is constantly changing" (Brinkmann, 2017, p. 18).

One final reason for taking an interpretivism approach is the acknowledgment that any research project needs to deal with the intrusion of researcher's prejudices (Rubin, 2005). However, rather than being concerned with eradicating prejudices by treating them as undesired bias, this philosophical epistemology considers bias as another expression of social interaction. Thus, interpreting it as a pivotal ingredient for crafting our collective knowledge (Mason, 2002).

> "By implication, every time we try to measure a particular phenomenon –be it boredom, motivation, or financial performance- we already operate within a specific interpretive frame, a theory of what should be foregrounded and what can be backgrounded, that we impute onto empirical observations" (Blagoev & Costas, 2022, p. 85).

To sum up, while epistemologies of representation pursue the discovery of a universal truth, an interpretivist inquiry focuses on reconstructing the different and not neutral practices that construct social reality (Bryman, 2011). This dissertation adopts this epistemological approach because to comprehend the management of negative impacts it is necessary to get closer to the organisational worldviews, and the CCE practitioner's experiences. Whereas positivistic or realist epistemologies would be attentive to generalizable findings that correlate the quantification of negative impacts with other organisational variables, interpretivism disagrees with uniformity and interprets situated practices and their conflicting meanings instead (Rubin, 2005). In this case, the situated practice that this dissertation focuses on is Corporate Community Engagement, and during my journey I develop a personal interest to understand the multiple "truths" driving engagement initiatives and the meanings that individuals attach to these practices.

In the following section, I briefly connect this interpretivist epistemology with the ontological foundation of social constructivism. While an interpretivist inquiry focuses on the process of generating knowledge, an ontological position delves into the nature of reality.

### 3.3.Ontology and the Nature of the Social World

Interpretive work does not take a more privileged access to the world, but a closer understanding of the horizons that different people scan and how they think about them (Neesham et al., 2022). Therefore, an interpretivist epistemological inquiry follows the philosophical ontology of constructivism because it acknowledges that social reality is constructed and influenced by the social context.

In essence, social constructivism claims that the social world, even its most self-evident and taken for granted aspects, are continuously constructed by the interactions among people, material objects, and nonhuman actors (Blagoev & Costas, 2022). In contrast to other ontological positions such as realism, social constructivism does not strive to create true accounts about the world, and it does not believe that the experiential or observational route is the only pathway to reality (Reihlen et al., 2022).

From a social constructivist perspective, social and nonhuman relations construct reality through subjective and objective processes. This means that researchers cannot separate the constructed social reality from the symbolic and materials contexts in which the creators negotiated and sedimented meanings (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). During the social construction, multiple subjects attach meanings to their (inter)actions by utilising a repertoire of words, concepts, and labels, which ultimately condition how subjects make sense of their experiences, practices, and discourses.

In this way, the social practices that construct our daily reality become core sources of knowledge. However, because social practices evolve, any social reality is contingent, context-dependent, and subject to ongoing social construction. In this regard, constructivism does not conceive empirical data as evidence that researchers can collect to mirror empirical reality because “reality and truth are not implied in the data, waiting to be discovered. Instead, the data are seen as construction themselves” (Blagoev & Costas, 2022, p. 91).

To sum up, articulating the philosophical (epistemological and ontological) assumptions shaping this dissertation is relevant for several reasons. By clarifying the interpretive and

constructivist assumptions at the outset of a research project, I can establish guiding principles that influence and most importantly ensure consistency between my research questions, data generation methods, and analytical approaches. Interpretivism as an epistemological orientation aligns with social constructivism due to its focus on subjective meanings and social context that construct reality. Interpretivism emphasizes the comprehension, not explanation, of empirical phenomena, the role of hermeneutics, and the acknowledgement of researcher biases as essential ingredients in constructing knowledge. Similarly, the ontological standpoint of social constructivism recognises that social reality is continuously constructed through interactions among individuals, groups, objects, and nonhuman actors. By embracing interpretivism and social constructivism, this dissertation delves into the multifaceted management of business' negative impacts through the exploration of conflicting meanings, practices, and situated social realities, specifically focusing on the practice of CCE.

### 3.4.Theorising Approach

The empirical phenomenon under investigation in this dissertation is "how CCE manifests at organisational and individual levels of analysis". This topic needs to be connected with a broader academic conversation within the discipline of management and the business and society field. To establish this connection, Huff (2008) suggests building theoretical contributions (or theoretic explanations if researchers take a more realist and positivistic view). By doing so, researchers can both generate a deeper understanding of the empirical phenomenon while connecting it to a larger academic conversation.

A theoretic explanation serves as a means of scholarly communication. In other words, it bridges the particular insights from an empirical phenomenon with the interests and needs of other scholars. Its purpose is to establish a common ground where complex and big debates can take place (Huff, 2008). However, to generate connections between detailed empirical phenomenon and abstract constructs, scholars need to pay attention to their specific styles of reasoning and theorising.

The concept of style of reasoning and theorising, in the context of management and organisational studies, refers to a particular form of thinking and argumentation that scholars utilise to structure their ideas by utilising a common idiom (Cornelissen, 2017, p. 2). This concept encompasses deductive, inductive, and abductive styles of reasoning (Bryman, 2011)

and as discussed in Cornelissen (2017) they can lead to three styles of theorising: propositions, narratives, and typologies.

Starting with the styles of reasoning, when researchers utilise a deductive reasoning, they employ a top-down approach that begins with general propositions and derives specific hypotheses. In contrast, with inductive reasoning, they adopt a bottom-up approach that opens with specific observations and develops more general explanations. In the case of this dissertation, the chosen reasoning style is abductive. In this style, there is a combination of deductive logic, which is informed by the review of the literature, with inductive logic, which is informed by the empirical data collection.

This dissertation employs abductive reasoning due to its flexibility in exploring empirical problems and connecting them with broader academic discussions. Abductive reasoning also informs the data analysis stage, which will be expanded on when discussing the Grounded Theory section (Bryant & Charmaz, 2019; Charmaz, 2014; Locke, 2001).

Following with the three styles of theorising suggested by Cornelissen (2017), in the propositional style researchers develop a set of concise statements, emerging from deductive reasoning, to interlink a specific argument in a structured and focused manner. In the narrative style, researchers develop an overall argument that explains a phenomenon and its potential outcomes by illuminating an underlying mechanisms that acts as the storyline within a process. Lastly, in the third style of theorising based on typologies, researchers aim to categorise empirical data and identify meaningful explanations based on specific relationships.

This dissertation employs both the *propositional* and the *typology*-based style of theorising. While the propositional style focuses on channelling arguments into a set of formally stated propositions, on the other hand, the *typological* style addresses the research problem by categorising different observations and providing a multidimensional framework. When comparing these approaches, Cornelissen (2017) suggests that the typological style of theorising offers more complex interconnections than the propositional one. This is because the typological style identifies the necessary conditions for interactions to occur and the richness of this style of relies on the researcher's ability to develop categories based on theoretical dimensions that can be connected to the empirical subject under study.

### 3.5.Literature Review Methodology

In the quest to expand my understanding of the management literature, I have taken on two distinct styles of literature review, as outlined by Huff (2008): exploratory literature review and critical literature review. Firstly, over the course of the initial six months of my project (September 2019-February 2020), I conducted a survey literature review with the aim of identifying the nature of the business and society field, specifically looking at readings that discuss the theme of extractive industries, its impacts in society, and the measures to mitigate them.

To achieve this, I consulted a range of general textbooks in various subjects, including but not limited to International Development, Sustainable Development, Corporate Social Responsibility, Stakeholder Management, Risk Management, Human Rights. These resources allowed me to gain a broader perspective about different case studies, and they provided me with insights into concepts, theoretical frameworks, and debates within the business and society field, helping me identify areas requiring further investigation. In Table 2, I list ten resources that assisted me to refine the research proposal during the first semester of my PhD studies.

Table 2 Reading List in Corporate Social Responsibility

| Book Title | Author | Year |
|---|---|---|
| The Rise of Global Corporate Social Responsibility: Mining and the Spread of Global Norms | Dashwood | 2012 |
| Managing Corporate Social Responsibility in Action: Talking, Doing and Measuring | Bakker | 2007 |
| The anthropology of corporate social responsibility | Dolan | 2016 |
| Corporate social responsibility: win-win propositions for communities, corporates and agriculture. | Wani | 2018 |
| Corporate Social Responsibility, Entrepreneurship, and Innovation | Amaeshi | 2012 |
| Corporate Stakeholder Democracy Politicizing Corporate Social Responsibility | Braun | 2019 |
| The Planetary Bargain : Corporate Social Responsibility Matters | Hopkins | 2003 |
| In good company an anatomy of corporate social responsibility | Rajak | 2011 |
| Corporate social responsibility and sustainable development in emerging economies | Vajpeyi | 2015 |
| Corporate Social Responsibility, Human Rights and the Law: Multinational Corporations in Developing Countries | Amao | 2011 |
| Earth Matters: Indigenous Peoples, the Extractive Industries and Corporate Social Responsibility | O'Faircheallaigh | 2008 |
| A stakeholder approach to corporate social responsibility: pressures, conflicts, and reconciliation | Lindgreen | 2016 |

Although the list of textbooks provided me with a broad overview of the ideas behind the term *Corporate Social Responsibility*, nevertheless, I found that the review lacked connection with a shared conversation among different authors. Therefore, I supplemented this reading with a deeper exploration of specific topics and consulted various outlets, including academic journals.

I found that academic journals often follow a common structure, with a literature review section that becomes very valuable in identifying the different perspectives and voices engaged in a particular argument. Thus, during this initial phase I also explored academic journals. Specifically, I selected those that are known for publishing work on the impacts of business on both nature and society, as this aligned with my personal interests (see Table 3). During my exploratory work, I found that academic journals encompass and combine diverse disciplinary and methodological perspectives, and I came to appreciate the focus of authors in connecting the empirical data with theoretical frameworks, usually in the form of diagrams. This approach helped to establish a clear link between empirical observations and the conceptual frameworks used to interpret them.

Conducting this survey literature review enabled me to obtain insights into the latest discussions and emerging trends within the business and society field. It also served as a means to identify prominent researchers and scholars who specialize in my area of interest. By combining insights from textbooks and journals, I managed to build the foundations for a comprehensive understanding of the academic discussion surrounding how businesses navigate the contradictory effects of nature exploitation.

Table 3 List of Academic Journals in the field of Business, Ethics, and Society

| **Journal Title** | **Shortened Journal Descriptions** |
|---|---|
| Journal of Business Ethics | The Journal publishes articles from a variety of methodological and disciplinary perspectives concerning ethical issues related to business that bring something new or unique to the discourse in their field. |
| Business & Society | Business & Society publishes research that develops, tests and refines theory, and which enhances our understanding of important societal issues and their relation to business. We aim to publish innovative work, which at times may deviate from the mainstream of management research by challenging assumptions and/or providing thought-provoking perspectives. |
| Business Strategy and the Environment | The Journal seeks to provide original contributions that add to the understanding of business strategies for improving the natural (green) environment. It seeks to publish research into systems and standards, |

| | |
|---|---|
| | environmental performance, disclosure, supply chains, particular industry sectors and responses of business to climate change and other contemporary environmental issues. |
| Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management | The Journal publishes theoretical and practical contributions about tools and practices associated with the social and environmental responsibilities of businesses in the context of sustainable development. The focus of the journal is on research and practical advice for the development and assessment of social responsibility and environmental tools. |
| The Extractive Industries and Society | The Extractive Industries and Society disseminates in-depth analysis of the socio-economic and environmental impacts of mining and oil and gas production on societies, both past and present. Topics covered include environmental management at mines and rigs; Corporate Social Responsibility and community development; the environmental and social impacts mining in developing countries; etc. |

The next stage of the literature review process, referred to by Huff (2008) as the critical literature review, enabled me to develop a more focused approach into the debates within the business and society field. I conducted this review in preparation to draft the first paper that is presented in this dissertation. Between March and June 2020, I focused on reading a more specific set of articles and books, aiming to gather concepts, arguments, and identify the voices that have contributed to the discussion about Corporate Social Responsibility, Stakeholder Management, and Community Engagement. While delving into this more focused approach, it was useful to look at systematic literature reviews that have been published in academic journals. They facilitated a more comprehensive idea of what is already known in the area of my intended contribution (Bowen et al., 2010; Frynas & Stephens, 2015; Garriga & Melé, 2004; Secchi, 2007).

Furthermore, understanding previous contributions is important for developing subsequent research design decisions. In addition, this understanding works to identify research puzzles and to formulate research questions addressing a specific puzzle. Finally, by familiarizing myself with existing findings, I found I was able to position my own work within a broader body of knowledge (Barney, 2018).

> "As you conduct a critical review, you will hopefully learn about the style and "voice" that can be effective in your own writing [...] A critical review not only helps scholars understand arguments in a particular area of scholarly inquiry, it also hopefully reveals disagreements, gaps, biases, misunderstanding, and other opportunities for original contribution" (Huff, 2008, pp. 162,163)

As I delved into the critical literature review, I realised that the original purpose of understanding the contradictory effects of nature exploitation required a different framing.

Specifically, in order to contribute to existing academic conversations on CSR, I needed to refine the initial question that had initially sparked my curiosity (see Table 4). This integration led me to develop a particular interest in exploring the management of CSR interventions, specifically, those implemented to reduce negative impacts in local communities.

While initially my research focus was limited to oil and gas companies operating in Mexico, I expanded the research context to encompass business organisations operating in different geographic locations and across various types of extractive industries. The extractive industries refer to economic activities that involve the removal of natural resources from the Earth's surface in high intensity and with profound negative impacts (Gudynas, 2009). This description typically involves activities such as mining and oil and gas extraction, activities that currently play a dominant role in the economies of 81 countries that accounts for 70 per cent of those people living in extreme poverty

Three main reasons explain my focus on these industries. Firstly, extractive industries exploit natural resources in remote and rural locations. In these locations, private entities interact with local communities through power asymmetries partly caused by a lack of regulatory enforcement and a historic background of lasting negative impacts. Secondly, extractive industries are long-term industries that demand high financial investments. Firms often operate over extended periods signing contractual agreements with the State that extend for decades. Finally, these industries have been accused of violating human rights and have reacting institutionalising CCE within their internal governance systems. For instance, the International Council on Mining and Metals (ICMM) and the International Petroleum Industry Environmental Conservation Association (IPIECA) are two industry associations highlighting the importance of CCE within the extractive industries (ICMM, 2015; IPIECA, 2008b).

Table 4 Overview of a Critical Literature Review

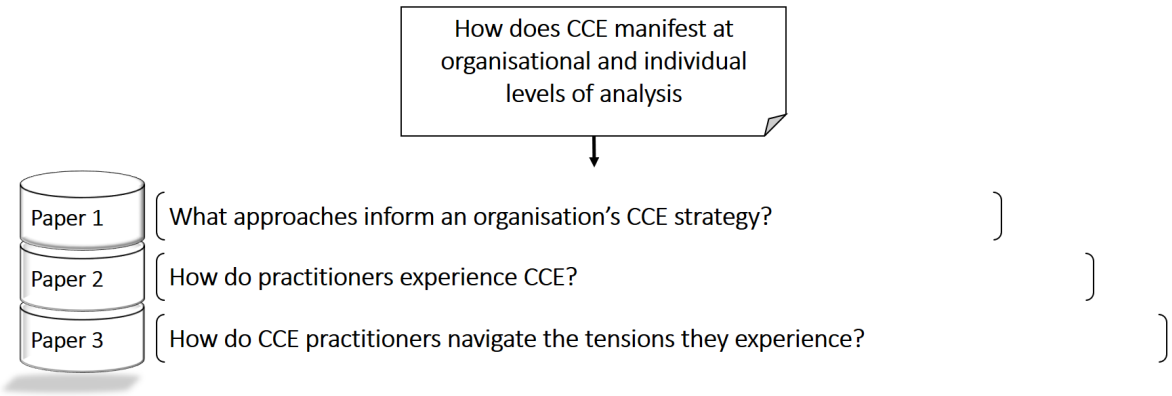
| | |
|---|---|
| Who is writing about the subjects that interests me? (indicative but non-exhaustive list of authors) | **Corporate Social Responsibility/Corporate Sustainability** Aguilera; Aguinis; Amaeshi; Bansal; Brooks; Carollo; Carroll; Crane; Ehrnström-Fuentes; Figge; Fontana; Frynas; Garriga; Giamporcaro; Gladwin; Gond; Hahn; Husted; Kourula; Matten; Melé; Moon; Morsing; Nyberg; Palazzo; Reinecke; Ruggie; Schedler Soderstrom; Spence; |
| | **Stakeholder Engagement** Castelló; Donaldson; Etchanchu; Fougère; Freeman; Greenwood; Jamali; Noland; Phillips; Rowe; Soundararajan; Yakovleva |

| | |
|---|---|
| | **Corporate Community Engagement**<br>Anguelovsky; Banerjee; Bebbington; Boutilier; Bowen; Buhmann; Calvano; Delannon; Esteves; Gibson; Hanna; Idemudia; Järvelä; Kemp; Maher; Newell; Owen; Vanclay. |
| What are the most compelling arguments they make? | • From a business case, when the value of CSR outweighs the cost to provide it, CSR initiatives are valuable in the sense of leading to higher revenues and lower costs of capital.<br>• However, CSR needs to go beyond mere market demands as it requires changes in business practices. Managing CSR solely for profit maximization fails to align with the normative principles of committing to societal well-being.<br>• Political CSR can shape the institutional environment by allowing companies to exercise political capabilities. By actively engaging in social issues, businesses contribute to addressing societal challenges but also to making tensions salient.<br>• Corporate sustainability should not ignore tensions, as examining how they are managed is crucial for understanding how organisations can address conflict. This analysis should encompass evaluating sustainability practices at both the organisational and individual levels, considering the differing perceptions among decision-makers regarding sustainability policies and strategies.<br>• Corporate-community relations require a shift towards a collaborative and flexible approach that prioritizes community development and acknowledges power dynamics. By actively involving communities in decision-making processes and addressing power imbalances, corporations can foster more sustainable and mutually beneficial relationships. |
| Key Concepts | Agonistic Politics, Business Case, Competitive Advantage, Corporate Financial Performance, Deliberation, Paradox, Political CSR, Stakeholder Management, Strategic Agility, Strategic CSR, Sustainability, Trade-Off, Win-Win |
| Identification of disagreements, gaps, puzzles. | While corporate sustainability research often focuses on the organisational and institutional environment, the individual and local perspectives, such as business initiatives bridging the organisation with their coalface stakeholders, have been relatively understudied in the literature. |

The objective of this research is **to explore how CCE manifests at organisational and individual levels of analysis by looking at the experience of the extractive industries.** By examining the approaches that inform an organisation's CCE strategy, paper 1 delves into the organisational worldviews shaping the CCE continuum. Then, by exploring the experiences of CCE practitioners, paper 2 dives into the tensions they need to navigate to maintain both businesses and communities engaged. Finally, by investigating the reactions of CCE practitioners to these tensions, paper 3 identifies the governance roles that practitioners

adapt to develop interactions between businesses and local communities (See research questions listed in Figure 4).

Figure 4 Project Research Questions




In the next section, I will introduce an overview of the methods that were employed for gathering and analysing primary data from the experiences of 51 CCE practitioners.

### 3.6.Methods of Data-Gathering and Analysis

It is important to note that the second and third papers are empirical, while the first paper is conceptual. In the first paper, I utilised a proposition-based style of theorizing (Cornelissen, 2017) to integrate concepts from the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and stakeholder literatures into the Corporate Community Engagement (CCE) literature. The second and third papers employed a qualitative research design, involving the gathering and analysis of data from interviews with practitioners. This approach allowed for an in-depth exploration of the strategies, tensions, and mechanisms involved in the interactions between extractive companies and local communities.

While pragmatic considerations may influence the selection of particular research methods, it is important to align these considerations with the philosophical foundations, styles of theorizing, and research questions that I explained in the previous sections. This alignment is key because it allows me to reflect on my own research decisions and it also facilitates the establishment of a common language, fostering connections between previous and future studies on the corporate community engagement topic (Bryman, 2007).

Hence, in accordance with the philosophical underpinnings discussed in the previous sections, this dissertation employs *relational semi-structured interviews* as the method to gather data, and a *constructivist grounded theory* as the method to analyse it. These methods align well with the interpretivist inquiry and the ontological position of social constructivism because they facilitate the comprehension of social reality through the meanings that research participants attach to their practices (O'Reilly, 2009).

> "Most qualitative researchers view knowledge as situational, and the interview is just as much a social situation as any other interaction […] If you chose qualitative interviewing, you are likely to conceptualise yourself as active and reflexive in the process of data generation, and seek to examine this rather than aspiring to be a neutral data collector" (Mason, 2002, pp. 64-65).

Semi-structured interviews offer important advantages for this research. Firstly, they allow me to delve into participant's experiences and gain insights into their perspectives, beliefs, and attitudes (Mason, 2002). Adopting dialogue as an entry point, this method creates space for in-depth exploration of the meanings shared by my research participants (Bell, 2014). In contrast to qualitative structured interviews, which expect predetermined answers, semi-structure interviews foster shared responsibility between myself, as the researcher, and the participants in co-constructing knowledge. In this collaborative approach, there is space for participants to express their perspectives and experiences openly, allowing for a richer understanding of the corporate community engagement subject. Characteristics often reported in the literature as signs of "great" interviews include their respectful nature, rich level of detail, exploration of personal thoughts and close attachment to meanings (Hermanowicz, 2002).

Despite these promising qualities of semi-structured interviews, it is essential to acknowledge that this method requires careful attention given some dilemmas may arise during execution. One dilemma is that the researcher needs to strike a balance between maintaining distance and building rapport with participants. Platt (1981) reflects on this issue, stating, "since the interviewer is meant to be objectively impersonal in her approach, while using rapport to elicit information which might not be provided under purely impersonal conditions"(Platt, 1981, p. 84). This highlights the tension between maintaining a degree of personal distance while also fostering an environment that encourages participants to share their experiences.

Another issue that demands careful attention pertains to the roles assumed by both the researcher and the participants. Under certain circumstances, it might be difficult for the interviewer to isolate the interviewees from their other social roles. For example, some participants might be unfamiliar with the idea of providing data to a researcher, and would instead take on the role of informants rather than respondents. To be clear on this difference, Platt (1981) argues that while the respondent's task is to provide raw data to be interpreted, the informant offers concluded interpretations. The author illustrates this sharing one anecdote "some of the bad interviews were those where the people interviewed […] told me their interpretations and the conclusions they had reached. Real respondents should […] not behave like sociologists" (Platt, 1981, p. 81).

In an effort to address this type of positionality issue, I chose a particular style of qualitative interview known as relational interviewing. This method, as defined by Fujii (2018), functions as a learning process in which the interviewer and interviewee generate data in the form of stories, worldviews, and feelings. The data emerges from the interactions between the interviewer and participants, rather than from the extraction of stories through intense interrogation. Similar to other methods, this approach emphasizes active listening and in-depth exploration of narratives. However, what distinguishes it is the appreciation for all types of backgrounds that both the interviewer and interviewee bring to the conversation, even if they go beyond the immediate research interest (Fujii, 2018).

> "With relational interviewing, the dynamics that arise between researcher and participant are an essential component of the interview […] If, for instance, an interviewee becomes more talkative and animated when she hears the researcher speak with an accent that resembles her own, that dynamic is part of the interview; or, when an interviewee follows her own stream of consciousness rather than the researcher's questions, that, too, is part of the interview" (Fujii, 2018, p. 8).

As commented by Fujii (2018), the main ingredient of relational interviews is reflexivity. This involves giving careful considerations to how personal characteristics, differences in power, status, and privilege shape the interaction between the researcher and interviewee. "The most fundamental privilege that all researchers enjoy is gaining entrée into people's worlds. Choosing what to do with that privilege is an issue no researcher should take lightly" (Fujii, 2018, p. 16).

### 3.6.1. Participant Selection

After selecting this method, the next decision was to identify the participants I aimed to interview. Guided by the literature I reviewed in the first semester of the PhD, I realised that my interest was becoming more focused on exploring the challenges that organisations experience, specifically when they implement CCE at local spaces (Figure 1). While researching the material impacts of CCE implementation is necessary, at the beginning of 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic was restricting my ability to physically witness these interventions first hand. Therefore, during conversations with my supervisory team, we decided to adapt the approach. Recognizing the limitations imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, we agreed on the value of interacting with CCE practitioners through online platforms. This decision allowed me to gather data from a broad set of locations.

To initiate the interaction with this group of practitioners, I chose LinkedIn as the platform for communicating. While this social media posed limitations for engaging with practitioners without an account, on the other hand, it offered me a convenient space for reaching pre-existent groups of CCE practitioners. For example, within Linkedin, I identified 10-20 groups of practitioners actively engaging in reflections on the CCE practice and exchanging information such as job offers and training resources.

In October 2020, I became a member of the "Community Engagement Group" supported by Red Quadrant, which stands as the largest group in the platform with 49.4k members. Additionally, I joined other regional groups, including "Better Together: South Australia's community engagement group" and "*Relaciones Comunitarias – Latinoamérica*". In the pursuit of more sector-specific insights, I also requested access to groups such as "Social Performance in Mining and Oil & Gas", and "CSR in Mining and Oil and Gas-Latin America". During the months of October and December, my participation in these groups primarily focused on screening members who were active in posting and commenting, as I thought their engagement might indicate a potential willingness to participate in my research.

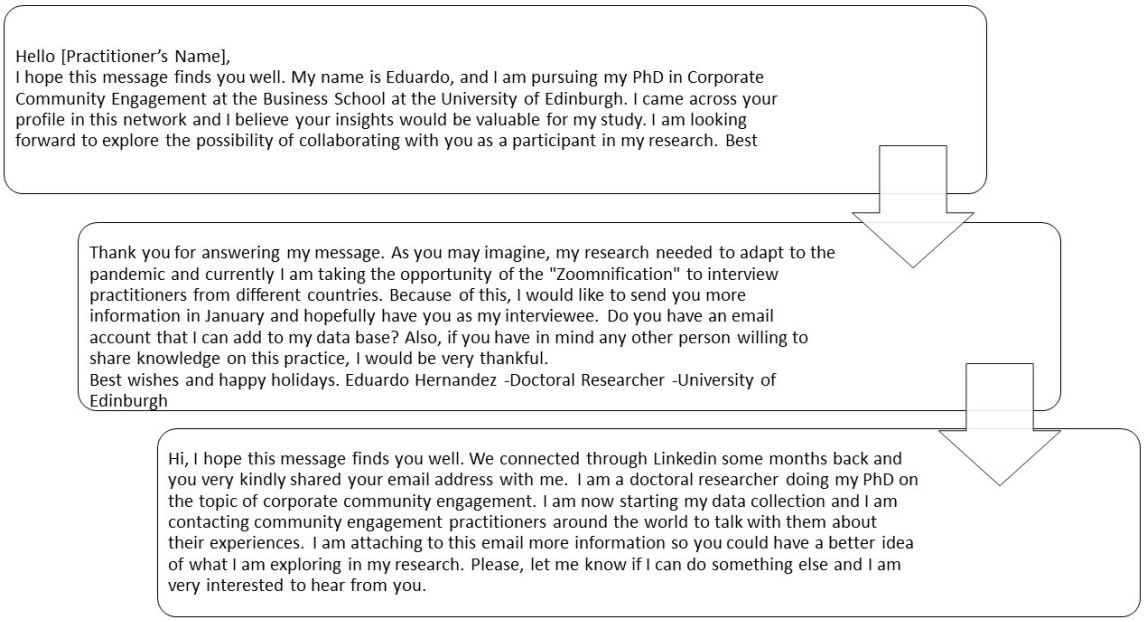
With this preliminary understanding, I created a database with the names, organisational affiliations, and professional backgrounds of community engagement practitioners. I organised the list based on their "last name," "name," "industry," "position in the organisation," "language," and "geographical location." Initially, my focus was on approaching practitioners with experience in large multinational companies. This decision was informed by

the literature review insights, which emphasized that community engagement practices were prevalent in transnational companies operating in countries such as Peru, Nigeria, Australia, Canada, Mexico, and Chile. By targeting organisations and practitioners operating in these regions, I aimed to gain insights into the challenges faced across different geographical contexts.

Once I had compiled a list of 20-25 potential interviewees, I crafted an introductory message inviting them to connect with my LinkedIn account. Before sending the message, I made a deliberate effort to be more active on the platform. For example, I shared posts and participated in conversations initiated by other members to increase my visibility.

While doing this, I became aware of the power dynamics I was experiencing. Not only was I the one initiating contact and requesting their knowledge, but I also recognised that I was using the reputation of the University of Edinburgh as a credential to gain access to their experiences. For example, upon reviewing the correspondences I shared with them, I noticed that I addressed them in a manner that stressed my role as a Doctoral Researcher in the Business School (Figure 2). I also noticed that I often used my Latin-American background as another credential to facilitate rapport with them. For example, in some cases, I deliberately approached them in Spanish and explicitly mentioned my working background in countries like Colombia and Mexico.

Figure 5 Correspondence between Researcher and Potential Interviewees




Overall, I received positive responses with the majority of practitioners who accepted my connection requests. Indeed, many also expressed their willingness to participate in the research. Once we connected, as a second step, I sent to their email additional information about my research project. By the beginning of January 2021, I had a list of 15 participants who had expressed their willingness to speak with me. I emailed these participants a "Participant Information Sheet" (PIS) and an "Informed Consent Form" (ICF) to explore the possibility of scheduling meetings.

I managed to schedule and conduct three pilot interviews in January 2021. Prior to these interviews, two of the practitioners requested the list of questions (figure 3). While providing them with the questionnaire may have made them feel more prepared and confident, I noticed that it also brought a sense of rigidity into our conversations. As a result, some of the interactions lost a degree of spontaneity, and in certain cases, the practitioner's answers were brief, as they felt they had already addressed certain questions they have prepared before.

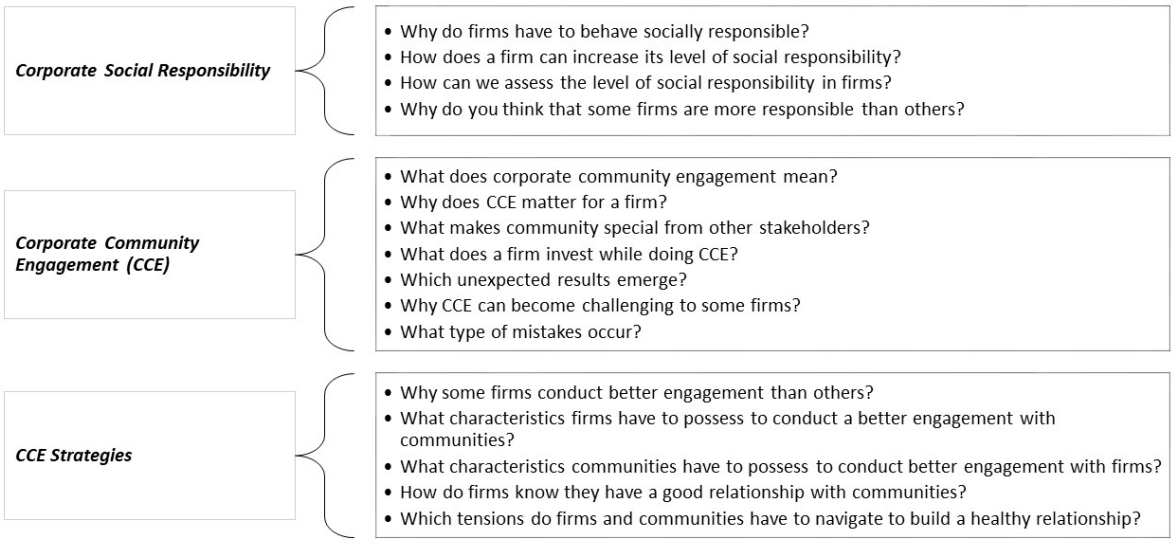
Furthermore, providing the questionnaire to research participants also seemed to have contributed to a more academic tone in our interactions. I noticed this because two practitioners were employing academic/practitioner jargon such as "shared value," "strategic corporate social responsibility", "competitive advantage", and "social license to operate."

These terminologies may have been influenced by the structured interview guide they read, unintentionally directing our conversations towards a more academic tone.

Through these three pilot interviews, I also had the opportunity to reflect on my own behaviour as an interviewer. Watching the recordings, I noticed that although I experienced some nervousness during our conversations, I also showed enthusiasm and a willingness to share my professional perspectives on the topic. Although sharing my experiences, in particular when I worked as a Social Impact Analyst in Mexico, may have fostered empathy with their anecdotes, it also lead me to reflect about the importance of co-constructing knowledge.

In contrast to other interviewing styles that seek objectivity, relational interviews are founded upon an interpretivist and constructivist epistemology/ontology. This philosophical foundation, as opposed to the positivist approach that extracts data from research participants, supports the cultivation of a working relationship between the interviewer and interviewee. These working relationships are shaped by the unique backgrounds each participant brings to the conversations (Fujii, 2018). Consequently, the exchange of their ideas, beliefs, and knowledge needs to be encouraged. In relational interviewing, the data emerges from interaction rather than interrogation of research participants.

Figure 6 Interview Guide used in the Pilot Interviews



Based on the insights from these pilot interviews, I made two changes to my approach. Reflecting on Fujii (2018) approach of treating mistakes as gifts "one of the most important adages of improvisation is "mistakes are gifts," meaning that the unexpected can actually lead to better outcomes than what had been previously planned" (Fujii, 2018, p. 49), firstly, I decided not to share my interview guide in advance to maintain spontaneity and prevent participants from feeling constrained by pre-set questions. Secondly, I edited the interview guide to infuse it with a more personal and conversational touch, while still keeping the central themes that I wanted to cover. The revised interview guide (Figure 4) aimed to facilitate discussions with practitioners, encouraging them to share their perspectives on community engagement, including their drivers, challenges, tangible and intangible benefits, and any valuable lessons they have learned throughout their professional journeys.

Figure 7 Interview Guide after the Pilot Interviews

In total, I conducted 51 online interviews with CCE practitioners representing diverse professional backgrounds such as environmental engineers, lawyers, sociologists, anthropologists, international relations, and geographers. These practitioners had experience working in mining or oil and gas companies across various locations, primarily in countries from the Global South (See Table 5).

All interviews were conducted online, and their durations varied (average of 71 minutes). Each interview was video-recorded and manually transcribed in either English or Spanish, depending on the language used during the conversation. The interviews progressed from general and "easy" questions that helped interviewees to familiarise with the format and rhythm of the interview to more specific questions (Fujii, 2018), where I asked them to explain what happened at specific instances when they were engaging with local community members. To foster a closer connection with participant's experiences, I occasionally shared some anecdotes from my professional experiences while working in the hydrocarbons sector in Mexico.

Table 5 CCE Practitioners

| Practitioner | Country | Position (as in Linkedin) | Expertise | Language |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. AR | Canada | Director | Consultancy | Spanish |
| 2. AC | United Kingdom | Principal Consultant | Consultancy | English |
| 3. AF | Denmark | Human Rights Specialist | Consultancy | English |
| 4. AM | South Africa | Consultant | Consultancy | English |
| 5. PR | Mexico | Director | Consultancy | Spanish |
| 6. IM | Mexico | Social Impact Coordinator | Manager | Spanish |
| 7. RP | Australia | Project Manager | Consultancy | English |
| 8. SB | Canada | Senior Consultant | Consultancy | English |
| 9. PA | Spain | Consultant | Consultancy | Spanish |
| 10. JA | Peru | Consultant | Consultancy | Spanish |
| 11. DN | United Kingdom | Social Transformation Leader | Consultancy | English |
| 12. LW | United Kingdom | Social Development Specialist | Consultancy | English |
| 13. CG | Colombia | Senior Consultant | Consultancy | Spanish |
| 14. WQ | Peru | Regional Coordinator | Consultancy | Spanish |
| 15. JF | Canada | Social Worker | Consultancy | English |
| 16. AM | Mexico | Consultant | Consultancy | Spanish |
| 17. HC | Mexico | Consultant | Consultancy | Spanish |
| 18. EO | United Kingdom | Director | Consultancy | English |
| 19. KV | Spain | Senior Social Licence Consultant | Consultancy | English |
| 20. MG | Peru | Manager | Consultancy | Spanish |
| 21. EA | Peru | Engagement Specialist | Manager | Spanish |
| 22. PW | Canada | Principal Consultant | Consultancy | English |
| 23. PH | Netherlands | Consultant | Consultancy | English |
| 24. LZ | Canada | Social consultant | Consultancy | English |
| 25. HV | Peru | Social Management Director | Manager | Spanish |
| 26. ET | Spain | Social Consultant | Consultancy | English |

| Practitioner | Country | Position (as in Linkedin) | Expertise | Language |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 27. EM | Australia | Managing Director | Consultancy | English |
| 28. RM | Chile | Community Development | Consultancy | Spanish |
| 29. RM | Chile | Community Development | Consultancy | Spanish |
| 30. JM | Australia | Senior Advisor | Consultancy | English |
| 31. MH | Chile | Community Manager | Manager | Spanish |
| 32. VP | Brasil | Project Coordinator | Consultancy | Spanish |
| 33. CM | Australia | Project Manager | Consultancy | Spanish |
| 34. SD | Australia | CEO | Consultancy | English |
| 35. HL | South Africa | Principal | Consultancy | English |
| 36. KM | USA | Manager of Strategic Planning | Consultancy | English |
| 37. VW | United Kingdom | Development Specialist | Consultancy | English |
| 38. MM | Mexico | Social Performance Manager | Manager | Spanish |
| 39. AF | Brasil | Especialista Negocio Social | Consultancy | Spanish |
| 40. TF | Peru | Social Management Director | Manager | Spanish |
| 41. CD | Chile | Community Engagement Manager | Manager | Spanish |
| 42. AM | Mexico | Enlace y Gestión Social | Manager | Spanish |
| 43. FS | Colombia | Project Manager | Consultancy | Spanish |
| 44. SM | Mexico | Advisor | Consultancy | Spanish |
| 45. VD | Mexico | Stakeholder Coordinator | Manager | Spanish |
| 46. SR | Mexico | Community Relations Analyst | Manager | Spanish |
| 47. RC | Mexico | Social Responsibility Manager | Manager | Spanish |
| 48. RC | Mexico | Social Responsibility Manager | Manager | Spanish |
| 49. JQ | Colombia | Community Manager | Manager | Spanish |
| 50. JG | Mexico | Associate Community Manager | Consultant | Spanish |
| 51. FG | Mexico | Social Impact Coordinator | Consultant | Spanish |

### 3.6.2. Data Analysis

In alignment with the philosophical underpinnings discussed in sections 3.2 and 3.3, this dissertation employed a constructivist grounded theory as the method for analysing the data. This method aligns with the ontological position of social constructivism, enabling the exploration of the meanings that research participants attribute to their narratives (Charmaz, 2014). By using this approach, I aimed to analyse the socially constructed perspectives that CCE practitioners associate with their engagement interventions.

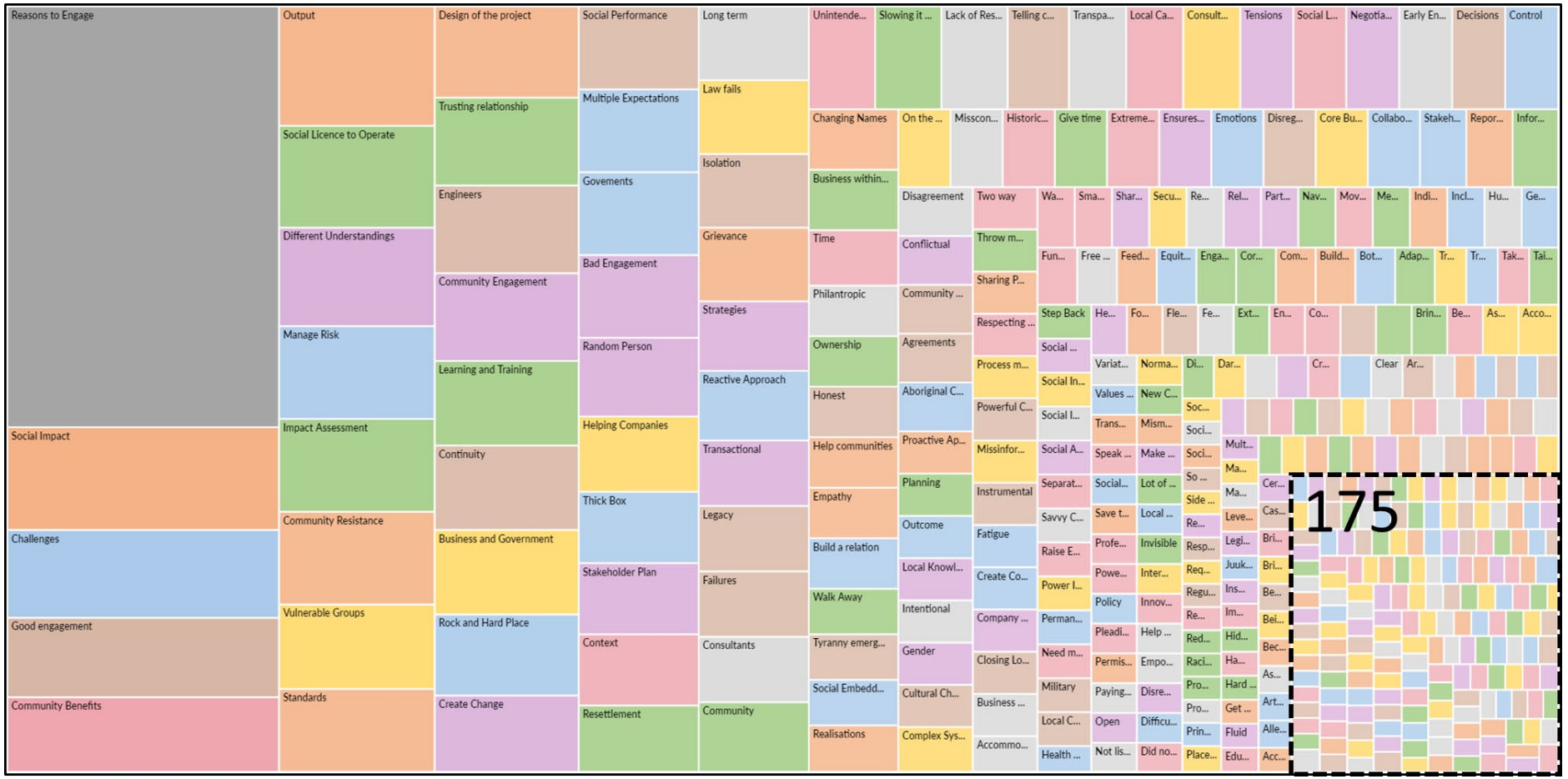
To facilitate the constant comparison method, crucial in Grounded Theory methodologies (O'Reilly et al., 2012), I used NVIVO 12 to generate a comprehensive dataset for iterative comparison. This dataset included diverse forms of data: interview transcriptions, interview videos, and memos written by the first author after each interview. Throughout the analysis of this dataset, I undertook various tasks, including watching recordings, reading transcripts, writing memos, coding transcripts, abstracting and visualizing ideas. Among the tools available in NVivo 12, I found the mapping and the annotation features particularly useful. They helped me organise and track my thoughts, providing material for the initial coding cycle and enhancing the comparative analytical process.

At the start of the data analysis process, I adopted an approach centred on maintaining proximity to the data. To achieve this, I simultaneously watched video recordings while coding the corresponding transcripts. During the initial coding phase, I employed open codes and followed what Saldaña (2015) refers to as micro-coding. This method involves a careful scrutiny of the data, breaking it down into smaller codable fragments. By following this approach, the first round of coding generated a detailed yet somewhat overwhelming perspective of the data.

At this point, a substantial cluster of 754 open codes emerged (see figure 9). Some of these open and micro-codes signalled key aspects within the data, which I would further explore in following rounds of coding. For example, some open codes such as "rock and a hard place," "tyranny of emergency," and "corporate resistance" provided starting points for nurturing the second paper of this dissertation, which delves into the complexities of CCE practitioners' experiences. Nonetheless, a majority of these initial open codes were excessively detailed, as

many of them often appearing only once in the code list. Figure 9 illustrates 175 codes with minimal repetitions in the dataset.

Figure 8 Dataset before Coding Refinement



After examining that the list of codes with fewer than 5 repetitions in the data set lacked meaning for generating insights in subsequent rounds of analysis, I started subsuming certain codes into broader codes. Concurrently, I decided to cut out codes that seemed unimportant, inconsequential, and unrelated to my research questions and objectives (Saldaña, 2015). From the initial list of 754 open codes, I managed to reduce the count to 318 codes by December 2022 (see Figure 6). I merged and discarded codes that did not provide deeper analysis and those that did not offer insights aligned with the research questions.

After completing the refining of the initial list of open codes, I started the second round of the analysis. In this round, I transitioned into a more conceptual approach. To do so, I employed a technique known as selective coding (Charmaz, 2014). This approach follows a deductive reasoning, starting the analytical process utilising a set of predefined codes extracted from the initial list. Deductive reasoning is particularly recommended when the research inquiry targets specific experiences, actions, and phenomena that the researcher anticipates will emerge in the interview transcripts (Saldaña, 2015). The selective coding approach was particularly useful in the development of paper 3, where my focus shifted towards examining the mechanisms practitioners employ to navigate the tensions identified in their community engagement experiences. With a streamlined set of codes, I then engaged comparing practitioners' experiences across three key areas: a) motivations to engage, b) challenges encountered during engagement, and c) the roles that practitioners perceived when engaging. This approach enabled a more in-depth exploration of the underlying themes and conceptual ideas present in the data, contributing to a comprehensive analysis in Paper 3 (see Chapter Six for further details).

Moreover, during the development of this second coding phase, I employed a particular method called versus coding that focuses on identifying the subjective aspects of human actions, reactions, and interactions, including emotions, values, and conflicts. This method is aligned with the interpretivist and constructivist approaches discussed in previous sections. In additions this method is also aligned with the agonistic PCSR framework discussed in the Chapter Two as versus coding “acknowledges that humans are frequently in conflict, and the codes identify which individuals, groups, or systems are struggling for power” (Saldaña, 2015, p. 160). This approach enabled a more in-depth exploration of the underlying antagonisms discussed in Paper 2 (for further details, refer to Chapter Five).

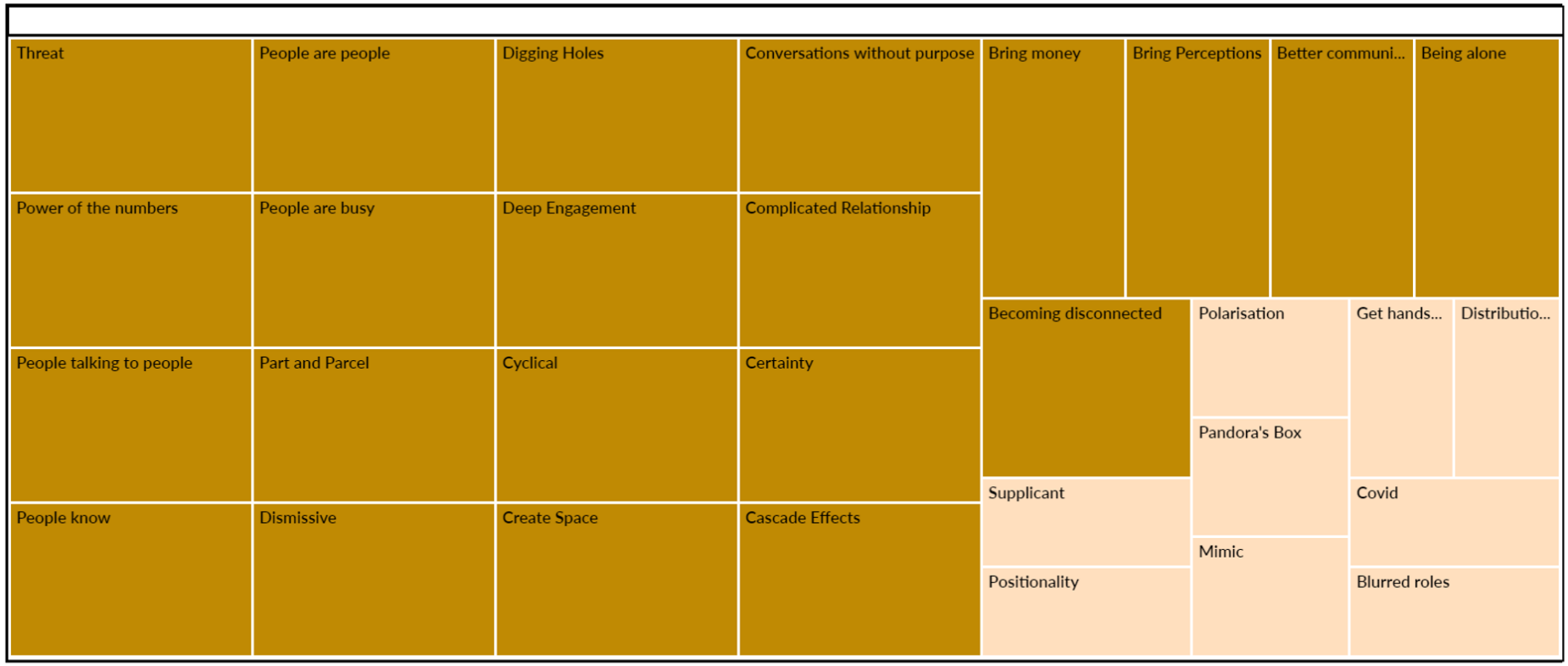
## 3.7.Summary of the Methodology

In this chapter, I provided an overview of the research methodology employed for this dissertation. My journey began with a personal interest in understanding how oil and gas companies address their impacts on society. However, as I progressed through the research design, I sharpened my focus being guided by ontological and epistemological considerations. For example, by adopting an interpretivist epistemology and a social constructivist ontology, my research interest narrowed down to understand the subjective meanings attributed by business organisations, particularly individuals, to their mitigation practices, such as Corporate Community Engagement. This approach allowed me to delve into subjective interpretations, exploring how organisations construct CCE approaches to address the impacts of their operations.

After conducting the survey and critical literature review, I made the decision to expand my empirical setting to include not only oil and gas companies but also mining companies. In order to achieve my objective **- to explore how CCE manifests at organisational and individual levels of analysis by looking at the experience of the extractive industries**, I explored three research questions.

The first research question was conceptual, focused on understanding how businesses develop meaningful Corporate Community Engagement strategies. This exploration is based on the CCE Continuum framework proposed by Bowen et al. (2010). The second and third research questions were empirical and required data generation through 51 semi-structured relational interviews with practitioners. For the analysis of the data, I employed a Constructivist Grounded Theory that involved the use of open and selective coding approaches.

Figure 9 Examples of open codes with a very limited number of repetitions



## 4. EXPLORING THE CONTINUUM OF CORPORATE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (PAPER 1)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Abstract** | Previous studies on Corporate Community Engagement (CCE) have explored how corporations adopt different orientations, responses, and structures to interact with local communities. However, existing CCE typologies are constrained to the material aspects of CCE and do not delve into the intangible organisational worldviews that inform the implementation of CCE strategies. This complication is of concern because confining CCE to predefined engagement practices could result in a disconnection between the community engagement function and broader corporate decisions that impact the entire business model. To address the need for a more thorough analysis of the intangible aspects influencing CCE, this paper formulates the research question: *What approaches inform an organisation's CCE strategy?* The paper addresses this question investigating firm's approaches to CSR and stakeholder engagement during the implementation of transactional, transitional, and transformational CCE strategies.<br>This paper contributes to the literature of CSR and CCE by conceptualising three organisational worldviews (utilitarian/instrumental, managerial/descriptive, and relational/normative) that shape the engagement practices of the CCE continuum. Finally, this paper concludes that progressing along the continuum requires a shift in organisational worldview, not just changes in the engagement practices of CCE. |
| **This paper has been presented** | • 2021 \| PRME UK and Ireland Business and Society Research Development Workshop. University of Bath, School of Management.<br>• 2022 \| Peer Presentation Workshop. ONE Sustainability PhD Community.<br>• 2022 \| Academy of Management Conference (AOM). Social Issues Management Division. Seattle, United States. |
| **Intended Submission** | • Journal of Business Ethics \| Winter 2023 |

## 4.1.Introduction

There has been a growing interest in understanding how businesses engage with local communities (Bowen et al., 2010; Delannon et al., 2016; Gibson, 2022; Kougiannou & O'Meara Wallis, 2020; Maher, 2019b). Scholars have examined different orientations, responses and structures (Hanna et al., 2016; Pater & Van Lierop, 2006; Rowe et al., 2014; Vanclay & Hanna, 2019), as well as the types of benefits involved in Corporate Community Engagement (CCE) interventions (Bowen et al., 2010; Green & Hunton-Clarke, 2003; Morsing & Schultz, 2006). Overall, these studies often arrange the material aspects of community engagement using either dichotomous or continuum typologies, suggesting practices that businesses can undertake to develop relationships with their local communities.

However, focusing solely on the arrangement of engagement practices may overlook the less visible elements that inform the implementation of Corporate Community Engagement (CCE) interventions. Although existing typologies provide valuable perspectives for understanding the material aspects of CCE, they do not examine organisational worldviews, in particular, the underlying approaches to social responsibilities and stakeholder engagement that inform the implementation of CCE strategies. This is of concern because simplifying CCE to a selection of practices can disconnect the community engagement function from the core business model. This disconnection could relegate CCE to play a tokenistic role, extracting its potential to influence the whole corporate decision-making, in particular, decisions taken by business departments directly causing negative impacts on local communities (Kemp & Owen, 2013).

To address this limitation and responding to the call for more critical analysis of the relationships between community engagement and organisational worldviews (Banerjee, 2018; Bowen et al., 2010; Gibson, 2022), this paper formulates the following research question: "*What approaches inform an organisation's CCE strategy*?". To address this question, this paper interrogates the approaches to social responsibilities (Garriga & Melé, 2004; Secchi, 2007) and stakeholder engagement (Donaldson & Preston, 1995) driving three types of CCE strategies: transactional, transitional, and transformational strategies (Bowen et al., 2010).

In doing so, this paper takes a step back from discussing solely the material practices of the CCE continuum (Bowen et al., 2010) and delves into the underlying organisational worldviews

that shape the transactional, transitional, and transformational CCE strategies. By examining the social responsibilities and stakeholder engagement approaches, this paper challenges the implicit assumption that firms can progress along the continuum solely by altering their on-the-ground practices designed by the CCE department. In contrast, this paper argues that meaningful engagement occurs when organisations critically reconfigure and align both their organisational worldviews to social responsibilities and stakeholder engagement with their CCE material practices.

This article first introduces the concept of CCE and explore various typologies to understand its visible and material aspects. Second, this paper focuses on the continuum typology proposed by Bowen et al (2010) and examines the interconnection between the implementation of transactional, transitional, and transformational strategies and the underlying approaches to social responsibilities (Garriga & Melé, 2004; Secchi, 2007) and stakeholder engagement (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). Drawing on this analysis, this paper ends presenting an updated version of the continuum of CCE (Bowen et al., 2010) that takes into account the organisational worldviews informed by social responsibilities and stakeholder engagement.

### 4.2.Community Engagement in the Corporate Context

Community engagement is a well-established concept in the public management literature (Edelenbos et al., 2020). It refers to the integration of citizen´s views in the formulation of public policies with the goal of increasing their public value (Cornwall, 2008; Visser et al., 2021). Public officers conduct community engagement aiming to identify common grounds and connect the citizen's experiences with the political decisions that affect them (Chwalisz, 2020; Pieczka, 2018). By integrating citizen's views, community engagement serves the purpose of constructing new meanings, promoting collective action, and enhancing our understanding of social issues (Ritchie, 2015).

Because community engagement seeks to reduce the distance between affected groups and decision makers, this concept has transcended the boundaries of an exercise between citizens and public officers. Aligned with the continuous redefinition of the private sector's role in society (Margolis & Walsh, 2003), business have recognised community engagement as an opportunity to address their legitimacy issues, shape their institutional environments, and

mitigate the non-technical risks associated to their investments (Calvano, 2008; Frynas et al., 2006; Scherer & Palazzo, 2007; Scherer & Palazzo, 2011).

In the absence of a universally accepted definition, CCE can be broadly understood as all those formal and informal practices undertaken by firms to develop relations with local communities in order to contribute to both business and societal improvements (Delannon et al., 2016; Gibson, 2022). Formal mechanisms of CCE encompass codes of conducts, corporate policies and legal agreements such as Community Development Agreements (CDA) (O'Faircheallaigh, 2013). In contrast, informal mechanisms of CCE involve more spontaneous interactions, for example, casual conversations between employees and community members or informal gatherings that support the development of their relationship. (Anguelovski, 2011).

Furthermore, CCE carries significant political implications due to the power dynamics at play that corporations exert against marginalised communities (Banerjee, 2018). For instance, research has discussed the use of corporate power when firms decide the scope of engagement, select their engagement techniques, and validate their engagement outcomes (Visser et al., 2021). While some researchers argue that engagement has the potential to protect citizen's rights (Crane et al., 2004; Crane, 2020), others adopt a more cautious stance, viewing CCE as a morally neutral practice (Greenwood, 2007). This means that while it can encourage participation, CCE can also be used to exert control. For example, scholars have observed CCE practices constraining freedom, manufacturing consent and fracturing community cohesion (Maher, 2019b).

Therefore, CCE is not limited to a singular purpose; rather, it encompasses the possibility of various objectives that are contingent on the types of orientation, structures, and response strategies employed by business organisations. To capture the range of material practices within CCE, both management scholars and community development scholars have proposed various typologies to categorise different engagement orientations, responses and structures. In the next section, this paper organise these visible aspects of engagement into either dichotomous or continuous typologies, providing a comprehensive understanding of CCE.

### 4.3.Typologies of CCE

One approach that the literature has taken to differentiate CCE strategies is by framing engagement orientations, responses, and structures as organisational dilemmas (Smith &

Lewis, 2011). This framing presents CCE through a series of binary choices, wherein organisations need to deal with opposing alternatives and must prioritise one decision over the other. Consequently, framing CCE as organisational dilemmas leads to the development of dichotomous typologies. These typologies distinguish engagement processes based on three criteria: engagement orientation, response, and structure. Table 6 provides an overview of these typologies, outlining their key features.

Table 6 Summary of dichotomous typologies of community engagement

| **Point of view** | **Pole A** | **Pole B** |
|---|---|---|
| **Orientation** (Pater & Van Lierop, 2006) | Inside-out | Outside-in |
| **Response** (Vanclay & Hanna, 2019) | Reactive | Proactive |
| **Structure** (Rowe et al., 2014) | Transactional | Relational |

Starting with Pater & Van Lierop (2006), they categorise two distinct orientations through which firms navigate their relationships with local communities: the 'inside–out' and 'outside–in' engagement. In the 'inside–out' orientation, companies engage with communities exploiting their internal resources. For example, firms may establish Memoranda of Understanding to donate equipment or transfer specific expertise to local communities. Conversely, the 'outside–in' orientation prompts firms to interact with communities when they become obstacles to the firm's ongoing operations. This could involve measures like compensating or co-opting community members affected or opposed to the presence of the firm. Overall, these two orientations represent two contradictory engagement approaches, with the ‘inside-out’ driven by internal resources and the ‘outside-in’ driven by external factors.

Another typology that similarly positions CCE in two extremes is suggested by Vanclay and Hanna (2019). They distinguish between reactive and proactive engagement behaviours. The reactive one aim for the immediate resolution of CCE conflicts. Examples of such practices include bribing community members, mobilising armed violence, and suppressing the dissemination of corporate critiques. On the other hand, proactive behaviours aim for

identifying the underlying causes of conflicts with the purpose of addressing them. This may involve activities such as organising dialogue tables, citizen's juries, and defining profit-sharing agreements, where the emphasis is on problem-solving and collaborative decision-making (Vanclay & Hanna, 2019).

The final dichotomous typology, proposed by Rowe et al (2014), contrasts a transactional approach with a relational approach. This typology focuses on the structure that firms employ to deliver outcomes to communities. In the transactional engagement structure, the focus is primarily on accomplishing specific tasks using a short-term timeframe. This approach is typically more results-driven and may involve one-time initiatives in order to address immediate community needs. On the other hand, the relational structure adopts a project-oriented perspective focused on building an ongoing and mutual understanding between the organisation and the community (Rowe et al., 2014). This approach involves recurrent initiatives designed to deliver valuable lessons to the CCE relationship.

This paper integrates these three criteria (orientation, response, and structure) into Table 6. However, we problematize that understanding CCE through the lens of organisational dilemmas hinders the possibility of looking at their interrelationships. Instead, it leads CCE practitioners to assess the advantages and disadvantages in each competing alternative (Smith & Lewis, 2011). While considering the structure, orientation, and response is relevant to the implementation of engagement strategies, these typologies fail to delve into the organisational approaches that inform CCE strategies.

Another approach taken in the literature to conceptualize community engagement involves employing a continuum framework. In contrast to the dichotomous perspective, this approach allows for a middle-ground alternative. By viewing CCE as a gradual and evolving process, these typologies suggest that firms have the opportunity to navigate through various interrelated stages of community engagement, allowing for incremental changes and continuous improvement.

The continuum typology recognizes that engagement is not a binary choice but rather a spectrum of possibilities that firms can adopt based on their contexts and objectives. In Table 7, this paper illustrates three typologies that distinguish levels of engagement according to their timings, communication flow, and provided benefits.

This paper formulates the first typology by synthesising the insights from three research articles published by Green & Hunton-Clarke (2003), Morsing & Schultz (2006), and Lane & Devin (2018). These scholars have identified three distinct communication flows that firms typically employ when engaging with communities.

At the initial level, firms engage with communities primarily to inform them about a decision that has already been made. The communication is one-way, with the firm providing information without expecting significant modification (Green & Hunton-Clarke, 2003). At the second level, firms involve communities in consultation before arriving at a final decision. The objective of this second level is to gather insights from the community; however, without guarantee that their voice will ultimately influence the final decision. The firm may listen to community concerns, but it is the firm who filters the voices that must be involved (Morsing & Schultz, 2006). Finally, the third level entails implications in the corporate decision making (Lane & Devin, 2018). At this ultimate state, CCE aims to integrate the community's voice within an ongoing and deeper conversation, where the processes of sense giving and sense making unfold in a dynamic and iterative manner.

The second typology, presented by Bowen et al (2010), provides a framework for differentiating levels of community engagement based on seven criteria: tactics, communication, number of community partners, nature of trust, learning, control over process, and benefits given. Among these seven criteria, this paper focuses on tactics and benefits given because they play a crucial role in understanding the material and visible aspects of CCE.

On the left end of the continuum, transactional strategies (level 1) focus on achieving immediate, albeit often exclusive, benefits for both the business and the community. Within this approach, firms prioritise obtaining a social licence to operate by engaging in short-time interactions with local communities. For example, companies provide public infrastructures to vulnerable communities such as roads, schools, and hospitals. In return, firms expect to obtain social acceptance from the community. The transactional nature of this approach means that the firm's primary objective is to secure the necessary support to facilitate its profitable operations. Therefore, in transactional CCE strategies corporate investments target specific community groups, particularly those that can mitigate the risk of community

protests. To exemplify this type of CCE interventions, Dalaibuyan (2022) provides examples of mining companies in Mongolia allocating vast amount of resources to opulent but one-off and isolated projects. However, some of the issues associated with this approach include a lack of transparency and commitment (Dalaibuyan, 2022).

In the middle of the continuum, the transitional strategy (level 2) involves more extensive community participation but confines business and community interactions to selected areas of corporate decision making. Transitional interventions generally seek for higher rounds of feedback in comparison to transactional interventions. For example, transitional CCE often utilises community dialogues for this extended objective. Nonetheless, these interventions may still retain a level of corporate control. This is due to the possibility that firms, in transitional interventions, could still implement practices that restrict the discussion of certain topics. Maher (2019b), for example, identified a CCE practitioner in Chile explaining to the community the rationale of why certain issues were left out of the community dialogue. This resonates with Cornwall's (2008) reflection on how it is not only the fact of participating, but also the fact of who participates, in which activities, and at which stages in the process.

On the right end of the CCE continuum, the transformational strategy (level 3) is characterized by a persistent emphasis on employing two-way communication methods, perceiving engagement as a mutually beneficial process (Bowen et al., 2010). In this level, firms and communities engage in collaborative sensemaking and problem framing, recognizing that mere technical-corporate expertise is inadequate to address complex challenges (Verrier et al., 2022).

Table 7 Summary of continuous typologies of community engagement

| **Point of view** | **Level 1** ⟶ **Level 2** ⟶ **Level 3** | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Communication Flow** (Green & Hunton-Clarke, 2003; Lane & Devin, 2018; Morsing & Schultz, 2006) | Interact to inform in one-way and with a sensegiving intention | Involve to consult in two-way but with filtered sensemaking and sensegiving | Integrate to decide in two-way and sensemaking and sensegiving in an iterative process |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Benefits/Outcomes** (Bowen et al., 2010) | Transactional with distinct and episodic benefits | Transitional with distinct but more repeated benefits | Transformational with jointly generated and frequent shared benefits |

As such, both dichotomous and continuous typologies help us in understanding various dilemmas and stages regarding how firms configure their orientation, structure, and benefits for local communities. All these frameworks identifying CCE orientation, response, structure, communication, and benefits play a crucial role in illuminating the material aspects of community engagement. However, it is important to recognize that these typologies may isolate community engagement to specific practices, without considering the underlying approaches that inform these strategies. A deeper understanding of community engagement requires us to examine organisational worldviews, as they guide how firms approach their social responsibilities and guide their relationships with stakeholders.

In the next section, this paper delves into a deeper reflection that goes beyond examining the practices that are solely undertaken by the Community Relations Department. Instead, it focuses on discussing three approaches to social responsibilities that firms might use to interpret their relationships with society. These approaches were identified from the literature reviews conducted by Secchi (2007) and Garriga and Melé (2004). To complement this analysis, in the next section we also discuss three approaches to stakeholder engagement that businesses might employ to interact with local communities. These approaches were identified from the work of Donaldson and Preston (1995). Lastly, we conceptualise both the approaches to social responsibilities and stakeholder engagement as organisational worldviews, as they encompass a range of corporate values and beliefs that inform the firm's overall perspective on its role in society and its relationship with stakeholders.

### 4.4.Rethinking the continuum of CCE

By only observing the visible methods of engagement and suggesting that firms can improve their engagement by moving up along the continuum, we miss the interrogation of organisational worldviews. This is problematic because as Pieczka (2018) argues: “to understand engagement in a more meaningful way, it is insufficient to see it only on a project

basis and to disconnect it from larger-scale phenomena of systematic or structural nature" (Pieczka, 2018, p. 560).

Although different scholars (Banerjee, 2018; Gibson, 2022) have invited debates on how engagement variations can arise from distinct worldviews, to date there has been no attempt to connect CCE strategies with broader theoretical dimensions. To address this, in the next section we take the typology offered by Bowen et al (2010) to explore the approaches to social responsibilities and stakeholder engagement that might inform the selection of transactional, transitional, and transformational strategies. This paper has chosen Bowen et al typology for two reasons. The first one because their typology offers a comprehensive examination of the antecedents and consequences of community engagement strategies by conducting a systematic review of over 200 academic and practitioner knowledge sources. This provides a robust foundation for our analysis. The second reason is because their typology focuses on community engagement actions rather than strategy statements, which aligns with our interest of shedding light on the visible side of CCE

Nevertheless the CCE continuum provides a framework for understanding different levels to community engagement, we argue that it lacks a deeper exploration of the underlying worldviews adopted by corporations. This paper argues that two important elements need further theorising in this regard. Building on the insights of Zandvliet (2004, 2009), who emphasizes the importance of shedding light on not only what firms do, but how they do it, we propose incorporating theories that examine organisational approaches towards social responsibilities and stakeholder engagement. By exploring these theoretical dimensions, we can gain a more comprehensive understanding on what informs an organisation's CCE strategy.

Secchi's (2007) and Garriga and Melé (2004) classification of CSR is relevant for this theorising because it distinguishes three different approaches that firms can take when approaching their social responsibilities. This classification takes a multidisciplinary lens with the authors proposing simple but clear-cut labels that distinguish three approaches: utilitarian, integrative and relational. Similarly, Donaldson and Preston's (1995) contribution to stakeholder theory also takes the organizational perspective and they propose three interrelated approaches to stakeholder engagement: instrumental, descriptive, normative.

In the next section, this paper discusses in more detail the CCE continuum developed by Bowen et al (2010) linking it with the three specific approaches to understand social responsibilities identified by Secchi (2007), Garriga and Melé (2004) and three different aspects of stakeholder theory proposed by Donaldson and Preston (1995).

#### 4.4.1. Transactional Strategies

The term transactional strategy as used by Bowen et al (2010) refers to the shallowest and most reactive form of corporate interaction with local communities. These strategies aim to prioritise quick results and therefore limit community participation to a minimal level. Their primary focus is on obtaining immediate support for business operations, rather than fostering a meaningful and long-term relationship with the local community.

Within transactional strategies, firms often prioritise engagement with influential community groups. However these interactions are seen as engagement episodes and they are often detached from core business decisions. While transactional strategies may meet the needs of certain groups within the community, they mostly benefit the most accessible groups (Mirvis, 2012) or the most agitated stakeholders (Brock & Dunlap, 2018). This is because the interests of these groups align or can be satisfied with the predesigned menu of benefits offered by the firm. As a result, scholars agree that transactional strategies may not effectively address the broader concerns and interests of the community as a whole (Delannon et al., 2016).

In transactional strategies, corporate actors do not show interests in renegotiating power (Arnstein, 1969). Instead, they adhere to static interests and business expectations. Correspondingly, firms refrain from broadening their time horizons, as they focus on actions that return immediate community support. While some authors reject that this strategy is an authentic form of engagement (Brown et al., 2020; Goodall & Montgomery, 2014), instances of its prevalence are observable in mainstream economic sectors, particularly within extractive industries (Delannon et al., 2016; Msweli et al., 2013).

Examples of transactional practices include the utilisation of one-way communication channels such as pre-designed meetings, the exchange of superficial information, employee volunteering, and even philanthropic initiatives such as donations (Bowen et al., 2010; Rowe et al., 2014; Stirling et al., 2016). Although researchers have classified this strategy as the most

basic form of community engagement, the prioritized CSR and stakeholder engagement approach remains unclear. To address this gap, in the following section we theorise that a transactional strategy emerges from an organisation that takes a utilitarian approach to their social responsibilities (Secchi, 2007) and an instrumental approach to their engagement with stakeholders (Donaldson & Preston, 1995).

#### 4.4.1.1. Utilitarian/instrumental approach.

Secchi (2007) categorizes three different approaches that firms can adopt to interpret their social responsibilities: utilitarian, managerial, and relational. When firms adopt a utilitarian approach, they perceive themselves as self-interested entities with a singular function: profit creation (Friedman, 1970; Jensen, 2010). Firms operating under this approach prioritize short-term financial results (Galbreath, 2014; Garriga & Melé, 2004; Margolis & Walsh, 2003), and they aim to maximize economic utility for a limited number of CCE participants (Cecile, 2011; Frederiksen & Nielsen, 2013).

Within the utilitarian approach, firms tend to adopt a business case frame that prioritises economic attributes, and they only take social aspects into account when they can be translated into economic advantages (Hahn et al., 2014). In this perspective, social responsibilities are seen as valuable solely to the extent that they serve instrumental purposes for the firm (Frederiksen & Nielsen, 2013). The focus is on maximizing shareholder value, with social considerations playing a secondary role.

Donaldson and Preston (1995) propose a framework that encompasses three distinct aspects of stakeholder engagement: instrumental, descriptive, and normative. In the instrumental approach, firms see stakeholders as means for accomplishing corporate goals. Engagement is driven by the belief that "if certain practices are carried out, then certain results will be obtained" (Donaldson & Preston, 1995, p. 74). Under this approach, stakeholders are seen as a group who can affect or be affected by the achievement of the firm's objectives (Freeman, 2010). With this corporate worldview, firms engage with stakeholders to advance their predetermined corporate goals, without questioning the legitimacy of their interests (Kaler, 2003).

In the context of CCE, firms might choose for implementing transactional strategies because their orientation to profit-creation and their perception of local communities as tools that enhance the cost-effectiveness of the firm. In this regard, transactional strategies are seen as "safety valves" (Skerritt et al., 2018, p. 5) that can mitigate community hostility. To achieve this, companies might employ superficial-level engagement methods, such as surveys, to identify gaps in the community development. While these techniques allow firms to play the role of public good provider, they often capture the needs of the most vocal or agitated community members, thereby missing deeper insights into community needs, values, and beliefs (Carr & Halvorsen, 2001).

In this utilitarian worldview, firms engage in instrumental stakeholder engagement to shield themselves from external threats. Instrumental engagement is a part of the corporate risk management process that conceives communities as non-technical risks (IOGP, 2104). To manage these risks, firms assess costs, benefits, and they employ monitoring and compensating tactics to safeguard the company's financial interests. In this process, firms often prioritize short-term choices (Johnston et al., 2019) and they rarely dedicate permanent human and financial resources to the ongoing management of community issues (Delannon et al., 2016; Frynas, 2010).

Furthermore, in transactional strategies, firms pay more attention to the engagement output rather than the process of engagement itself. The main corporate objective often revolves around achieving tangible results and as a result, transactional strategies typically do not advance fundamental principles in the CCE interaction, such as issues of procedural justice, fairness, inclusivity, transparency, and accountability (Kemp et al., 2011).

In summary, our arguments indicate that transactional CCE strategies are driven by the utilitarian approach to social responsibilities that places profit creation at the centre. These strategies also involve an instrumental mode of engaging with stakeholders. Within these transactional interventions, firms engage with local communities, but primarily as a mechanism of co-optation or seeking forgiveness, rather than as a means to drive corporate change. As other authors have suggested, since engagement takes the form of a market transaction (Johnston et al., 2019), the right to be free from their social responsibilities is what firms value higher. With these insights, this paper develops the following proposition.

*Proposition 1. A transactional CCE strategy is realised when firms have a utilitarian approach to their social responsibilities and an instrumental approach to stakeholder engagement.*

### 4.4.2. Transitional Strategies

Bowen et al. (2010) introduce the transitional strategy as an intermediate step between the transactional engagement and the more advanced transformational strategy. As we will see, the existence of this intermediate strategy implies that firms can improve the quality of their engagement by incorporating a greater number of community members and elevating the frequency of interactions—shifting from mere surveys to more dynamic forms like stakeholder dialogues, public consultations, and town hall meetings. In the words of Bowen et al. (2010, p. 306) "this strategy is 'transitional' in the sense that firms can move beyond […] transactional approaches to engage in dialogue with communities".

Additionally, a transitional strategy highlights that engagement is an incremental process. This means that corporations can undertake small adjustments in order to move from one end of the continuum to the other. For example, Bowen et al. (2010) says that transitional strategies allow to build trust through the recurring interactions among participants. This suggests that companies can progress along the CCE continuum by gradually expanding their engagement frequency and incorporating a more extensive range of stakeholders.

Within this approach, companies can perceive themselves as explorers of the community's perspective rather than mere collectors of community demands. Businesses engage in two-way communication with community members and they stress the importance of dialogue and deliberations in their interventions (Bowen et al., 2010). However, the content of the dialogue between the corporate entity and the community can still be influenced by the imposition of corporate beliefs that react defensively to alternative worldviews originating from the community (Illia et al., 2017; Mazutis & Slawinski, 2015). In essence, while transitional strategies might reduce the corporate and community gap, scholars have discussed that still within this shortened interaction, other factors such as emotional or procedural aspects can affect the effectiveness of community engagement (Attygalle, 2017).

The existence of this strategy invites us to reflect on which approaches to social responsibilities and stakeholder engagement are consistent with this middle point. This paper

proposes that a transitional strategy is consistent with an organisation adopting a managerial approach to social responsibilities (Secchi, 2007) and a descriptive approach to stakeholder engagement (Donaldson & Preston, 1995).

#### 4.4.2.1. Managerial/descriptive approach.

Recalling that firms have utilitarian, managerial, and relational approaches to their social responsibilities (Secchi, 2007), we theorise that the managerial approach is consistent with a transitional CCE strategy. When firms adopt this approach, they recognise themselves not only as profit creators but as providers of social goods. In the managerial approach, "business people, in particular, like to think of their economic/financial/profitability performance as something that they are doing not only for themselves, but also for society, as they fulfil their institution's mission to provide goods and services for society" (Carroll & Shabana, 2010, p. 89).

Firms conducting transitional engagement experience a stronger connection with the social context (Mazutis & Slawinski, 2015). However, it is important to note that this does not necessarily translate into greater transparency and social responsiveness. This is because the managerial frame, as described by Secchi (2007), prioritises corporate management and decision making. In Secchi's words "managerialists have a firm-centred perspective and, therefore, everything from outside the firm is principally addressed to organisational decision-making (Secchi, 2007, p. 355). While transitional strategies encourage corporate and community dialogue, the managerial approach still places the interests of the organisation at the forefront, which can restrict the level of transparency and social responsiveness.

Applying this concept to the realm of CCE, firms employing a managerial approach might increase the frequency of engagement while simultaneously controlling information accessibility. For example, firms might choose to emphasize favourable aspects or they could inundate community members with information that favours corporate visions, all while avoiding any mention of past corporate mistakes (Basu & Palazzo, 2008). This control over information empowers the firm to maintain decision-making that shapes the perspectives of community members, aligning them with the firm's strategic goals.

Moreover, within the managerial approach, firms also exert control over the allocation of financial and human resources and their use in the implementation of engagement interventions (Carroll & Shabana, 2010). This highlights how power asymmetry in CCE is particularly pronounced when partnerships involve communities that are structurally and historically disadvantaged (Banerjee, 2018; Garvey & Newell, 2005). While these communities may have the ability to sign agreements with corporations (Delannon et al., 2016; O'Faircheallaigh, 2013), they often lack the influence necessary to shape fundamental decision-making processes in order to have a meaningful impact on the outcomes of CCE.

A transitional CCE strategy aligns with a descriptive approach to stakeholder engagement (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). This is because descriptive engagement involves companies aiming to define their role and significance to stakeholders (Amaeshi, 2009; Donaldson & Preston, 1995). Essentially, this form of engagement is motivated by the corporate imperative to convey positive perceptions to local, regional, and global stakeholders by presenting an image of social responsiveness, which reduces the likelihood of community opposition (Egbon et al., 2018).

When firms adopt a descriptive approach, their purpose is to promote themselves and sell the benefits of CCE (Liu et al., 2013; Pieczka, 2018). Firms engaging with a descriptive approach focus on highlighting “what the corporation is” (Hahn et al., 2018). In this approach, managers play a crucial role as they act as architects and constructors of CCE bridges (Bowen et al., 2010) While corporations may appear to facilitate two-way communication interactions, they still maintain control over the frequency and depth of those interactions. This control allows them to influence the dialogue and limit the depth of the conversation, perhaps leading to fatigue or disinterest among community members. Consequently, firms adopting a managerial and descriptive approach may not demonstrate a genuine commitment to adapting their behaviours based on insights from the community. Such companies may justify this lack of responsiveness by referring to rigid management structures and established plans (Jenkins, 2004).

Within transitional strategies the firm owns the engagement process and uses it as a tool to “win stakeholders” and manage their expectations. In this process, the firm decides what a reasonable expectation is and it also selects how to take on board thoughts coming from the

community (Wall, 2012). However, the managerial approach to social responsibilities and the descriptive use of stakeholder engagement can turn problematic if firms disregard alternative frameworks that are not familiar to the firm environment.

Consequently, this may cause that community members perceive transitional strategies as a mechanised exercise of corporate hypocrisy. For instance, Kougiannou & O'Meara Wallis (2020) found that despite corporate intentions to employ two-way communication dialogues, community members did not engage because corporate statements seldom turned into actions. Similarly, Anguelovsky (2011) delves into how corporate dialogues ultimately fragment communities. The author explains "the Dialogue Table was a secretive mechanism with meetings occurring behind closed office doors inside the mine, without being opened to members outside the Dialogue Table, without benefiting the larger population around the mine, and without communicating regularly with this population" (Anguelovski, 2011, p. 392).

Our arguments developed in this section indicate that transitional CCE strategies are driven by the managerial approach to social responsibilities, in which the firm controls key decisions, and a descriptive perspective to engage with stakeholders that prioritises the dissemination of positive corporate messages. With these approaches, firms manage to increase their social acceptance by driving their interactions and leaving minimum space to alternative modes of dialogue.

*Proposition 2. A transitional CCE strategy is realized when firms have a managerial approach to their social responsibilities and a descriptive approach to stakeholder engagement.*

#### 4.4.3. Transformational Strategies

Researchers label the transformational strategy as the most advanced form of CCE intervention (Bowen et al., 2010). This is because it recognizes both the company and the community as knowledgeable actors with the capacity to integrate their views through a shared sense making and a shared decision-making (Bowen et al., 2010; Delannon et al., 2016). As such, a transformational strategy works as a synergetic project that "can lead to mutual understanding and agreement about firm's responsibilities in addressing social problems, and even to the transformation of the problem domain itself" (Bowen et al., 2010, p. 310).

Transformational engagement can also be understood as a deliberative project. It encompasses the idea that decision-making is grounded in public dialogue accessible to all citizens. Achieving this deliberative objective requires both businesses and communities to cultivate dynamic, open, and dialogic relationships (Bebbington, 2018). Firms need learning on how to feel more comfortable by having less control (Egbon et al., 2018); accepting that this state can provide them with sustainable benefits. In transformational strategies, community members perceive themselves as participants (rather than proprietors) of engagement, empowering them to exercise their decision-making authority to select diverse formats, timing, and language for CCE.

Given transformational strategies occur at the other extreme of the CCE continuum, enables us to explore the approaches to social responsibilities and stakeholder engagement that are consistent with this strategy. To address this, we theorise that a transformational strategy emerges from an organisation with a relational approach to their social responsibilities (Secchi, 2007) and a normative approach to stakeholder engagement (Donaldson & Preston, 1995).

#### 4.4.3.1. Relational/normative approach.

As discussed, there are three different approaches to firm's social responsibilities: utilitarian, managerial and relational (Secchi, 2007). Because the relational approach adopts the more systemic perspective and "shifts the focus to we, the collective community" (Mirvis, 2012, p. 99), this paper argues that this approach is consistent with those CCE interventions that seek to make a positive impact in society (Mazutis & Slawinski, 2015). In the relational approach, "the basic idea is a simple one. The society, corporations and the other economic organisations are supposed to share implicit, informal relations in order to define a moral community" (Secchi, 2007, p. 363).

In contrast to the utilitarian approach, the relational approach is a type of 'opening up' perspective that gives space to understand both the short and the long-term implications, outputs and outcomes of corporate community relations. Moreover, this opening up extends the scope of community engagement beyond the economic dimension, and seeks to integrate the social, ecological, and even political insights that communities construct everyday with their identities. The relational approach aligns with the statement that "if firms only engage

in CSR when there is immediate pay off, then they may miss opportunities to make a positive difference in society" (Mazutis & Slawinski, 2015, p. 139)

By putting relationships at the heart of the analysis (Secchi, 2007), the relational approach provides a broader perspective to identify how reciprocal interactions shape the behaviour of firms and communities in the overall system. One key aspect to analyse within this relational approach is the acknowledgement of reciprocity. The search for reciprocal interests reconciles business and society and contradicts the notion of business as "independent actors, acting for themselves, with no permission needed from any other (social) entity" (Wood, 1991, p. 67).

Using a relational construct, firms and communities perceive themselves as interacting elements engaged in a dialectical interplay (Benson, 1977). They see themselves as entities embedded in a larger social context (Mazutis & Slawinski, 2015), interlinked through a plurality of reinforcing and conflicting relationships (Hahn et al., 2014). In contrast to the utilitarian approach, the relational approach prompts firms to embrace a heightened sense of social interconnectedness, while also displaying increased responsiveness and transparency. Transparency involves access to information, while responsiveness denotes a firm's willingness to adapt their practices to evolving social and economic community needs (Mazutis & Slawinski, 2015).

Within this approach, firms approach stakeholder engagement in a different way than in the previous strategies. Donaldson and Preston (1995) explain that a normative stakeholder approach emerges when firms treat stakeholders as ends and not as means. This implies that firms develop efforts in seeing the legitimate rights of their stakeholders. Within this normative approach of stakeholder theory, both societal and environmental systems are regarded as having intrinsic and non-instrumental value (Hahn et al., 2018).

Firms with a normative approach negotiate different visions of reality and show willingness to improve their decisions as result of the learning experiences emerging from community interactions. Within a relational approach to social responsibility and normative approach to stakeholder engagement, firms develop more proactive and even creative mechanisms to engage with communities. For example, corporations conduct open strategizing, inclusive communication, and screening techniques as a mechanism to anticipate future effects (Schmitt, 2010). Similarly, within this approach, firms acknowledge that their operations can

result in lasting and unintended consequences on the living conditions of local communities (Zandvliet, 2009).

Within normative stakeholder engagement, firms acknowledge that their current values and beliefs might limit their understandings. Consequently, they adopt diverse collaborative methods when working with communities For instance, they might deliberately slow down their operations to synchronize with the community's rhythms. Schmitt (2010) quotes a CCE manager: “I think we learned that it (community engagement) is a process, it is not an event so that you have to start being engaged and then you have to be willing not only to work at your pace but also at the pace and desire of the people you are talking to” (p. 16).

Another example is when firms stop perceiving local communities as risks to be avoided. Firms accept that building trust requires vulnerability, which involves revealing issues that might lead to tensions. Nevertheless, firms willingly accept these tensions and navigate them through dialogue and mutual learning (Lewis, 2000; Smith & Lewis, 2011). For instance, in transformational engagement, firms are keen to disclose information. This contrasts with the utilitarian or instrumental perspective, where firms might be inclined to guard their competitive advantages (Barney, 1991; Barney et al., 2011; McWilliams & Siegel, 2011).

In the context of transformational engagement, communities shift from being mere recipients of engagement to becoming active contributors. Authenticity in engagement is no longer solely propagated by the firm; rather, it is collaboratively shaped with the community. Within transformational engagement, “stakeholders not only help the firm discover its authentic self, but they also validate claims made by the organisation about its authenticity” (Mazutis & Slawinski, 2015, p. 141).

Furthermore, within transformational engagement, both firms and communities collectively establish social legitimacy, a concept distinct from the social license to operate. This legitimacy is not solely derived from the distribution of tangible benefits (roads, schools, clinics). It is equally rooted in the processes of procedural justice. Advancing in these dimensions of justice helps prevent the amplification of existing power imbalances (Kemp et al., 2011).

In summary, within transformational engagement strategies, firms and communities engage with the belief that the future is malleable and full of possibilities (Secchi, 2011).

Transformation occurs when firms implement workable decisions that communities can refine with their feedback. Firms see communities' feedback as an opportunity to bring new meanings from non-explored perspectives. This also entails a collective endeavour where both firms and communities engage in introspection and refine their internal governance mechanisms (Johnston et al., 2019).

*Proposition 3. A transformational CCE strategy is realized when firms have a relational approach to their social responsibilities and a normative approach to stakeholder engagement.*

### 4.5.Discussion

This paper delved into the organisational worldviews that shape the material practices of the CCE continuum. The conceptual analysis identified profound differences among the social responsibilities and stakeholder engagement approaches used by firms to implement transactional, transitional, and transformational CCE strategies, which challenge the implicit assumption of free movement along this continuum.

Addressing the research question -What approaches inform an organisation's CCE strategy? - This paper proposes that meaningful CCE is achieved when firms align their material practices of CCE with coherent approaches to social responsibilities and stakeholder engagement. The findings highlight substantial differences among utilitarian, managerial and relational approaches to social responsibilities as well as deep variations within instrumental, descriptive and normative approaches to stakeholder management.

The profound differences analysed in this paper suggest a key insight: business cannot transition towards transformational community engagement approaches, which represent the most advanced forms of CCE- without simultaneously modifying their approaches to social responsibilities and stakeholder engagement. For example, companies that employ transformational CCE techniques- characterised by two way communication methods-, while still adhering to utilitarian and instrumental approaches, place themselves at the risk of disconnecting the community engagement function from their core business model. Moreover, these firms run the danger of being perceived as incoherent organisations, following one stakeholder approach within the CCE department and another within, for

instance, the finance department. To effectively achieve a less tokenistic CCE, it's essential that the shift in organisational worldview is widespread throughout the company.

Furthermore, the three propositions outlined in this paper provide critical insights to understand the distinct motivations behind the adoption of transactional, transitional, and transformational CCE strategies. For instance, findings showed that while firms might opt for transactional CCE strategies as a means of co-opting or seeking community members' forgiveness, the adoption of transformational CCE strategies is commonly driven by an aspiration to foster a sense of social interconnectedness. This transformational approach also entails an increased commitment to social responsiveness and transparency in the firm's interactions with the community.

Interpreting these findings, this paper highlights a conflict often overlooked within the CCE continuum. Transactional strategies are constructed upon a vision that isolates the firm from society, whereas transformational strategies embrace a more relational vision that integrates business and society in an ongoing and reciprocal transformation. This recognition of the contrasting organisational worldviews underlying these strategies enriches our understanding of the complexities and antagonisms within the CCE continuum.

By bringing attention to the competing organisational worldviews, this paper challenges two ideas that have gained ground in the CCE literature. The first one is the tempting idea that companies can implement integrative CCE strategies that would take the best from each CCE strategy (Delannon et al., 2016). However, this paper argues that such an integrative approach may foster further inconsistencies, ultimately undermining the efficacy of the engagement process. Given that utilitarian and instrumental approaches contradict the relational and normative approaches to social responsibilities and stakeholder engagement, failing to acknowledge these differences could give rise to authenticity issues.

For instance, firms might showcase transformational practices without substantiating them with relational and normative approaches in all their corporate decisions. This could result in communities participating in extended town-hall meetings with the company, only to later experience discontent upon realising their insights are not considered in decisions made by other company departments. This example highlights the possible negative consequences of

ignoring the differing approaches to social responsibilities and stakeholder engagement that underlie CCE strategies.

The second idea that this paper challenges is the proposed progression that some researchers have suggested for CSR interventions (García-Chiang, 2018). According to this perspective, firms are advised to begin their community interventions with level 1 engagement practices. These activities imply short-term and targeted actions, such as school repairs, aimed at "seeking an immediate impact on the basic needs of the population while a first contact is established without hostilities" (García-Chiang, 2018, p. 6). Subsequently, the progression to level 2 of engagement is recommended. At this stage, firms are encouraged to undertake initiatives that "integrate with the community. At this point, the *evolution* [emphasis added] of actions should be channelled towards the extension of benefits to the general population" (García-Chiang, 2018, p. 7).

This proposed progression rests on two primary assumptions. Firstly, it assumes that firms will have motivations to progress to higher levels of engagement. However, findings exhibit that utilitarian companies will find contentment with the immediate advantages given by transactional strategies, even though these may not be viable over the long term. The second issue arises from how the community might perceive utilitarian firms attempting to shift to relational behaviours. Companies that initiate engagement with donations and subsequently arrange town hall meetings could actually raise mistrust within the community regarding the underlying motivations driving this shift. Furthermore, numerous transactional practices have the potential to diminish the trust of community groups, especially those that were initially excluded from initial engagement interventions.

This paper extends previous literature by taking a step back from discussing solely the material aspects of the CCE continuum. In doing so, it delves deeper into the fundamental approaches that underlie the transactional, transitional, and transformational CCE strategies. This contribution enhances the existing body of CSR and CCE literature.

Firstly, this research introduces a refined framework for distinguishing between various CCE strategies. Beyond the usual focus on CCE outcomes, this study proposes a triad of approaches that align with specific CCE strategies. Specifically, we have identified three combinations of approaches: the transactional strategy characterized by utilitarian-instrumental approaches,

the transitional strategy driven by managerial-descriptive approaches, and the transformational strategy guided by relational-normative approaches. This framework introduces a nuanced perspective that transcends the material classifications, providing researchers and practitioners with a more comprehensive understanding of the underlying approaches to social responsibilities and stakeholder engagement shaping CCE strategies.

Secondly, the discussion of these underlying approaches brings to light an inherent tension within the continuum of CCE, an aspect that previous researchers have overlooked. This tension emerges from the contrasting motivations in the identified approaches. While the transactional approach emphasizes utilitarian and instrumental goals, the transformational approach is rooted in relational and normative considerations. By acknowledging this tension, our study contributes to an alternative comprehension of the dynamics at play within the CCE continuum.

### 4.6.Conclusion

The aim of this research was to enrich the theoretical understanding of the continuum of CCE. Departing from the conventional arrangement of their material aspects, this paper takes a deeper theoretical insight to this continuum. Additionally, this paper introduced a novel tensional approach to consider within this CCE continuum.

Through this conceptual work, this paper aims to extend the discussion beyond the question of what actions companies need to take to engage with local communities. Instead, the focus shifts to a more profound inquiry of how these actions should be undertaken. This shifting involves a reflective consideration of a company's approaches to social responsibilities with stakeholders, which serves as a foundational step preceding the determination of specific engagement strategies.

Our findings suggest the existence of inherent tensions within the CCE continuum that firms must navigate. These tensions emerge from the utilitarian, managerial and relational approaches to social responsibilities, as well as the instrumental, descriptive and normative approach to engaging with local communities. Rather than being prescriptive as to which approaches to CSR and stakeholder management firms need to privilege when engaging with communities, our work seeks to exhibit how CCE strategies can be fraught with tensions due to the contradictions inherent in these approaches.

Nevertheless, the empirical reality may be more uncertain and messier both in defining which social responsibility approach and stakeholder approach firms fall into, and also in finding firms with two, but not three of the proposed frames which result in specific CCE strategies. This makes empirical study of these propositions both pressing and fascinating, to refine further this proposed framework.

In conclusion, this paper advances the theoretical understanding of the CCE continuum, emphasizing a tensional perspective and highlighting the CSR and stakeholder approaches firms adopt. The dynamic interplay of these approaches within the context of real-world corporate engagement practices presents both challenges and opportunities for further empirical exploration, contributing to the ongoing evolution of this proposed framework.

## 5. ANTAGONISM IN POLITICAL CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (PCSR): EXPLORING TENSIONS IN CORPORATE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INTERVENTIONS (PAPER 2)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Abstract** | This paper employs agonistic PCSR to surface the potential antagonisms that Corporate Community Engagement (CCE) practitioners experience when engaging with extractive industries and marginalised local communities. Previous research in Political Corporate Social Responsibility (PCSR) has attributed a political role to corporations, acknowledging their capacity to interact with collective stakeholders, including local communities. However, this political role heavily relies on corporate community deliberations and overlooks the existence of local power asymmetries, which can pose challenges for practitioners implementing these CCE interventions on the ground. This complication is a matter of concern because overlooking the various tensions faced by CCE practitioners could lead to an oversimplified understanding of the CCE function, both for companies and local communities. Moreover, it could result in the neglect of the political in its dimension of conflict. To address the need for a deeper political dimension in PCSR studies, this paper employs the perspective of agonistic politics to explore the question: How do practitioners experience CCE? The paper identifies the tensions arising from the antagonisms experienced by practitioners while implementing CCE interventions. This paper contributes to the literature on agonistic PCSR by formulating three pair of tensions (intertemporal, rhythmical, and point of advocacy) that CCE practitioners must navigate employing agonistic politics. |
| **This paper has been presented** | 2022 \| Edinburgh Paper Development Workshop. University of Edinburgh, Business School.<br><br>2022 \| World Class Workshop 'Acting Towards Promising Futures'. University of Edinburgh, Business School.<br><br>2022 \| European Group of Organisational Studies (EGOS). Rethinking the Impact and Performance Implications of CSR. Vienna, Austria. |
| **Intended Submission** | Journal of Business Ethics \| Winter 2023 |

'We regularly engage with our communities and host governments on a wide range of topics'

(Rio Tinto, 2019, p. 19).

"No amount of money will ever replace it (Juukan Gorge cave). I would rather have the rock shelter back than you write me a cheque

(Hayes, 2020).

'The agreements between Rio Tinto and the PKKP[4] required the PKKP to cede their rights and prevented them from contesting company decisions

(Parliament of Australia, 2021)

## 5.1.Introduction

The study of Corporate Community Engagement (CCE) interventions has received significant empirical attention in recent management literature. Gibson (2022) provides a theoretical framework to understand corporate community co-development, while Banerjee (2021) argues that corporate deliberations fall short in addressing the concerns of marginalised communities. Similarly, Maher (2019b) and Järvelä (2022) discuss how businesses restrict CCE by constraining the psychological freedom of community members and detaching engagement methods from its local context.

Building on these efforts, but taking an individual level of analysis, this paper uses the lens of agonistic politics (Mouffe, 2013) to examine the potential antagonisms that CCE practitioners experience when engaging with extractive industries and marginalised local communities. Agonistic politics is a political approach that recognises antagonisms as legitimate and deserving of recognition. Its analysis is important because it illuminates how opposing perspectives can have positive impacts on businesses and local communities.

CCE can be broadly defined as all those practices undertaken by firms to develop relations with local communities with the objective of improving both business performance and societal well-being (Delannon et al., 2016; Gibson, 2022). CCE can be seen as a form of Political CSR (PCSR) intervention, as it seeks to address societal issues by engaging businesses with collective stakeholders (Scherer & Palazzo, 2007; Scherer et al., 2016). Nonetheless, PCSR interventions have been critiqued by Critical Management Scholars (CMS) due to their reliance on deliberation, which is seen as neglecting antagonisms and prioritising business interests

[4] The Puutu Kunti Kurrama is an aboriginal Australian community from the Pilbara region of Western Australia.

over community needs (Banerjee, 2018; Ehrnström-Fuentes & Böhm, 2022; Rhodes & Fleming, 2020).

The existing CMS literature on PCSR (Brand et al., 2020; Dawkins, 2021a; Fougère & Solitander, 2020) has used agonistic politics to illuminate tensions arising among companies and collective stakeholders, including nongovernmental organisations (NGOs). However, many of these tensions emerge at a global scale, particularly, within the implementation of multi-stakeholder initiatives (MSIs) (Arenas et al., 2020; Burchell & Cook, 2013; Dawkins, 2021a; Ehrnström-Fuentes, 2016; Fougère & Solitander, 2020). While this transnational emphasis is important, it has led to less attention on tensions within specific local and organisational settings.

Particularly, into settings where PCSR interventions involve stakeholders without business governance structures, such as local communities. Moreover, while previous CCE research has shed light on the overarching tension between instrumental and normative CCE drivers, there is a call for further empirical research into how this tension resonate within the day-to-day experiences of CCE practitioners, particularly, in relation to issues associated with internal corporate processes (Kemp, 2010b; Kemp et al., 2011).

The purpose of this paper is to examine the tensions that have remained silent at the heart of PCSR and through CCE interventions. The research question guiding this work is: *How do practitioners experience CCE?* To answer this question, this paper gathered data from 51 practitioners working for extractivist projects. CCE practitioners are firm's employees or consultants responsible for obtaining social licences to operate for companies, and they are primary points of contact for the grievances of local communities. This research specifically focuses on the extractive industries as a relevant setting for analysing tensions, due to the long project life cycle and extensive impacts on both nature and society caused by large financial investments in mining and oil and gas projects (Bebbington, 2012; OECD, 2017).

In answering the research question, this paper argues that practitioners experience tensions regarding the temporality (past legacy issues versus present engagement needs, and future engagement outcomes), rhythm (episodic engagement approaches versus continuous engagement models), point of advocacy (company interests versus community concerns), and function of CCE (enacting a partner role versus a parental role; and by burying corporate

impacts or surfacing community concerns). By shedding light on these local tensions, the paper contributes to existing CMS literature on agonistic PCSR by providing a more detailed understanding of the political dynamics inherent in CCE interventions. The framework presented in this paper aims to function as a compass for practitioners, enabling them to make informed decisions while considering opposing alternatives.

This paper is structured with three main sections. The first section introduces the theoretical framework, starting with a broad view into agonistic PCSR and CCE studies. The second section presents the research context, providing information on the professional practice of Corporate Community Engagement (CCE) within the extractive industries. Finally, in the discussion and conclusion sections, this paper analyses the implications of the study's results and contributions to the broader field of agonistic PCSR and CCE.

### 5.2.The Return of The Political In the PCSR Agenda

Drawing from the work of Habermas et al. (1998), Scherer and Palazzo (2007) argue that business play a political role in society due to their responsibility to make profits while addressing the interests of multiple stakeholders. In this context, the return of the political means a shift of purpose for businesses. Instead of solely pursuing profits, firms need to adopt the responsibility of cultivating dialogues among citizens with the aim of solving societal problems and protecting the interests of vulnerable stakeholders (Scherer & Palazzo, 2011). In particular, when governments lack the willingness or capacity to fulfil these functions on a global, regional and local level (Scherer et al., 2016).

However, a number of CMS scholars (Banerjee, 2018; Dawkins, 2021a; Ehrnström-Fuentes, 2016) have critiqued the Habermasian perspective of PCSR. In particular, they see the “return of the political" as not an adequate approach to amplify the voices of those who lack power. For example, Banerjee (2018) argues that while PCSR has changed the dynamics between markets and civil society, its deliberative processes depoliticise the public sphere by limiting access to dissenting voices. By eroding dissensus, firms seek to gain strategic resources such as land access. However, these competitive advantages compromise the principles of open dialogue and reciprocity (Dawkins, 2021a), which ultimately neglects the existence of conflict in the corporate and stakeholder relationship.

Similarly, Ehrnström-Fuentes (2016) challenges that corporate deliberations actually lead to a consensus without obscuring the pluriverse of possible imaginaries. Specifically, this universal consensus turns unrealistic in the presence of incommensurabilities, understood as "the differences in interests and livelihoods that may exist between stakeholders and MNCs (multinational corporations)" (p. 435). Under competing interests, according to Ehrnström-Fuentes (2016), corporations impose one-side type of legitimacy that destroys alternative perspectives –or social imaginaries-, because the business logic considers them irrational. Illustrating this point, sociologist Svampa (2021) discusses how both public and private actors have collaborated in normalising the negative impacts of the extractive sector. When imposing industrial legitimacies over other development alternatives, both governments and companies have established numerous "sacrifice zones"[5] across the Latin American region.

Addressing some of these critiques, CMS scholars suggest an alternative perspective to revisit "the return of the political" within PCSR interventions. This perspective draws inspiration from agonistic politics, an approach that embraces the political in its dimension of conflict (Mouffe, 2005). In acknowledgement of this perspective, Dawkins (2021a) coins the term agonistic PCSR to bring this contestatory approach into PCSR considerations.

Agonistic PCSR, similarly to translocality (Banerjee, 2018) or pluriversality (Ehrnström-Fuentes, 2016), is a political approach that repoliticises private governance by looking at antagonisms not as mere possibilities but as certainties that rule the corporate and stakeholder interaction (Brand et al., 2020; Dawkins, 2021a). Contrary to the notion that corporate and stakeholder interactions occur within a neutral terrain, agonistic PCSR underscores the significance of antagonism in illuminating the alternatives that corporations may intend to suppress (Fougère & Solitander, 2020).

In contrast to the Habermasian notion of PCSR (Scherer & Palazzo, 2007), agonistic PCSR rejects the idea that society has reached a point free of antagonisms (Dawkins, 2021a). Conversely, agonistic PCSR defends the need to comprehend and take into account all the competing interests and values that coexist in society. Therefore, agonistic PCSR brings back

[5] A "sacrifice zone" refers to a place where industrial activities have damaged the environment and people. The term means that these places are sacrificed for the country's economic growth, often resulting in more environmental degradation and social inequalities.

the political in its dimension of conflict (Mouffe, 2005), arguing that antagonism is an ineradicable, desirable, and legitimate dimension of social life (Mouffe, 2005, 2017).

Antagonism may come to the foreground through different forms. One of them is the experience and navigation of tensions. Tensions are feeling states (Putnam et al., 2016) that result from the union of two or more elements, forces, or processes that develop in incompatible ways (Farjoun, 2016). Although tensions might be uncomfortable to experience, they are key in explaining the emergence, reproduction, and transformation of social orders (Benson, 1977).

However, the navigation of tensions needs a democratic outlet in order to avoid the paralysis, frustration, or even destruction of antagonisms. This approach is called by Mouffe (2017) agonism. In this approach, opposing interests are seen as legitimate adversaries that must be tolerated instead of being treated as enemies to be eliminated (Mouffe, 2005). Through the practice of agonism, agonistic PCSR aims to construct a "conflictual consensus", a symbolic space where consensus exists alongside tensions.

> While consensus is no doubt necessary, it must be accompanied by dissent. Consensus is needed on the institutions that are constitutive of liberal democracy and on the ethico-political values that should inform political association. But there will always be disagreement concerning the meaning of those values and the way they should be implemented. This consensus will therefore always be a 'conflictual consensus' (Mouffe, 2013, p. 5)

As agonistic PCSR places the conflictual nature of the corporate stakeholder relation at the fore (Dawkins, 2021a), this approach has been used to examine the emergence of tensions within different type of organisations (Acosta et al., 2021; Arenas et al., 2020; Banerjee, 2018; Burchell & Cook, 2013; Dawkins, 2021a; Ehrnström-Fuentes, 2016; Fougère & Solitander, 2020). The adoption of an agonistic framework has enabled scholars to gain deeper insights into the tensions surrounding the implementation of PCSR initiatives. The work of Burchell and Cook (2013), Fougère and Solitander (2020) and Arenas et al. (2020) are notable papers that exemplify these dynamics.

Burchell and Cook (2013) analysis highlights the ongoing tensions between Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and businesses in the context of CSR. The authors

observe how NGOs accept the tension of both collaborating and resisting corporate actions. This tension is important as it enables them to advocate for social and environmental causes.

The work of Fougère and Solitander (2020) instead highlights the role of dissensus in Multi-stakeholder (MSIs) initiatives. The authors conceptualise MSIs as hegemonic projects and discuss how civil society actors resist them while simultaneously engaging with them. This is due to the fact that civil society participation allows actors to make incremental improvements, and drawing attention to systemic flaws that less powerful actors often struggle to voice.

Finally, Arenas et al. (2020) also employ an agonistic approach to focus on the constructive role of internal tensions in stimulating deliberations. They argue that when disputants embrace internal tensions, it can lead to clearer positions, questioning of existing rules, and even discussions about involving a wider array of more participants within private governance mechanisms.

Overall, CMS have used agonistic politics (Mouffe, 2013) to revitalise the political dimension of conflict within PCSR initiatives. Conversely to the Habermasian perspective of PCSR, agonistic PCSR acknowledges the existence of power relations and the value of turning structural antagonisms into manageable agonisms.

However, these studies have mostly focused on the analysis of tensions at transnational levels and within MSIs. Although these studies have paid continuous attention to a diverse set of industry settings, such as forestry (Arenas et al., 2020; Fougère & Solitander, 2020), garment (Burchell & Cook, 2013; Dawkins, 2021a; Fougère & Solitander, 2020), and oil and gas (Arenas et al., 2020; Arond et al., 2019), research has given less attention to the analysis of tensions experienced within local settings. Moreover, these scholars have also given minimal attention to stakeholders who lack business governance structures, such as local communities.

In the following section, we introduce the literature on Corporate Community Engagement (CCE) with the aim of describing an overarching tension that researchers have discussed while studying the implementation of CCE initiatives in various geographical contexts.

## 5.3.The role of Conflict in Corporate Community Engagement

CCE has been described as the battleground upon which local communities contest those corporate activities that negatively affect their interests (Calvano, 2008; Kemp et al., 2011). From a political science perspective, community engagement refers to a public deliberation process that aims to connect the experiences of individuals with the political decisions that affect them (Ritchie, 2015). In an ideal scenario, community engagement should involve all political actors, including public and private actors, recognising their potential to cause and address complex societal challenges (Ferraro & Beunza, 2018; Reed et al., 2018).

This paper understands Corporate Community Engagement (CCE) as the diverse set of practices, both formal and informal, through which business seek to navigate and develop relations with the communities in which they operate (Delannon et al., 2016; Gibson, 2022). Companies engage with community members living in the impact zone, however, they may extend their engagement to landowners living in other areas (Kemp, 2010b). From this definition, it is noteworthy to emphasise that in CCE, casual interactions are just as important as the most formal ones. This is because informal exchanges evidence the extent to which the company-community relationship develops with respect, kindness, and honesty (Kemp et al., 2011; Whiteman & Mamen, 2002).

However, since CCE does not develop in a neutral terrain, but in a landscape with significant power imbalances (Calvano, 2008), the implementation of CCE practices often takes place with businesses exerting control over material, financial, and human resources. Consequently, CCE is substantially affected by power asymmetries, ultimately leading to the intensification of conflicts and tensions (Kemp et al., 2011).

The literature has identified different type of tensions within CCE interventions. An overarching tension is related to the motivation driving CCE interventions. On the one hand, CCE is seen as a means for mitigating risks. Specifically those non-technical risks that increase the costs associated to infrastructure projects (Davis & Franks, 2014). On the other hand, CCE is perceived as a means for building trust and addressing community development priorities (Gibson, 2022). This is confirmed by an increased recruitment of practitioners specialised in community development and capacity building (Kemp, 2010b).

Businesses experience the overarching tension between instrumental and normative drivers in different ways. For example, this tension can manifest in the motivations that drive CCE practitioners to engage with communities. CCE practitioners driven by instrumental reasons often align their interventions with corporate goals and timelines –for instance, to secure access to land and gain corporate support for their achievements (Hayes & Walker, 2005). On the other hand, CCE practitioners driven by normative considerations tend to implement CCE with a focus on social justice matters (Garvey & Newell, 2005; Kemp, 2010b). Moreover, they also engage with community members, decentralising specific aspects of corporate control and fostering the development of communities' capabilities (Gibson, 2022).

The tension between instrumental and normative drivers can also coexist within the organisational setting. For example, Maher (2019b) discusses that while normative drivers encourage practitioners to establish spaces for deliberation, instrumental drivers push them to suppress dissenting voices within the community. Furthermore, Kemp et al. (2011) elaborate on how the tension between instrumental and normative motives can also manifest between different departments within the organisational setting. In particular, tensions can emerge between technical and CCE departments. Specifically, when the latter seeks the involvement of the former to address grievances arising from company's operations. Kemp (2010b) highlights that these tensions emerge because CCE practitioners, who often remain sensitive to community contexts, operate within an organisational culture that does not align with community development and participatory frameworks (Esteves & Moreira, 2021).

Within the emergence of this instrumental and normative tension, the State is not an absent actor. Ehrnström-Fuentes and Kröger (2018) delve into the involvement of government officials who, while seeking to safeguard community human rights following a normative driver, paradoxically also play a role in the instrumentalisation of community engagement. This occurs as they enact legal regulations that restrict dissent in support of foreign private investments.

Järvelä (2022) also explores how the tension between instrumental and normative values emerges through the different tactics to either promote or resist extractivist projects. For example, the author highlights how mining employees (referred to as "extractors") use CCE to detach corporate impacts from the places where they occur. Conversely, community

members (labelled “protectors”) use CCE to resist these interventions, by leveraging the intrinsic value of nature.

> The Extractors actively tried to detach any notions of harm caused by the mine from the place by specifying the distance between the protected mire and the mine, thereby separating the surface (protected aapa mire) and subterranean (mine) zones. The Protectors are ecologically embedded in the place; they have deep knowledge of it through their educational backgrounds and also time spend there. The Protectors actively mobilised the place and its uniqueness through socio-spatial practices of performance both in and with the place. (Järvelä, 2022, pp. 10-11).

Another manifestation of this instrumental-normative tension discussed in the literature emerges when corporations impose their own business priorities to disrespect alternative worldviews. For example, researchers have documented cases where companies damage sacred community sites and irreplaceable cultural artefacts. In managing these impacts, firms disregard alternative community conflict-handling processes such as storytelling or healing, considering them as incompatible with the business logic (Kemp et al., 2011; Sincovich et al., 2018; Whiteman & Mamen, 2002).

In summary, this literature review has identified two main research gaps. Firstly, despite the existing studies on agonistic PCSR underscoring the conflictual dynamics within corporate stakeholder relationships, there remains a lack of exploration into the tensions that arise in local scales, and particularly into settings where PCSR interventions involve stakeholders without business governance structures, such as local communities. Secondly, while previous CCE research has shed light on the tension between instrumental and normative aspects, there is a call for further empirical research into how these tensions resonate within the day-to-day experiences of CCE practitioners (Kemp, 2010b).

To address these research gaps, this paper aims to delve into the specific challenges faced by CCE practitioners. This paper follows an agonistic PCSR approach with the purpose of surfacing the tensions experienced by CCE practitioners working with extractive. In the next section, this paper offers insights into the research context and the methods used to gather and analyse the data given by the stories of research participants. Then, the paper moves to introduce the findings and discuss them with relation to previous literature.

## 5.4.Research Context

Since the late 1990s, extractive industries have experienced an evolution in the management of their social responsibilities. From a general philanthropic approach, firms have gradually moved to a risk management approach that is currently applied not only to health and safety aspects, but also to social and environmental issues (Tomlinson, 2018). In 2001, mining companies funded the International Council on Mining and Metals (ICMM), and in 2002 hydrocarbon companies refocused IPIECA to become a global oil and gas industry association for environmental and social issues. These organisations, in conjunction with other international efforts such as the Environmental and Social Performance Standards from the International Finance Corporation (IFC), have settled down the institutional foundations to update companies' policies to include organisational commitments towards not harming but improving the livelihood conditions of local communities.

This shift has given birth to an emerging group of CCE practitioners (Esteves & Moreira, 2021; Zandvliet, 2009) and numerous international guidelines have been published to guide their labour (ICMM, 2015, 2021; IPIECA, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c, 2012, 2019). Consequently, firms have paid more attention to this function and have recruited employees to work in this function. These employees can work in a permanent position or can also work as consultants drawing from different locational experiences. In both cases, CCE practitioners work with communities at operational levels and typically engage with them in the vicinity of the corporate facilities. The type of practices these professionals conduct is broad, and include facilitating local consultation, planning social investment programmes, handling community grievances, and collecting information for sustainability and corporate reports (Esteves & Moreira, 2021).

To obtain multiple and diverse insights, this research engaged with both consultants and community engagement employees. Research participants involved in this study have conducted much of their work engaging transnational corporations with marginalised and low-income communities, mostly in spaces from the Global South, a term that conventionally refers to the regions of Latin America, Asia, Africa, and Oceania. These professionals have been involved in a variety of projects, including the resettlement of rural communities and the implementation of social management systems with fishers in coastal communities.

### 5.5.Data Collection

To address the research question: *How do practitioners experience CCE?*, this paper followed a cross sectional research design that gathered data from 51 CCE practitioners working for mining and oil and gas companies (see table 1). Using a Grounded Theory methodology (Bryant & Charmaz, 2019; Glaser, 2012), we explored the local and individual level to identify those tensional experiences that illustrate the ongoing contestation in PCSR initiatives.

Due to the COVID 19 global pandemic, this paper gathered data using digital channels. Given that the first author had working experience in a governmental regulator in Mexico, this research approached a first group of participants using his professional network to conduct three exploratory interviews. Initial participant's views led the team of researchers to identify central themes that later were used to design an interview guide that was iteratively refined after each interview. The interview guide aimed to facilitate in depth conversations regarding practitioners' understandings of community engagement, including their drivers and challenges, tangible and intangible benefits, and any lessons they have learnt along their professional journey. In total, this paper conducted 51 relational interviews (Fujii, 2018) in English and Spanish. Research participants were contacted using various online channels such as webinars, training programs, Industry Associations, and LinkedIn groups.

### 5.6.Data Analysis

The first author of this paper has a socio-historical pre-understanding of the phenomenon of community engagement, as he previously worked as a social impact analyst and public officer in a regulatory body. Consequently, data analysis was never pristine but socially constructed and inspired using the Constructivist Grounded Theory methodology (Bryant & Charmaz, 2019; Charmaz, 2014). To facilitate the constant comparison method, in which new data is iteratively interpreted and contrasted to earlier incidents (O'Reilly et al., 2012), the first author created a dataset of transcriptions, videos, visualisations and memos in NVIVO 12.

Participants' experiences were interpreted reading transcripts, listening to their voices, and observing their interactions in video recorded conversations. Video was utilised as an investigative tool to delve on participant's reactions as they happened during the interviews (Heath et al., 2010). This provided the team of researchers with an extra layer of analysis into the details, actions, and meanings co-constructed in the conversations.

To remain as receptive as possible, the first author watched the video recordings of the interviews while closely reading their transcripts. This process involved the creation of an initial set of open codes (Saldaña, 2015). During this stage, the first author also began generating analytical ideas, which were documented in reflective memos. This first round of coding served to portray the meanings and actions behind engagement stories. Through the interpretation of participant's stories, this research gained a sense about the type of rewards, concerns, challenges, and tensions experienced by CCE practitioners. Negative aspects and uncomfortable moments were coded using labels that stick close to the data. In total, this first round of coding generated 754 codes. Examples of codes illustrating some sort of antagonism were: "social impact", "community resistance", "extreme activists", "corporate resistance", "power imbalances", "different understandings", "rock and a hard place", "tyranny of emergency", "fences", etc.

These codes prompted deeper reflections on the problems that arise in CCE interventions. For example, practitioners expressed concerns about the limited effectiveness of corporate approaches in improving the future of local communities. Moreover, they challenged that risk mitigation strategies, which see the local community as a threat, rarely bring about long lasting improvements in the livelihoods of community members. Other participants also underscored the antagonism between corporate and community values, in particular, the tensions that arise in corporate organisations during the implementation of CCE interventions.

After documenting these initial reflections in memos, the second step in the analytical process was to delve into the most significant or interesting open codes that portrayed struggles within the organisations that CCE practitioners work for. The first author studied in more detail the initial set of open codes and group a portion of them below the node "challenges". Under this node, the next step was to group all the antagonistic visions, values, beliefs, and expectations that practitioners reported to perceive in their CCE interventions.

In the second stage of analysis, the first author engaged in a deeper coding process. This involved sorting, refining, and integrating pre-existing open codes while also generating a new set of selective codes, directed to explain larger segments of data (Charmaz, 2014). The main objective was to highlight antagonistic dynamics within the challenges experienced by practitioners. To achieve this, the first author adopted a focused coding approach, using a

technique known as the versus coding approach (Saldaña, 2015). This technique allowed for a more profound exploration of the conflicting elements present in the data.

By analysing the videos and transcripts, the first author delved into the participants' experiences and sought to understand the problems that emerged from the opposing interests between corporations and local communities. This interpretation identified incidents that explicitly highlighted antagonistic relationships, and these selective codes were utilised to compare data across various interviews.

The third stage was theoretical coding and the first author built upon the selective and open coding stages to generate theoretical codes that specify relationships between larger amounts of data. Theoretical codes "may help you tell an analytic story that has coherence […] and move your analytic story in a theoretical direction. They can add precision and clarity." (Charmaz, 2014, p. 63). At this stage, the first author focused on capturing the specific tensions under which antagonism arise, discerning into five type of coding families that are presented in more detail in the findings section. These coding families are neither exhaustive nor mutually exclusive, rather they refer to recognisable analytic terms that are embedded in practitioner's experiences: intertemporal, rhythmical, point of advocacy, function, and role type of tensions.

Table 8 Data Structure

| Example of Open Codes | Selective Codes | Theoretical Coding |
|---|---|---|
| "Legacy issues", "long-term vision", "myopia", "early engagement", "fatigue", "historical relations". | Present<br>Future<br><br>Past<br>Present | **Intertemporal** |
| "the tyranny of emergency", "tick the box", "ensuring connections", "transactional", "throw money", "isolation", "philanthropic", "continuity", "consultations", "reporting", "social embeddedness", "instrumental". | Episodic<br><br><br><br>Continuous | **Rhythmical** |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| “Loyalty”, “resistance”, “vulnerable groups”, “negotiation”, “law fails”, helping companies”, “internal engagement”, “help communities”, “extreme activists”, “closing loop”. | Corporation<br><br>Community | **Point of advocacy** |
| “Stakeholder mapping”, “Corporate lenses”, “transparent”, “reactive approach”, “disregard social risks”, “local awareness”, “agreements”, “uncertain”, “misinformation”. | Surface<br><br>Bury | **Function** |
| “create change”, “learning”, “trusting relationship”, “empathy”, “collaborative decision-making”, “local capacity”, “honest”, “control”, “ownership”, “build a relation”, “proactive approach”, “local knowledge”. | Partnership<br><br>Paternalistic | **Role** |

## 5.7.Findings

> Researcher: Why do you do this work?
>
> Consultant RP: Because the world is stuck and it needs sorting out […]
>
> Consultant MJ: I've always been passionate about making sure people's views are considered.
> Consultant LH: I want to give back to the world […] It is a broad ambition but this is how I want to utilize my privilege.

CCE practitioners acknowledge that their work has the potential to positively transform the living conditions of local communities. They see themselves as expanding boundaries in the business environment; accompanying, influencing, and supporting corporate decisions to give back to people. While some embrace the broad agenda of reducing poverty and inequalities, others talk more clearly about changing the conditions that marginalise communities to better integrate their voices in corporate decision making processes.

These personal drivers often clash with economic premises that dominate the business environment (Whelan, 2012). As a result, practitioners describe their work as challenging and uncomfortable due to the pressure of multiple forces that place themselves between a rock and a hard place. Practitioners conduct studies such as social environmental baselines, due

diligences, and stakeholder mapping, aiming to help companies in the management of their impacts and interactions with communities. However, there is a wide range of possible conflicting alternatives on how companies can take on board their work. As one consultant shared in a conversation:

> (We) are sort of caught between tensions. Between long term and short term impacts, corporate and community worldviews, social impact but also a kind of financial corporate profitability. Our role is to be very ambidextrous. I think it's also a driver for many of (us). We enjoy working in this space […] having to grapple with all of these tensions (Consultant EO, May, 2021).

In the next section, this paper explores the specific tensions that arise in CCE. The findings describe three types of tensions experienced in practitioners' daily activities: a) intertemporal, whereby practitioners are confronted with considerations related to the past, present, and future; b) rhythmical, whereby practitioners are confronted with competing concerns regarding the frequency of their engagement. Within this tension, practitioners have to decide whether to engage with local communities in an episodic or continuous manner. And finally c) point of advocacy, whereby loyalty confrontations emerge, together with the question of who practitioners are advocating for in their work. Moreover, we found two additional pair of sub tensions within the point of advocacy tension, c.1) the engagement function, which revolves around two competing possibilities of advocating for the community, as a partner or a parent; and c.2) the engagement role, which involves two different manners of advocating for the company, by burying issues or surfacing them.

Table 9 Tensions in CCE interventions

| **Category** | **Force A** | **Force B** | **Description** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Intertemporal | Present | Future | There is a clash between immediate business goals with persistent socio-environmental impacts. |
| | Past | Present | There is a clash between unresolved legacy issues, conventional engagement tactics, and the innovative efforts to implement CCE in a more genuine manner. |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Rhythmical | Episodic | Continuous | There is a clash between business timeline expectations and those from the community. Whereas episodic rhythms enable and disable engagement according to regulatory requirements, continuous rhythms aim for organisational learning, community caring, and trust building. |
| Point of Advocacy | Firm | Community | There is a clash between protecting business and community interests. While firm advocacy shields the company from the community, community advocacy safeguards the well-being of the community from corporate activities. |
| Corporate Advocate | Surface | Bury | There is a clash between bringing issues to the attention of corporate decision makers and hiding or concealing those issues. |
| Community Advocate | Parent | Partner | There is a clash between nudging communities to accept benefits given by the firm and partnering with them to identify their development needs. |

### 5.7.1. Intertemporal Tensions: Between the Past, the Present, and the Future

CCE practitioners experience two types of intertemporal tensions. The first one emerges due to the conflict between short-term corporate objectives and long-term negative impacts (*present versus future*). The second intertemporal tension emerges from the conflict between past corporate approaches and the persisting legacy issues that continue to influence the CCE function (*past versus present*).

Regarding the *present versus future* tension, findings showed that this tension arises from the antagonism between the short-term business goals and the long-term societal impacts. This tension materialises in impacts that negatively affect the livelihood conditions of local communities. These impacts, whether social (i.e., resettlement conditions) or environmental (i.e., habitat destruction) are not isolated from the business environment; instead, they backfire in the form of community protests and social unrest. In essence, the tension between immediate business goals and long-term societal effects creates a loop that can harm both the community and the corporate sector.

Community resistance, rather than being episodic, tends to be prolonged over time. This continuous resistance can impact the feasibility of long-term investment projects and the overall stability of local communities. Practitioner PW reflects about this *present versus future* tension, acknowledging how it affects business profitability in the long term:

> If a Canadian company went to Peru and did something wrong, there is a probability that shareholders would know about it and the internet would be involved. Now, it has increased the perception by companies that communities have the power to cost money, stop projects, to reduce the value of projects (Practitioner PW, May 2022).

However, CCE practitioners are not solely confronted with the tension between the *present versus future*. They also grapple with another type of intertemporal tension that revolves around the *past* and the *present.* This second tension emerges in two moments: first, when practitioners address *legacy issues,* and second, when practitioners use engagement approaches that may seem obsolete for meeting the current needs of community engagement.

To begin with legacy issues, the findings highlight that practitioners have to deal with these due to past corporate approaches that overexploited natural resources without mitigating the resulting negative impacts on local communities. This type of extractivism, instead of fading from the community's memory, has left a lasting effect, becoming a significant obstacle in building trust between practitioners and community members. In the present day, communities resist extractivism and CCE interventions because of such unresolved legacies. CCE practitioners find it difficult to accommodate these type of actions, as practitioner JA shares with us in the following quote.

> In recent years, I have witnessed the increase of protests. Trucks that have to take the mineral to the harbour are prevented from leaving the mine. This is a community action that forces private companies to accept their demands. Communities, with which agreements have already been reached, again come to us with new demands and ask us to reopen agreements that have already been reached. They generally asked us for a greater economic payment or compensation (Practitioner JA, August, 2021).

Similarly, in the following quotes, first, practitioner MG reflects on how the persistence of unresolved legacies with a lack of corporate accountability significantly limits the implementation of CCE practices. In reaction, practitioner AC suggests an alternative approach

that recognizes the importance of identifying the existence of these legacy issues as a foundation to build a more meaningful relationship.

> Mining investment in Peru has been very irresponsible. We have environmental damages from the 70s. At that time, no one was paying attention. Firms find now almost impossible to operate because a lack of a social licence. A Mexican firm bought a mine with serious legacy issues and the community hates them. We have been trying to operate the mine for 5 years, but we can't. (Manager MG, August, 2021).

> People have pre-existing concerns that will limit building trust-based relations in the future. A critical moment is to identify these pre-existing concerns, address them, no sorry, not address them but acknowledge their existence, and understand that people may have been hurt by the lack of engagement in the past. Although it's not our responsibility to solve all the past issues, we can strive to do things differently going forward. (Consultant AC, April, 2021).

With regards to the use of obsolete engagement practices, findings reveal that some participants experience the tension of employing engagement approaches that do not accurately respond to the current needs of communities. For example, practitioners expressed concerns about the use of Social and Environmental Baselines, especially when they are exclusively designed from office desks that rely on outdated data. They argued that such approaches may create the illusion of starting an engagement relationship from scratch. Practitioners reflected on how, rather than starting from a blank slate, their practice typically involves communities with strong pre-existing concerns. One practitioner commented: "they (communities) know that it could be very wrong if there is something unsolved in the past" (Consultant AC, April, 2021).

Another example of the use of obsolete engagement approaches is evident when practitioners deal with corporate understandings that limit the voices of community members. For example, in the next quote, practitioner JF illustrates the struggle they face with senior mining officials. JF underscores the significance of including a variety of voices in community engagement, even if those voices have not been officially elected through traditional democratic processes.

> When I arrived there (mine in Tanzania), there were things already in place. I distinctly remember talking to the Resettlement Manager. He said -We've got negotiating committees in place. I asked -how are they representative of the community? -very representative, he said. They were elected. I walked into a room with 20 people, every single person was a male. I was floored. I couldn't stop myself from saying,

> where are the women? They kind of giggled and said -Oh, the women… they're too busy, and they will... swallow whatever we decide. (Consultant JF, May, 2021).

As shown, the community engagement practice is influenced by old approaches that generate tensions between firm's expectations and practitioner's interests to develop a new approach in community engagement. Furthermore, despite practitioners' interests in advancing new and more meaningful relationships with community members, they highlighted how the corporation remains entangled in archaic structures that do not correspond to the promises and commitment of CCE. The following quote exemplifies this challenge, touching upon the issue of racial discrimination in extractivist projects. It shows how despite renovated CCE promises, longstanding issues of discrimination persist.

> If you go to a construction site, the plant manager is a white man. The people digging holes are usually people of colour. I think the level of respect that's paid to people is different. The understanding of who is community versus who are professionals is different. There is an assumed expert status that is given to white people (Consultant LH, September, 2021).

The previous quote underscores the issue of racial discrimination and its persistent normalisation within corporate cultures. In a separate conversation, another consultant also enlightens this past versus present tension. Consultant LH observes that despite firms' efforts to recruit more local CCE practitioners, tensions emerge because of the consequences of revisiting the damages caused by previous corporate failures. This suggests that the legacy of past corporate irresponsibility continue to affect the dynamics of community engagement, making it a complex process for all parties involved, including CCE practitioners.

> Black female CCE practitioners, the challenges for them are so layered. They have grown up through the struggle of apartheid, extreme poverty, but they're now engaging with communities and their struggle, poverty and inequality. So there is a trauma element to it right. Your ancestry has gone through all of it, and now, you are engaging again with this (Consultant LH, September, 2021).

To summarise, CCE practitioners encounter a various set of intertemporal tensions. These tensions represent opposing push-pull forces that emerge from the need to address legacy issues and obsolete engagement approaches. Balancing these competing forces is a significant challenge for practitioners as they strive to foster responsible community engagement practices.

### 5.7.2. Rhythmical Tensions: A Continuous or Episodic Approach

Related to the intertemporal tension discussed in the previous section, findings showed that practitioners also experience rhythmical tensions. These tensions originate from the conflicting notions of *episodic* versus *continuous* engagement. Episodic notions manifest, for example, in the necessity to meet immediate corporate deadlines, but this urgency often clashes with the timing that community members experience in their daily lives.

In the following quotes, two practitioners reflected on the tensions between these competing rhythms. Firstly, practitioner SB highlights how corporate urgency to collect data, such as water samples, can conflict with the expectations and norms held by community members. Secondly, practitioner AF emphasises the importance of synchronising corporate and community rhythms as a means to enhance the engagement process.

> My job is about ensuring connections between community members and companies. It can be a very conflicting role because even if I meet with the Community, my colleague speaks badly to them. He will just go in the Community to take some samples of the water and go out. (Consultant SB, September, 2021).

> If you want to have a woman in the room you have to be very careful in deciding which day and which time. Because if it's close to the times that women are cooking, or coming home from work, or I remember, for example, in Bolivia when I was working in the mining sector from four to five it was the hour of the telenovela, this time was sacred because it was the only moment in the day that woman could just relax, sit down, and do something for themselves (Practitioner AF, January, 2021).

The recognition of synchronizing corporate objectives with the community's rhythms is a pivotal element of meaningful community engagement. However, findings indicated that practitioners predominantly designed interventions based on episodic engagement and prioritising immediate results.

Because CCE is often dictated by public and private regulatory requirements, these ones place practitioners under what they describe as “the tyranny of emergency”. This situation makes practitioners to operate under tight time constraints in pursuit of tangible objectives. Under these circumstances, practitioner’s efforts were bounded by external factors, such as the date for shareholders to receive reports or the deadline for regulatory license requirements. Consequently, business factors, rather than community needs, defined the rhythms of their engagement interventions.

Findings showed that episodic engagement, as opposed to continuous engagement, is related with minimal organisational learning. This is due to the fact that companies tend to prioritize reporting to public and private regulators over actively listening to community voices. Once regulatory approvals are obtained, practitioners said that community engagement tends to diminish. Consequently, in the absence of external pressures such as community protests or stringent regulatory monitoring, companies have fewer incentives to invest in community learning.

> Most consultation is a bit of a transactional process, we've got a project, we go out, we find out what the community thinks about it, we write a report. And that goes to a regulator to consider. We always seem to be rushing, left to the last minute. (Firms say) We've done the design now, you can go and consult, and you've got a month to do our report (Consultant JM, September, 2021).

> "As a consultant you are always jumping from project to project, you don't typically go back. Projects can be like one week or six months not like ten years in the same project" (AC, April, 2021).

While episodic engagement initially stems from a reactive approach to address social issues, findings showed that community members also play a role in the perpetuation of this engagement rhythm. Due to the existence of legacy issues and trust deficits, community members also put pressure on firms to engage in short-term transactions that maximise their economic benefits. This comes with the trade-off of not nurturing a longer-term and more trustworthy relationship with the corporation. As practitioner MM shared, this is a trend in different small companies who find easier to engage in these transactional routines with the hope to start becoming profitable sooner.

> "Of course we all want to plan community engagement ahead, but to do so we need money and a proper team. In Mexico there are small companies who are just starting. They have no resources to set a community engagement team two years ahead. When these firms meet the community, they receive high pressure and end up asking to the communities: What do you want to let me start working here tomorrow? In the ideal world we all want to plan ahead, but in reality some cannot, but to be honest, others just simply do not want to (Practitioner MM, October, 2021).

In contrast to this episodic engagement, practitioners also reflected on a distinct type of engagement with better opportunities to develop a more caring engagement approach. For example, practitioner JM discussed how when they had a full time position and a regular team and budget, they were able to develop a more responsible vision towards the living conditions

of the people they engaged with, “for two years […] I was trying to make sure people were well informed. If you're in a permanent position, you have a different perspective on why you're engaging (Consultant JM, September, 2021).

The participant follows this point in a later moment in our conversation, confirming that caring aspects emerged after a longer term and more continuous interaction,

> “It is much more about building relationships, a much longer term focus, is more rewarding. When you do something long term, and you can follow it through as opposed to just a one off come in” (Consultant JM, September, 2021).

In light of this observation, practitioners emphasised the importance of continuous engagement. If we are clear that “most firms will not see the link between their own activities and (communities) risk exposure” (Consultant LZ, June, 2021), ongoing engagement is the only mechanism to increase business awareness. Consultant LZ continues: “We typically suggest firms visit communities every now and then to chat and collect any sort of grievances. Have you been having more dust, noise, problems with security guards? (Consultant AC, April, 2021).

From these quotes, it is possible to identify how practitioners face the struggle to move community engagement from episodic instances to more continuous rhythms. This shift is more complex than only scheduling yearly community engagement town halls. It involves large amounts of corporate willingness, time and energy to visit the past, the present, and the future of the engagement relationship. It asks firms to re-conceptualize, re-evaluate, re-negotiate, and re-design its presence in the community. It involves corporate willingness to restore damages and to envision a type of community future with or without the firm.

> Once a project is constructed, the ongoing engagement gets lost very easily, because the project already has funding, it has already been built, it has been operating. So, they slowly stop caring about engaging with local communities (Consultant AC, April, 2021).

> “(some) companies really don't care or just want to have a social impact analysis to tie to their contract, you know as a kind of paperwork that is obligatory to get a contract or to get a license or to get an insurance or to get a something (Consultant VK, May, 2021).

CCE practitioners experience rhythmical tensions due to the contrasting demands they encounter. On the one hand, they are paid to comply with regulatory requirements, and on

the other hand, they need to be responsive to the specific timings and needs of each community. These competing rhythms give rise to two distinct engagement approaches: the episodic approach and the continuous approach. The episodic is driven by the necessity to meet regulatory compliance while the continuous acknowledges the significance of consistent dialogue.

Although practitioners admitted continuous engagement offers better prospects for constructing a more meaningful engagement, firms tend to display minimal incentives to pursue this path. Once agreements are signed, the importance of CCE diminishes in the eyes of the company. This situation creates a challenge for practitioners who recognise the benefits of continuous engagement but may face resistance from within the company to sustain these efforts.

### 5.7.3. Point of Advocacy: Between the Firm and the Community

CCE practitioners deal with the challenge of navigating a tension of loyalty. They are hired to fulfil a business function, specifically, when firms recruit them to deal with community resistance affecting corporate reputation. However, as practitioners engage with communities, they often find that many CCE problems do not solely emanate from the community; instead, they originate from the underlying assumptions and attitudes within the corporate environment. In other words, they realised that the root cause of corporate issues can be traced back to how the company perceives and interacts with the community, rather than solely placing the responsibility on the community's interactions with the company.

> “The common situation is companies saying we've got problems with local communities, we've got to engage them, we have a community relations team (but) these community relations practitioners get stuck in the middle, they just hear all of the problems, they get all the complaints about jobs, but they don't have the influence to reverse them (Consultant EO, May, 2021).

Therefore, our findings show that determining who practitioners should advocate for becomes a tension that requires careful navigation. This is exemplified by the experience of practitioner MG, who expresses the challenge of simultaneously serving as an advocate for both the community and the company.

> “I had to be the company's advocate in dealing with the communities, to persuade them that the company's presence was beneficial for them. However, my strategy was that for the community, I

> continued to be their advocate when dealing with the company. I tried to make the communities understand that my role within the company was not solely to represent the company, but to ensure that the community had a voice in the highest levels of the company (Manager MG, August, 2021).

In the next subsections, we explore this tension in more detail. Specifically, we note that when practitioners take the side of the corporation, they become entangled in a dual role. On one hand, they act as 'diggers', diligently surfacing problems that may exist within the community or its relationship with the company. On the other hand, practitioners also find themselves in the role of an 'undertaker,' responsible for hiding or disregarding those problems that affect company's reputation and interests.

After examining the tension that arises when practitioners aligned with the interests of the corporations, we will move on to explore the last tension, which occurs when practitioners advocate for the community and find themselves navigating between the roles of being a partner or a parent for the local communities they engage with.

#### 5.7.3.1. Between Burying or Surfacing Community Problems

CCE practitioners struggle to define the type of advocacy they have to commit to. For example, when conducting studies such as stakeholder mapping, they have to focus on extracting data from the community to generate information about the actors operating in the business environment. However, we also found that practitioners, instead of surfacing issues, are often told to bury some community issues, particularly when their disclosure might affect business' reputation.

In situations where practitioners take the side of the corporation, their task revolves around surfacing and assessing the power held by community members. In other words, their goal is to suggest effective strategies for managing stakeholders who may pose a threat to the corporation's interests. Practitioners explain this type of surfacing work in terms of helping companies to identify potential red flags. In a conversation with a social performance consultant about the types of activities they perform, they state:

> Our work is everything, from helping companies understand contexts to managing the interactions with communities. Helping them design and manage interventions. Helping companies to put in place management systems or resolve particularly difficult issues, and then also working on their assessment, due diligence, the review side of things (Consultant EO, May, 2021).

From this quote, findings show that practitioners acting as corporate advocates fulfil a multifaceted role, encompassing the provision of knowledge to create a profitable business environment. In their engagements with communities, practitioners emphasize the importance of generating business opportunities. This is because “you’re managing risks, you're trying to get access to land, you're trying to reduce costs, there's always business” (Consultant EO, May, 2021). Practitioners value this type of surfacing work because it provides firms with competitive advantages, especially, when they are operating in challenging environments. Some examples of the resources practitioners facilitate to the firm are: local labour, land, local products, and even security, as the following quote describes.

> In some places we set up a site with heavy security, um but there's no better fence, really, than the community that is around you. So if the community likes you, (it) wants to protect you. (Community helps) in terms of early warnings, in terms of positive relationships, in terms of understanding when things are going wrong. The community is that first layer of defence for the company (Consultant DN, April, 2021).

*Despite being aware of the benefits their work provides to corporations, practitioners expressed concerns about becoming mere concealers of important community demands. This is because they experience a loss of objectivity in their work. This concern was expressed as: “objectivity is hard to maintain because at the same time that I would develop relationships with people, I was also developing relationships in the company that was paying me, and those relationships although important for getting things done, they can also blur hard decisions that need to be taken (Consultant JF, May, 2021).

With the previous quote, we found that practitioners shared a concern about making decisions that lack clarity. These decisions tend to be vague, and are commonly influenced by strong corporate filters that provide a lack of well-defined information. In a different interview, another practitioner followed this idea, describing how in three different moments internal corporate dynamics were obscuring their observations and understanding of the situation on the ground.

> “Companies don't want to hear that to do what you want to do is going to require time and money and or even that you shouldn't do it that way. The mine manager wants to make sure his boss and head office corporate head office in wherever believes he's managing things well. So, how much they knew

> of the day to day complexities? It's hard to know. I've seen conclusions and recommendations getting shaped by clients" (Consultant JF, May, 2021).

These findings highlight the inherent tension that practitioners experience when they find themselves in the position of both surfacing and burying community problems. This dichotomy can create a conflict between their responsibility to address communities' interests and their obligation towards corporate concerns.

Moving on to the final subsection, we present another tension related to the point of advocacy. Here, practitioners face a challenge when advocating for the communities they work with. In doing so, they often find themselves caught between two contrasting positions – that of being either partners or parents to the communities.

#### 5.7.3.2. Between a Community Parent or a Community Partner

CCE practitioners emphasized the need to advocate for the demands and concerns of community members. However, we found that this intention placed them into the challenge of differentiating two opposing types of relationships. First, the one of a parent-child equivalent relationship, and the second one a partnership type of relationship. In both cases, practitioners expressed care for the needs of the communities. However, this caring approach materialized in distinct ways.

In our conversations, practitioners expressed having developed caring relationships to community members, and this was a factor for them to also become more legitimate with them. For example, one practitioner shared:

> "they (communities) knew they could come to me, I would do whatever I could to help them, my allegiance really was and continues to be the communities, and I've struggled, but I always felt like it was a good struggle, if I stop, then something is wrong, the community saw me as legitimate (Consultant JF, May, 2021).

In addition, we also found that practitioners caring for communities developed an engagement approach that did not only consider the most powerful actors, but also the most vulnerable ones. With this shift, practitioners managed to contradict typical notions of stakeholder saliency (Mitchell et al., 1997), and instead conducted their engagement using more relational methods.

> (When) we talked with the fisherman at their own sites. That was such a marvellous experience, they shared how they felt. Is this the kind of intentional effort you need to have in order to listen, engage, and in the future not position yourself like in this higher structure of the company?
>
> Those (fishermen) are actually the people that you have to involve the most, to stop affecting them. You care about them, you realise how unfair and unacceptable their living conditions have been, you open yourself up to reality that is typically invisible, and I see this as a very positive thing (Consultant AC, April, 2021).

Community advocacy was confronted with two distinct type of relationships that practitioners found difficult to accommodate. The first type is a parental relationship in which the firm uses its power to execute both control and care to the community (Etchanchu & Djelic, 2019). In this relationship, practitioners nudge communities to accept corporate decisions and social benefits given by the firm. This parental relationship is also accompanied by authoritarian attitudes like the one the following quote narrates.

> "There are firms who start the relationship like -hey I am an oil and gas company-, so what can we do to help? Do you want money? Do you want new modern engines? Just let me know how much it costs. (Consultant AC, April, 2021)".

The second role that we identify is a partnership type of relationship. Some practitioners identify this as the mode that yields more favourable outcomes. In contrast to the parental relationship, practitioners engaging as partners acknowledge that it is about

> "Working together with them, not pretending like I'm coming here and I've got all the answers. What I'm trying to do is facilitate a way for you as the people most directly affected by these projects. Sitting at the table in some way with these companies that are having these big impacts and figuring out how to do it together." (Consultant JF, May, 2021).

To summarize our findings, CCE practitioners work within an often antagonistic environment, characterised by multiple and interrelated tensions related to types of engagement: temporality, rhythm, point of advocacy, and function. Through an interrogation of practitioners' on the ground experiences, our analysis found that CCE emerges from opposing corporate and community interests, further leading to the emergence of tensions due to conflicting approaches of implementing CCE interventions.

The next section of the paper discusses how the findings in this paper contribute to the ongoing theoretical conversation in the PCSR literature, particularly in relation to the agonistic

approach that scholars have been developing. This discussion highlights the importance of considering micro and local levels of analysis in understanding the areas where tensions emerge within CCE interventions.

## 5.8.Discussion and Conclusion

In this paper, we investigated the following research question: *How do practitioners experience CCE?* Our findings show that practitioners experience antagonism through the emergence of various organisational tensions. These tensions are rooted in conflicting corporate interests regarding CCE temporality, rhythm, and practitioners' point of advocacy.

Moreover, this paper also argues that CCE practitioners respond to corporate-community antagonism employing agonistic politics (Mouffe, 2017). This is a political approach that allows practitioners to surface the legitimacy of opposing alternatives. In particular, those that corporations may intend to suppress, such as legacy issues that occurred before the company took legal responsibility over the project. By embracing an agonistic approach, CCE practitioners can engage with both companies and local communities, working to achieve consensus while acknowledging and managing the tensions that may arise in the process. Furthermore, through the adoption of an agonistic approach, CCE practitioners can clarify their personal positions concerning the rhythm of engagement and the advocacy they select at specific moments within the engagement process.

By doing so, this paper offers an insider perspective to the analysis of organisational tensions in corporate community relations. By employing an agonistic approach, which acknowledges the existence of conflicting interest (Dawkins, 2021a; Mouffe, 2013), this paper challenges the Habermasian PCSR approach that positions CCE as a tool to coordinate societal problems and achieve universal consensus (Scherer & Palazzo, 2007; Scherer et al., 2016). In contrast, and following the call from authors to bring back the political dimension in the analysis of PCSR initiatives (Banerjee, 2018; Mouffe, 2005), this paper takes a micro and local perspective to shed light on the conflicting nature of the corporate-community relationship (Rhodes & Fleming, 2020).

While previous studies have analysed the conflicting nature arising in global PCSR interventions, they mostly analyse tensions emerging at a transnational level. For example, how civil society organisations both collaborate and resist corporate dialogues (Burchell &

Cook, 2013; Dawkins, 2021a), how corporations both engage and destroy alternative social imaginaries (Ehrnström-Fuentes, 2016; Ehrnström-Fuentes & Böhm, 2022), and how consensual dissensus contributes to incremental improvements in MSIs (Arenas et al., 2020).

Using an agonistic approach (Mouffe, 2005, 2013), which acknowledges the political in its dimension of conflict, the above literature has emphasized the importance of understanding the underlying antagonisms fuelling corporate and stakeholder conflicts. With the purpose of contributing to these PCSR agonistic efforts, this paper looked into CCE interventions. In contrast to existing agonistic PCSR studies, which primarily delved into private governance mechanisms such as MSIs, by focusing on CCE this paper opens up opportunities for illuminating tensions emerging within local settings. This focus also sheds light on the tensions between corporations and stakeholders operating without business governance structures, such as local communities.

As prior CCE literature has underscored, CCE practitioners have been operating under the overarching tension of instrumental and normative drivers (Gibson, 2022; Hernandez & Ivory, 2022; Owen & Kemp, 2014). Consequently, CCE researchers have scrutinized the contradictions that emerge from these competing motives. For instance, Maher (2019a) discusses the contradiction of encouraging corporate deliberations while suppressing dissenting voices from the community.

Following these efforts, this paper looks at how this instrumental versus normative antagonism also triggers other type of organisational tensions. In doing so, this paper found that tensions emerge due to conflicting corporate interests concerning the temporality, rhythm and point of advocacy.

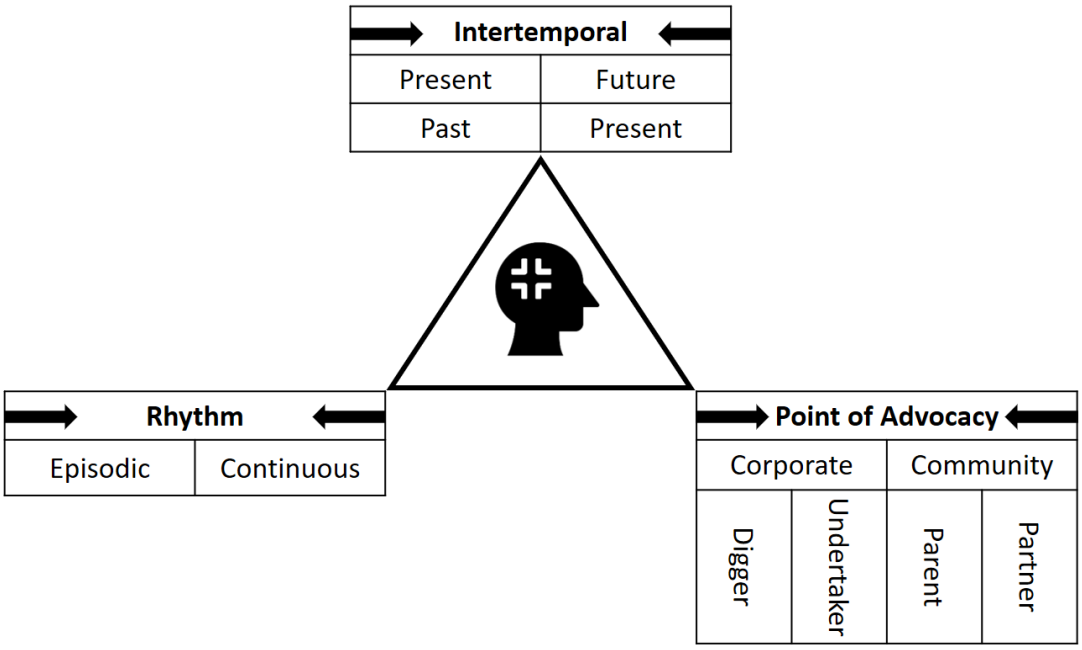
However, rather than reacting to these tensions with an antagonistic approach, which seeks to eliminate them by questioning the legitimacy of opposing viewpoints, this paper examines how CCE practitioners apply an agonistic approach. The agonistic approach recognises the coexistence of differing perspectives in order to achieve a conflictual consensus. In this approach, practitioners encourage corporate objectives while also understanding disagreements as part of the process.

As shown in figure 1, practitioners implementing CCE interventions experience tensions because of the clash of two conflicting alternatives. At the top of the figure, the temporal

tension is formed due to the clash of present versus future interests, and past corporate practices versus present community needs. On the left side of the figure, a rhythmical tension emerges due to the contrast between episodic and continuous forms of community engagement. Finally, on the right side, the advocacy tension arises from the encounter between corporate and community loyalty. Within this last tension, the figure also visualises two pair of tensions, representing the dual functions that CCE serves within both the organisational and community setting.

Collectively, these tensions maintain a significant influence on the behaviours and decisions of CCE practitioners. They prompt CCE practitioners to make choices that revolve around prioritizing either short-term or long-term objectives. Additionally, practitioners must decide whether to engage as partners or adopt a more authoritative "parent" role in their interactions.

Figure 10 Tensions in CCE interventions




In our findings, we identified the first tension as the conflict between short-term corporate objectives in the present and long-term community impacts in the future. An antagonistic approach to this tension would seek to eradicate it, by undermining the legitimacy of the community impacts, treating them as if they were claims of enemies that need to be neutralised using a corporate rationalist approach. Conversely, an agonistic approach to these tensions would maintain their antagonism, strengthening the legitimacy of the impacts as if

they were adversaries that need to be tolerated. As Mouffe puts it, “Adversaries fight against each other because they want their interpretation of the principles to become hegemonic, but they do not put into question the legitimacy of their opponent’s right to fight for the victory of their position” (Mouffe, 2013, p. 21). In our findings, we observed practitioners' proactive efforts to illuminate the connections between corporate objectives and community impacts. Rather than avoiding these confrontations, practitioners made them evident, understanding that an excessive focus on short-term goals has historically resulted in violent community protests, thereby affecting the longer-term sustainability of both corporations and the community.

Furthermore, within this intertemporal tension, our analysis highlights the conflict between legacy issues and present engagement approaches. An antagonistic response to this tension might seek to eliminate it by questioning the legitimacy of these legacies, treating them as issues that should be disregarded with new promises for the future.

In contrast, an agonistic approach would acknowledge the repercussions of past approaches, even if these actions were initiated by other companies. Moreover, as demonstrated by some CCE practitioners, an agonistic approach would embrace a conflictual consensus. This approach, on the one hand, advances the corporate agenda of obtaining a SLO while simultaneously accommodating dissent and disagreements as integral components of the process. For example, CCE practitioners emphasise that prioritising short- term business goals without considering their societal impacts can have negative repercussions, leading to community protests that can harm both the community and the corporate sector.

In our findings, we also identified a second tension that is illustrated in the conflict between episodic and continuous forms of CCE. This tension emerges when practitioners' intentions to establish an ongoing engagement with the community is antagonistic with corporate structures that incentivise a more sporadic approach to community engagement based on, for example, institutional deadlines. Episodic rhythms give companies fewer opportunities to perceive the community in agonistic forms. This is because they delimitate the deliberative space using formalised tools and rules for a specific period of time. Thus, to address this tension in a more agonistic way, practitioners seem to acknowledge the impossibility of a final reconciliation and encourage firms to not deprive community members of an agonistic exchange where they can make their voices heard and choose between real alternatives.

Finally, the third tension relates to the point of advocacy. For practitioners, it is clear that their work serves an economic function, however, they also recognise that to conduct a more effective CCE, they have to provoke internal organisational changes while nurturing community relations with advocacy and care. In contrast to an antagonistic approach that would split loyalty, practitioners aim to develop an agonistic approach. In doing so, they attempt to fulfil their business responsibilities while challenging corporate assumptions that influence decision-making, seeking to bring about changes within the corporate context. The point of advocacy tension also illuminates two more sub-tensions. When practitioners operate as corporate advocates, they see that their work can surface community problems while simultaneously burying them. Similarly, when practitioners advocate from the side of communities, they experience a tension between two different roles they could perform. One role is the paternalistic approach whereas the other is a partner approach.

With this article, we wish to bring attention to the political nature of CCE interventions, and challenge the notion that CCE is solely aimed at obtaining social licenses to operate. Our findings reveal that practitioners confront various interconnected tensions, which reflect the inherent antagonisms that are an inseparable part of social life (Mouffe, 2017). This illustrates that CCE work does not follow a straightforward process and involves grappling multiple and interrelated tensions, which according to their management, can either obscure or surface opposing viewpoints and alternatives. While these tensions could be approached in antagonistic ways, practitioners strive to handle them through agonistic approaches. CCE practitioners understand that to build trust in the present, they must maintain a continuous engagement with the past while being aware of the negative impacts that business can have in the future.

This paper contributes to the existing agonistic PCSR literature (Burchell & Cook, 2013; Dawkins, 2021a) by providing more in-depth insights into the specific dimension where contestation arises. While Dawkins (2021a) discusses antagonisms and contestations as opportunities to interrogate the power origins and disrupt prerogatives with alternatives, the analysis of the Bangladesh Accord lacks sufficient illustration of the areas where contestation can emerge. In contrast, this paper delves into the tensions that emerge during the design and implementation of local Corporate Community Engagement (CCE) interventions. In doing so, this paper offers a deeper understanding of how power dynamics unfold in the context of CCE.

### 5.9.Limitation and future research

The management of conflicts and the navigation of organisational tensions are often addressed in agonistic PCSR research (Arenas et al., 2020; Fougère & Solitander, 2020). These studies emphasize the discussion of corporate power imbalances and highlight the intensification of antagonisms, conflicts, and tensions that arise in the interaction between corporations and stakeholders.

This study has investigated a set of interconnected organisational tensions that have emerged based on empirical data collected from 51 CCE experiences. While practitioners have shared the narratives illuminating the organisational factors shaping these tensions, further research could extend this work by conducting more in depth case studies.

This paper contributes to agonistic PCSR research by examining the antagonisms experienced by CCE practitioners in their interactions within specific local contexts. In relation to this, this paper also sheds light on the agonistic responses these practitioners employ to highlight the variety of alternatives and perspectives that might otherwise be dismissed within an antagonistic framework. However, this study primarily relies on the experiences shared by CCE practitioners, and the dynamics might vary if other viewpoints were included in the analysis.

Future research could also explore the influence of social and public actors in shaping CCE practices. For instance, it would be valuable to investigate to what extent both community members and government officials contribute to the management of tensions, whether through agonistic or antagonistic approaches.

## 6. BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE: CORPORATE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PRACTITIONERS ADOPTING GOVERNANCE ROLES (PAPER 3)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Abstract** | Previous micro-CSR literature has investigated the mechanisms that CSR practitioners employ to navigate various type of tensions while aiming to reconcile business interests with societal well-being.<br>However, most of the available literature has delved into the perspectives of CSR practitioners primarily located in corporate headquarters, resulting in the exclusion of voices from practitioners directly involved in addressing the demands of affected local communities. This complication is a matter of concern because overlooking the experiences of CCE practitioners hinders our understanding of the mechanisms put in place to navigate the possible conflicts between businesses and local communities at the individual and local levels of analysis.<br>To address the need for greater inclusivity within the micro-CSR literature, this paper adopts the concept of governance roles to explore the question: How do CCE practitioners navigate the tensions they experience? The paper identifies four governance roles (negotiator, mediator, interpreter, and transformer) that practitioners employ to generate and maintain governance spheres among private, public, and social actors.<br>This paper contributes to the literature on micro-CSR and governance by introducing an individual-level of analysis into the formation of governance spheres. |
| **This paper has been presented** | 2023 \| Government of CSR Workshop. Bayes Business School. London, United Kingdom.<br><br>2023 \| Business and Development Research Seminar. Copenhagen Business School. Copenhagen, Denmark.<br><br>2023 \| European Group of Organisational Studies (EGOS). Governing for Sustainability: Exploring How Public and Private Forms of Governance Interact. Cagliari, Italy. |
| **Intended Submission** | Journal of Business Ethics \| Winter 2023 |

## 6.1.Introduction

"I had never been so afraid for my life, I experienced political repression in the 70s, but what I lived in that place was the scariest moment of my life" (Practitioner AG)

"I was introducing myself when one community leader told me, anyone who comes from that company or works for them, we will shoot them out" (Practitioner PR)

There has been interest in examining the challenges faced by CSR practitioners as they strive to reconcile businesses with societal well-being (Carollo & Guerci, 2018; Fontana et al., 2023; Hahn et al., 2014; Wright & Nyberg, 2012). For instance, scholars have explored the sustainability, identity work, and emotional tensions that practitioners experience (Carollo & Guerci, 2018; Fontana et al., 2023; Wright et al., 2012). Additionally, researchers have examined the mechanisms that these practitioners employ to navigate these tensions, including boundary-spanning (Brès et al., 2019), the use of metaphors (Carollo & Guerci, 2018), and framing compatible interests (Wright & Nyberg, 2017). Overall, these insights contribute to comprehend both the tensions and mechanisms adopted by practitioners when working as agents of social change (Risi & Wickert, 2017).

However, most of the existing micro-CSR research studies practitioners primarily based in corporate headquarters. This approach has overlooked the on the ground CSR implementation experiences of local practitioners (Acosta et al., 2021), who directly engage with the demands of affected local communities. Moreover, although the emerging Corporate Community Engagement (CCE) literature has paid increasing attention towards the efforts of these practitioners, it lacks an individual analysis as it often tends to label their roles as gift-givers (Rajak, 2011) or regulatory facilitators (Dougherty, 2019).

Consequently, although micro-CSR research and CCE literature have begun to examine the mechanisms used by practitioners to navigate tensions, current understanding is constrained due to a lack of attention to the interactions of practitioners with affected local communities. This shift in focus is important because CCE occupies a central position. It is relevant both for business performance and community resistance. Therefore, it is key to investigate how practitioners navigate the potential antagonism between business and local communities at the local and individual levels of analysis.

In this paper, we seek to address the lack of a front-line perspective in current micro-CSR research (Girschik et al., 2022), and the lack of an individual perspective in the CCE literature. We ask the research question: How do CCE practitioners navigate the tensions they experience? When answering this question, this paper develops a typology of four governance roles that practitioners perform when navigating governance spheres. Governance spheres are broad politico-economic spaces formed by the actions of businesses, environmental groups, and social activists (Cashore et al., 2021; Ponte et al., 2021). In relation to this, we discuss governance roles as the competitive and collaborative behaviours enacted by practitioners to facilitate the corporate-community relationship.

Our study shows that CCE practitioners attempt to navigate the antagonism between businesses and local communities by simultaneously balancing often-contradictory governance roles. This balancing is crucial to gaining trust among both businesses and communities. Importantly, these governance roles do not exist as fixed characters but constitute positions that practitioners take in particular circumstances and for particular audiences. We begin this paper by interrelating the CSR, CCE and governance pieces of literature, suggesting the relevance of adding an individual perspective to the formation of governance spheres. We then continue presenting the methods and findings of our study. Finally, we close with a discussion of the theoretical contributions of these four governance roles to the literatures of micro-CSR, CCE, and governance.

## 6.2.The Governance of Corporate Social Responsibilities

### 6.2.1. CSR Practitioners Navigating Tensions

There is general acceptance that researching how practitioners experience CSR is a well-needed and burgeoning field (Girschik et al., 2022; Gond & Moser, 2021). As a result, much of the current literature has highlighted some of the mechanisms that practitioners put in practice to navigate more effectively different type of tensions (Brès et al., 2019; Carollo & Guerci, 2018; Fontana et al., 2023; Mitra & Buzzanell, 2017, 2018; Risi & Wickert, 2017; Wright et al., 2012).

For example, scholars have argued that in order to navigate the challenges inherent to their work, CSR practitioners need to play ambivalent positions. In particular, when their personal interests, identities, and aspirations clash with those of others. For example, in their analysis of consultants establishing a sustainability market in Canada, Brès and Gond (2014) identified three distinct roles that practitioners performed: boundary negotiators, regulatory enactors, and environmental translators-. Similarly, Mitra and Buzzanell (2018) arrived at the conclusion that to navigate the tensions inherent to CSR work, practitioners adopted four distinct positions: discoverers, enlighteners, legitimizers, and consumers.

Similarly, Wright et al. (2012) identified the coexistence of competing identities within CSR practitioners –change agent, rational manager, and committed activist. The balancing of these identities, according to their findings, contributes to a more effective navigation of tensions in the implementation of CSR. In a follow-up study, Wright and Nyberg (2017) expanded upon these findings. They discussed that practitioners experiencing these identities also need to draw from framing mechanisms to make opposing preferences compatible, localising mechanisms to provide temporary compromises, and normalising mechanisms to realign sustainability initiatives to market discourses.

Moreover, researchers have delved into how CSR practitioners react to spatial-temporal tensions (such as short-term vs. long-term perspectives and insider vs. outsider roles). These practitioners often employ cognitive tools such as metaphors to grapple with the inherent contradictions of their work (Carollo & Guerci, 2018). In another study, Fontana et al. (2023) conducted a comparative study among practitioners at different stages of their careers. They found that whereas early-stage practitioners use neutralising responses to deal with tensions, late-stage practitioners respond with chameleonic mechanisms.

Previous research has enriched our understanding in micro-CSR by revealing some of the mechanisms used by practitioners to navigate the tensions within their work (Brès & Gond, 2014; Fontana et al., 2023; Wright et al., 2012). Nonetheless, this knowledge has been limited to the study of top management employees. Consequently, this paper aims to expand this research by giving voice to a richer diversity of voices, in particular, those industry insiders implementing CSR initiatives locally and in developing spaces (Acosta et al., 2021; Girschik et al., 2022).

### 6.2.2. CCE Practitioners Navigating Governance Spheres

While prior research has examined the experiences of Corporate Community Engagement (CCE) practitioners (Esteves & Moreira, 2021; Kemp, 2010a, 2011; Wilson, 2019), our study seeks to offer a more complex understanding of the mechanisms performed by these practitioners. In particular, the focus on this paper centres on the navigation of governance spheres. In doing so, we aim to go beyond the previously explored positions given to these practitioners, who are often seen as being buffers of business profitability (Owen & Kemp, 2012), risk absorbers, and double agent scouts (Dougherty, 2019). By adding an individual level approach, we hope to give justice to the multifaceted nature of their roles by looking at the competitive and collaborative dynamics involved in their work.

To investigate the complex interactions in which CCE practitioners operate, we draw on the concept of governance spheres (Cashore et al., 2021). This concept suggests that private entities interact with public organisations in both synergetic and contentious dynamics. Although Cashore et al. (2021) initially crafted this concept to analyse private and public interactions, we see possibilities to extend it to the analysis of corporate community interactions.

However, in contrast to Cashore et al. (2021), this paper does not regard local communities as private actors. The distinction is significant because local communities, in contrast to business organisations, act collectively to protect a diverse range of interests, rather than exclusively focusing on safeguarding the benefits for a specific group. Consequently, this paper conceptualises local communities as social actors who, within conditions of limited statehood, contest and collaborate with private entities to address some of their development priorities.

While early studies have examined the dynamics of governance spheres in global south countries (Marques & Eberlein, 2021; Ponte et al., 2021), this literature review has identified a research gap with regards the micro-level examination of these spheres. Therefore, we aim to seize this opportunity by examining the multifaceted roles that CCE practitioners might perform to create and maintain these governance spheres.

Based on the review of existing literature, this paper aims to contribute to the field of micro-CSR and governance literatures by examining the governance roles that CCE practitioners undertake when engaging with affected local communities. By exploring this aspect, we can

gain insights that enhance our understanding of field of micro-CSR and CCE by addressing the following research question: How do CCE practitioners navigate the tensions they experience?

To address this research question, we followed a cross sectional research design to collect qualitative data from 51 CCE practitioners working for mining and oil and gas companies. We continue this paper by giving a contextualisation of the CCE phenomenon and the research design chosen for this study. Then we move on to describe the methods employed to analyse the data and the findings.

## 6.3.Research Context

Corporate Community Engagement (CCE) represents a localised manifestation of CSR, implemented by firms to acquire a social license to operate and contribute to specific community development priorities (Gibson, 2022; Jamali, 2008). At the industry level, the extractive sectors have recognised the significance of CCE initiatives, as evidenced by the publication of several toolkits and guidance materials. (ICMM, 2015, 2021; IPIECA, 2017, 2019; OECD, 2017). Within this context, CCE practitioners have emerged as a nascent group of professionals responsible for developing interactions with local communities (Esteves & Moreira, 2021; Kemp & Owen, 2013).

CCE practitioners working for extractive industries, similarly to other CSR practitioners in other industries, operate in the middle of a contradictory area. Firstly, because of the ongoing tension between instrumental reasons to enhance corporate reputation and normative drivers to address community needs (Esteves & Moreira, 2021). Secondly, because of the aspirations of certain practitioners aiming to reform an industry that resists fundamental changes (Smith, 2019). Lastly, because practitioners often operate at a cross-boundary space, sometimes making decisions that influence business activities, while in others, providing inputs that remain detached from organisational processes (Blesia et al., 2021; Owen & Kemp, 2014).

Due to the fact that practitioners operate at the crossroad of multiple dynamics, they often find themselves performing ambivalent roles. For instance, they are seen as protectors of Social Licenses to Operate (Prno & Scott Slocombe, 2012), mitigators of community resistance (Maher, 2022), or advocates of community needs (Gibson, 2022). In this context, two main reasons led us to choose CCE practitioners in this study. Firstly, because of their ambition to

drive social impacts within an industry that resists structural changes. Secondly, because they operate within a local context that requires them to engage with affected stakeholders while also staying closely connected to the business environment.

### 6.4.Data Collection

To advance the understanding of how CCE practitioners develop interactions with community members, this paper collected data from practitioners with experience in either/both mining or/and oil and gas companies. In total, this paper conducted 51 relational interviews with managers and consultants who have held positions as community relations officers. Relational interviewing is an interpretative method in which the researcher develops working relationships with participants to get insights into their worldviews. This type of interviews require engaging in reflective dialogues, wherein the researcher critically examines how issues of positionality shape the research process (Fujii, 2018).

Given that the first author had working experience in a governmental regulator in Mexico; we approached to a first group of participants using their professional network and conducting exploratory interviews with three consultants. Their views led us to identify central themes that we used to design an interview guide. The interview guide aimed to facilitate in depth conversations with practitioners regarding their understandings of community engagement, including their drivers and challenges, tangible and intangible benefits, and any lessons they have learnt along their professional journey.

We increased the diversity of perspectives by contacting participants using online channels. For instance, we attended digital webinars and online training programs, and we also browsed Industry Associations6 and Linkedin professional groups. We generated a database of 122 potential participants, who we approached sending them an invitation letter via email. In total, 93 participants responded to our email, and 51 decided to take part on a videoconference call with the first author.

The participants who agreed to take part have diverse professional backgrounds, including environmental engineers, lawyers, sociologists, anthropologists, international relations, and geographers, and have worked in mining or oil and gas companies in various locations,

[6] ICMM, IPIECA, Community Insights Group, Social Performance Forum, SIA Hub, International Association for Impact Assessment.

primarily in countries from the Global South (Table 1). We also achieved greater diversity by interviewing individuals who have worked at different levels within their companies and in various departments, such as Health and Safety, Environmental Protection, External Affairs, and Human Resources.

Interviews were held online and we moved from general questions (e.g. can you please tell me about your role in the organisation?) to more specific questions aimed at revealing the links between their motivations, challenges, and CCE practices. When needed, the first author also shared some of their professional experiences when working in the hydrocarbons sector in Mexico (Fujii, 2018). Sharing professional anecdotes allowed us to remain close to practitioners' experiences, show empathy, and ask for clarification. Conversations varied in duration (71 mins average), all of them were video-recorded and manually transcribed in their original language (English or Spanish).

### 6.5.Data Analysis

Following a constructivist, abductive, and interpretivist Grounded Theory Approach (Bryant & Charmaz, 2019; Charmaz, 2014), the first author analysed primary data while conducting interviews with research participants. This approach opened possibilities to steer the conversations with practitioners towards those data segments that generated more curiosity at early data collection stages. For instance, as one of the memos that the first author drafted, initial semi-structured interviews exhibited the centrality of tensions in the practitioner's experiences.

> "After having conversations with them, what struck me as intriguing is how Corporate Community Engagement (CCE) kicks off with a challenge. Practitioners often recount dealing with multiple corporate issues, despite working from remote locations, while their Head Offices are situated comfortably somewhere else in the world." (Memo titled: Intriguing notes).r

To facilitate the constant comparison method in which new data is compared to earlier incidents iteratively (O'Reilly et al., 2012), the first author created a dataset of transcriptions, videos, visualisations, and memos in NVIVO 12. To remain as close and receptive as possible, the first author watched the video recordings while coding their transcripts using open and selective codes (Saldaña, 2015). Open codes were important to obtain a detailed but simple perspective that sticks closely to fragments of the data (Charmaz, 2014). At this point, a group of open codes were already signalling some tensional experiences for CCE practitioners.

Examples of open codes signalling them are: “rock and a hard place”, “tyranny of emergency”, and “corporate resistance.

At the beginning of this journey, we expected practitioners to identify tensions according to the instrumental and normative motivations involved in CCE. However, as a result of simultaneous data collection and analysis, we adapted the coding approach to focus on a more conceptual idea about the mechanisms practitioners use to navigate these tensions. Selective coding helped facilitate a more conceptual approach (Saldaña, 2015), but before taking this path, the first author worked on reducing the number of open codes from 754 codes to 318. Examples of dismissed codes were those primarily summarising but not analysing data and those codes reflecting meaning far from the research question. Through focused coding, the first author compared practitioner’s experiences, in particular, those related to: a) motivations to engage, b) issues faced when engaging, c) roles that practitioners perceive when engaging.

After grouping open codes within selective codes, the first author generated a series of memos reflecting on how practitioners told us to react to the diversity of motivations and issues involved in their work. These reflections allowed us to move away from investigating tensions towards investigating the construction of roles to navigate the interactions between firms and local communities. Further comparison and focused coding grouped similar engagement practices using theoretical codes. Theoretical codes assisted us in specifying possible relationships, boundaries, similarities, and differences between several data incidents (Charmaz, 2014; O’Reilly et al., 2012). This task led us to streamline six initial roles that were challenged during team meetings to differentiate them clearly. After three research team meetings, we specified four types of roles a) negotiator, b) interpreter, c) mediator, d) transformer. Table 2 presents the resulting data structure, which is presented in more detail in the next findings section.

Table 10 Data Structure

| Example of Open Codes | Selective Codes | Theoretical Coding |
|---|---|---|
| Social Licence to Operate, Secure investment, Terminate conflict, Protect reputation Comply with law, Transactional, Walk away, Control, Company Benefits, Engagement Fatigue, Throw money, Stakeholder requirements, Agreements, Business case, Instrumental, Fences, Imposition, Misinformation, Separated from, Red flags | Defending profitability<br><br>Controlling community expectations | **Negotiator** |
| Community resistance, Understand needs Stablish bounds, Manage risks, Reactive approach, Ensures connections, Reporting, Misconnection, Strategic communication, Control expectation, Neutral, Camouflaging, Process do not flow. | Bridging actors with proximity<br><br>Fabricating neutrality | **Mediator** |
| Influence opinions, Social awareness, Local awareness, Early engagement, Comprehensive understanding, Give time, Translation, Step back, Accommodating, Create space, Flexibility, Understand corporate thinking, Help them talk, Power of the numbers, Bridge perceptions. | Facilitating knowledge<br><br>Expanding mind-sets | **Interpreter** |
| Ask for forgiveness Mutual dependency, Develop relationships, Changing bad practices, Considering people's voices, Create change, Trusting relationship, Empathy, Proactive approach, Bottom up, Two-way, Social embeddedness, Sharing power, Humble, Closing loop, Partnerships, Tailor engagement. | Involving marginal voices<br><br>Broadening the engagement function | **Transformer** |

## 6.6.Findings

In answer to the research question, how do CCE practitioners navigate the tensions they experience? Our findings revealed that as practitioners are exposed to antagonism between companies and communities, they attempt to navigate it by taking on a combination of multifaceted governance roles that help them to generate and maintain both corporate and community connections.

Extending beyond the typical approach that understands CSR practitioners as risk absorbers and regulatory enactors (Brès & Gond, 2014; Dougherty, 2019), our study revealed that by taking the governance roles of negotiator, mediator, interpreter, and transformer, practitioners gained more fluidity to build up trust among business and community. We start by describing the practices identified in the negotiator and mediator role, and then we introduce the interpreter and transformer roles with the practices that constitute them. Although we will distinguish these roles in more depth in the last section of the paper, we introduce now an overall difference.

Firstly, our findings suggest that practitioners adopting the roles of negotiators and mediators engage with community members with the intention of resolving conflicts, emphasizing a short-term focus. Negotiators and mediators address a range of issues, including community protests, roadblocks, acts of sabotage, and in more extreme cases, incidents involving personal hostage situations. Through a competitive approach, practitioners seek to obtain an advantage against community members. Consequently, they engage with local communities in negotiations and mediations. The urgency of resolving conflicts is due to the fact that prolonged conflicts present a significant risk to the profitability of the business.

In contrast, the findings exhibit practitioners adopting the roles of interpreters and transformers. In these roles practitioners prioritise a complementary approach that takes into account a longer-term perspective. These roles allow CCE practitioners to navigate tensions by exploring diverse perspectives, enabling them to comprehend conflicting viewpoints. Interpreters and transformers address a range of issues, such as a limited comprehension of community engagement's function, biased interpretations of social impact, and the transformation of corporate practices that dismiss community members. Through their roles as interpreter and transformer, these practitioners aim to obtain a more inclusive comprehension of community engagement.

The governance roles of negotiator, mediator, interpreter, and transformer are not official or designated organisational roles established by corporations or taught in training programs. On the contrary, we found they are temporary positions practitioners take to better navigate their struggles in creating governance spheres between private organisations and local communities.

> I like to get my hands dirty. So, I like to get my hands in the middle of conflict and partnership, because both of them require a lot of work, and I´m just passionate about people (Practitioner ALM).

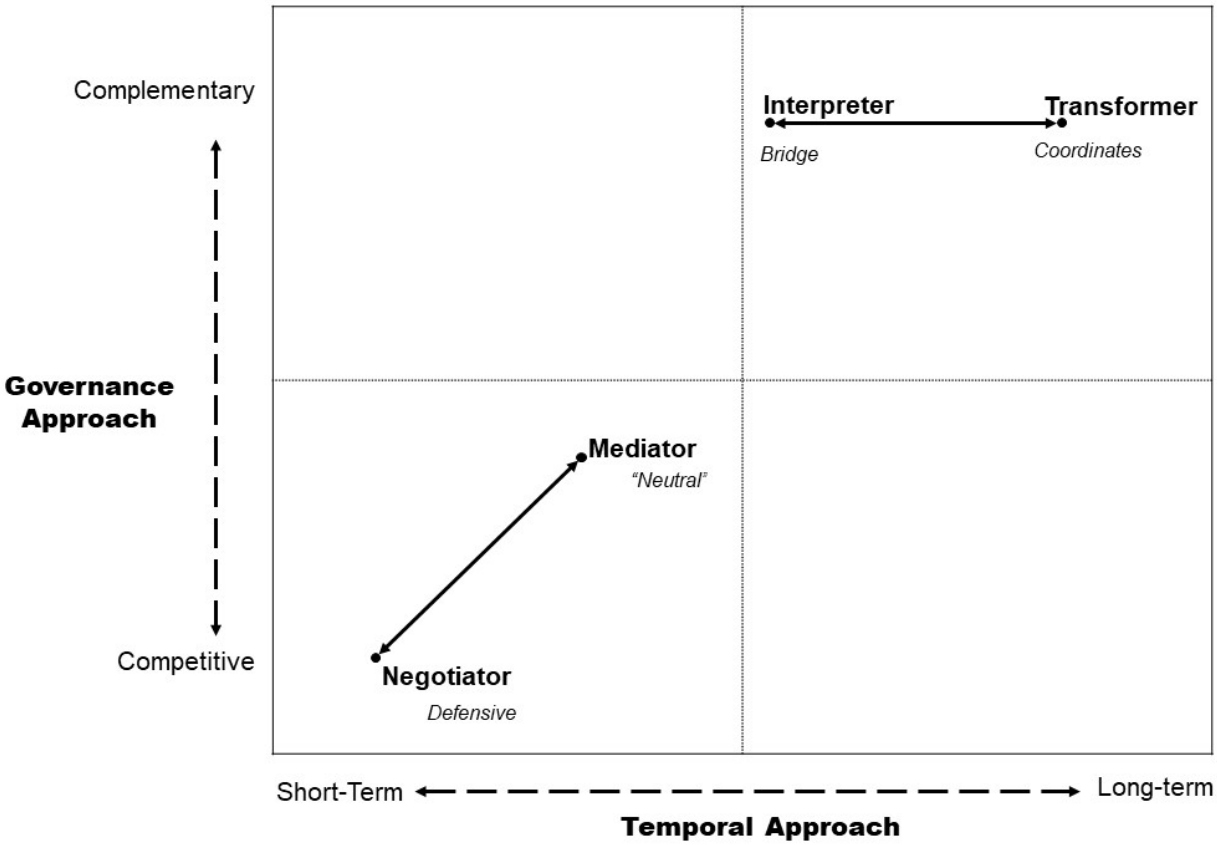
> Our role is to be very ambidextrous; it is a real core competency and a driver for many of us. We enjoy working in this space, having to grapple with all of these tensions. That bigger purpose is driving me, it's actually exciting and interesting" (Practitioner EO).

### 6.6.1. Negotiator role

> The private sector do not understand the need for engagement until is already late. They react to conflict once that it starts. There are many companies anticipating confrontation, and they come to develop the project just expecting to pay some amount for the controversies to go down (Practitioner AC).

In this first position, illustrated in the left bottom side of Figure 1, practitioners took on a negotiator role. At this role, they deal with different pressures, including the corporate urgency to quickly and efficiently resolve the corporate-community conflict. As highlighted in the previous quote, corporations often internalise conflict into their budgeted costs, pushing practitioners to function as relief valves by negotiating the de-escalation of these conflicts.

Figure 11 Matrix of CCE Governance Roles




When doing so, practitioners might follow two specific practices: defending corporate profitability and controlling community expectations. We briefly describe each of these practices providing quotes for further illustration.

#### 6.6.1.1. Defending Profitability with Efficiency

During the exploration, production, or closure stages of extractive industry operations, practitioners are hired to rapidly reach agreements with community members. This is due to the fact that when companies start community engagement, they already have pre-existent contractual commitments. We talked to practitioners who have been involved in negotiations related to different topics such as resettlement processes, and disputes, and environmental compensations. Despite their diversified expertise, we found that they all share a sense of frustration because their negotiation processes tend to develop under time and financial constraints, or as a practitioner framed it “when none other alternative is left”.

> Indigenous say -this is our territory- Do you want to take this territory? You have to do an agreement with us. There is no choice. The company will have to make a written agreement, because if the community is well organised, they want to make sure things are written (Practitioner SB).

> Addressing conflicts is time consuming. The ideal situation (for the company) would be for the conflict to be resolved in a few days. I accompanied a conflict between native communities in the Amazon and oil companies. There was a certain deadlock because of very high demands (Practitioner JA).

In meeting the corporate expectation of resolving conflicts as efficient as possible, negotiators employ specific tools that assist them to defend business profitability. The following quotes illustrate the use of due diligence studies and stakeholder mapping techniques. Practitioners employ them as strategic tools for prioritizing the most pressing community demands and addressing the issues that are more likely to facilitate the resolution of conflicts between the corporation and the community.

> Due diligence is a sort of study that pretty much is about identifying potential red flags, and red flags means like show stopper, maybe a community group is against the project, and then you would suggest and approach to develop a closer relation with them (Practitioner AC).

> I follow a map to identify actors, depending on the methodology, but it always says that those in the upper right quadrant are the ones I have to relate to more permanently (Practitioner MH).

Although certain CCE practitioners, taking on the role of negotiators, may have the capacity to empathise with the community's viewpoint, this ability typically emerges when the business's profitability is not under threat. We illustrate this with a practitioner's quote, where they tell a story of a mining company that decided to alter a pipeline design. However, this adjustment was made due to an alignment between community demands and business rationales, rather than solely because the company followed community concerns and chose to act accordingly.

> The original proposal was that minerals would be would be trucked down […] but it would need a road through a UNESCO site. The other one was a pipeline. When the environmental impact study was presented, the proposal was to use trucks, but then the mine changed its mind and decided to go with the pipeline. There were actually some economic reasons why the pipeline was a better option […] but that created the impression that we would listen (to the community) and take action as a result. (Practitioner PW).

As expected, negotiators defend business profitability due to financial incentives such as salaries and potential prospects for future employability. However, we also identified that practitioners behave defensively driven by the influence of strong corporate cultures, compelling them to align with the company's interests. The following quote illustrates an internal struggle experienced by a practitioner. During our conversation with them, we asked the following question: “I wonder, from the corporate side, which were the results they were expecting from you?” They replied sharing the instruction given by the general manager:

> -Get those people moved out of there, so we can get this project going-. I would have all sorts of conversations with different people within the mining company. Subcontractors, the company people that were on site. People were like… -why do we need you there? - Why cannot we just use the bulldozer? People will move when they see a bulldozer (Practitioner EF).

While negotiators prioritize business profitability due to financial incentives and corporate culture alignment, they also work defensively to filter community demands and shield the company from external actors. For instance, practitioners employ tactics like re-labelling roles to mitigate negative connotations, and government representatives intervene to convince communities of the firm's environmental efforts.

> I will no longer call them community relations officers, but territorial managers. We have 15 plants that were previously referred to as critical plants, but for communication purposes, I have changed the name because if you call them critical plants, it has a negative connotation. Someone might think that a lot of things happen there and that attacking that plant could disrupt something. For us, it is neither one nor the other, but a plant where we will have a high level of territorial management (Practitioner MH).

> Community members were insisting that after the installation of a couple of piles there has been more environmental pollution. We had to ask government representatives to talk to community leaders so they could change their mind. It took a while, but they realised their idea was wrong. Simultaneously, the company offered some local projects and other temporal jobs that helped them improve their community (Practitioner JA).

As such, practitioners assume the role of negotiator driven by the necessity to rapidly and effectively address conflicts within the community. This role is motivated by both personal and corporate economic interests, aiming to safeguard business profitability. In this context, practitioners employ specific tools to defend business profitability, focusing on identifying the most urgent community demands that most likely will have a positive impact for the business environment.

#### 6.6.1.2. Controlling Community Expectations

During our data analysis, we also found that practitioners often adopt a negotiator role as a result of their need to command and control community expectations. This task is essential for maintaining a stable business environment, which is particularly relevant for the uncertainty often experienced in extractive projects. The following quote illustrates a practitioner taking on a parental role to dissuade communities from adopting unrealistic expectations. These expectations could arise from third parties or even their own leaders:

> Within a community, we regularly have bad people who generate huge expectations and are simply not happy with anything. In an assembly, you are not always going to have one hundred percent support, but at least two thirds of the attendees is enough to have an agreement. However, regardless of the agreements we sign, the demands on the company never stop. I feel that there is no limit for them. That is why for me it is very important to inform, to educate, because even if not all, many pull for their own side.

From this quote, it is possible to see that if practitioners do not control community expectations precisely and timely, corporations fear that their negotiating costs will rise and end up threatening business profitability. The next quotes detail the experience of two practitioners. In the first one, we identified a practitioner struggling with this idea of controlling communities' demands, whereas the second one seems to have conformed to this "controlling" task.

> Internally, within the firm is difficult because many people do not see the reason why. They think community engagement is going to cause controversy. Why not we build it without too much noise? Let's call people until everything is ready because it will raise expectations (Practitioner AC).

> I worked in mining operations for two years, it is a more structured work because the land has already been negotiated and the focus is on preventing the community's expectations from growing too much (Practitioner EA).

In summary, practitioners take on the role of negotiator driven by the urgency to put an end to conflicts between business and the community. This role involves two overarching practices. The first practice revolves around safeguarding business profitability, while the second practice centres on managing and controlling community expectations to ensure a harmonious business environment. In the next section, we discuss the mediator role in which practitioners also engage in a competitive dynamics with local communities.

### 6.6.2. Mediator Role

> How did you feel about being somehow between the company and the community? As a mediator, of course. It is definitely talking things clearly. I cannot go and create expectations in the community. If it can be done, then it can be done. If the company cannot, then say so too. This has allowed me to have credibility on both sides (Practitioner EA).

In the second position, illustrated in the bottom left side of Figure 1, practitioners take on a mediator role. At this position, similarly to the negotiator, they aim to put an end to the corporate-community conflict, however, rather than overtly protecting business profitability, practitioners take a more cautious approach. In contrast to the negotiator role, mediators aim to reconcile conflicting parties, but acknowledging less influence in the determination or redistribution of CCE outputs.

The mediator role, on the contrary to the negotiator role, has a less significant involvement in corporate decision-making. Mediators recognised that they had little power over certain corporate decisions. Despite being sympathetic to community issues, they admitted their inability to manage them. For example, when we asked a practitioner about previous land compensations to the community, the practitioner replied:

> That is a historical and very difficult issue to remove. It has its pros and cons. I am not in favour of any of them. I try to see it as black and white as possible so that I can help the company but I am also empathetic with communities (Practitioner AM).

As our initial quote suggests, mediators aim to develop trust on both sides of the pole and to do so, we found, they follow two specific practices: bridging actors with spatial proximity and fabricating neutrality. In the following subsections, we briefly describe each of them adding quotes for further illustration.

#### 6.6.2.1. Bridging Actors with Proximity

One of our interviewees described their professional duty as “bringing all the different players together for a shared benefit” (Practitioner JF). However, to do so, they have to bridge distanced actors who have fallen apart “due to mistrust, misinformation, resentment" (Practitioner HV).

Filling a distance gap is not an easy task when there is a “messy, horrible, and difficult” (Practitioner EO) environment in which mediators have to operate. Thus, it is key for them to

blur organisational boundaries, by “sitting down, listening, talking” (Practitioner JM). In order to mediate at this lack of connection, practitioners employ both material and psychological bridging techniques.

Our data revealed cases of practitioners performing psychological linking tasks, for example, by practicing empathy and building personal friendships within affected community groups. By doing so, mediators aimed to connect the company with the community. They attempted to reduce the bottlenecks that hinder the relationship by facilitating a more constant flow of information

> Empathy is achieved by knowing every oil well, neighbour, leader, and by having a direct personal friendship. When you are from here, your house is a block away from a well, you know that there is noise, smells, and it generates a positive expectation, where not everything is complaints. They also receive you in good terms (Practitioner AM).

In our data, we also found examples of material bridging techniques. This is the case of Community Liaison Officers (CLO). They are firm’s employees who move their residency within the communities. They do so to gain a better understanding about the corporate-community conflict. In the next quote, one practitioner discusses with us the role of CLO, who in his opinion should be a person who also comes from the community in order to have a better cross cultural boundary work.

> Community Liaison Officers are the ones who really do the dialogue with community members on a daily basis. They will be based near the project operations and they will be doing this dialogue. What I am suggesting is that they should be more and more really from the Community. They should be employed and trained, so that you have a community person inside the project team. (Practitioner PH).

However, bridging actors is not a free risk function. Due to mediator’s minimal influence in corporate decision-making, they are consequently trapped at very difficult scenarios. For example, in the following quote practitioner PR reflected with us about a life-threatening event she experienced. In her anecdote, she relates how her “communication enabler function” was misused as cannon fodder to mediate between hostile antagonisms.

> It was a complete breakdown. When I got there, I managed to get along with many ejidatarios (label given to communal landholders in Mexico) but then the company messed up again, and they sent me back because I already had a certain bond, but this time, leaders were armed and they told me, "You work for them”. I calmed things down but that was quite difficult (Practitioner PR).

As such, practitioners assume the role of mediator driven by the necessity to rapidly and effectively address conflicts within the community. This role is motivated by both personal and corporate economic interests, aiming to safeguard business profitability. In this context, practitioners employ specific tools to defend business profitability, focusing on identifying the most urgent community demands that most likely will have a positive impact for the business environment.

#### 6.6.2.2. Fabricating Neutrality

Contrary to the negotiator role, CCE mediators employed a less defensive approach when engaging with communities. They even fabricated the idea of operating as neutral agents or as one practitioner put it: "a trustworthy actor that is not clearly positioned to one side to another" (Practitioner PA). In relation to this, practitioner KV discussed with us her notion of corporate diplomacy. In a second quote, practitioner AC narrated a similar idea, but using the term "third party". Both practitioners were describing their responsibility to empathise strategically with the concerns of different disputants.

> Sometimes we were working with the government and there were rebels fighting it, and two months later, those rebels were in the same tax office where we had to pay our taxes. You can do stuff as a company. Some diplomacy approaches trying to stay neutral. You offer help building peace, offering meeting rooms where people can stay overnight, and talk (Practitioner KV).

> As an external third party, you have to deal with many grievances that you are not responsible. Many people would say -hey I am not responsible- But if you respond -I understand and that has been unfair- this creates trust. However, it also puts a lot of weight in your shoulders and you need to deal with this emotional charge (Practitioner AC).

Another example of mediators fabricating neutrality is their promotion of technical data. Both to the company or the community, mediators treat themselves as data collectors and strategy designers. For example, while talking about her daily duties, one of our participants told us "we would provide statistical data, and we would then turn that into an engagement strategy to the client for approval" (Practitioner EM).

However, because mediators are paid by the company, our data also showed instances where practitioners struggled for demonstrating or believing in their neutrality. The previous participant mentioned to us in the same interview: "even though we tailor our approach, (clients) may come back to us and ask to cut things out or down" (Practitioner EM). Similarly,

but from the view of another practitioner, she said: "in the end you have to be accountable to the company" (Practitioner PR).

> Well, as a consultant, I can tell you that everyone has an agenda, so I do not think we can deny that. I think it is a bit naive to think that we are doing research and being objective when in reality, we are subjects. That is where I differ a bit. You try to be objective, but in the end, things affect you (Practitioner PR).

To sum up, by the mediator role what is meant is practitioners working to put an end to the conflict, fabricating an image of neutrality in order to bridge distanced players together.

### 6.6.3. Interpreter Role

> It is very important to spell out the business case. Engineers really need numbers. Why should we maybe allow this community engagement team to go on a very expensive trip to someone's funeral? Because otherwise, I will not be allowed into community meetings. It requires the team's social performance to speak the language of the boards (Practitioner LH).

In the third governance position, illustrated in the right side of Figure 1, practitioners took on an interpreter role. At this position, similarly to the mediator role, they aimed to enhance engagement communication. However, instead of linking actors by the fabrication of neutrality, interpreters acknowledged conflict and fostered a more collaborative environment.

As our initial quote from this section suggests, interpreters aim to improve engagement communication by following two specific practices: facilitating knowledge and expanding mind-sets.

#### 6.6.3.1. Facilitating Knowledge

In our conversations with practitioners, they described themselves as knowledge facilitators working to create a new corporate-community understanding. Thus, in contrast to the negotiator role, interpreters did not take defensive approaches. On the contrary, they focus on expanding the coding schemes that created in the first place business and communities' conflicts.

When asking one practitioner about her professional driver, she responded to us: “my goal is to get to the bottom of what people want or what their annoyance is, so I can give a better

interpretation in order to walk together" (practitioner EA). Finding the underlying cause, as the practitioner framed it, requires interpretative work in order to transfer information that can facilitate knowledge to both the company and the community.

Thus, we identified in our data that interpreters, in contrast to negotiators, perform internal and external knowledge facilitation. In particular, facilitating knowledge to the community is key when they are not aware of the corporate impacts that will come upfront. In the words of one practitioner, he explained to us: "It's very hard for a community to understand what the impact of a company is going to be. Therefore, that obstacle still needs to be addressed by the company. You cannot expect the community to understand what questions they need to ask" (Practitioner LZ).

Similarly, interpreters must facilitate knowledge to the company. In particular, when business are not aware of the local practices, traditions, and even regional history. To do so, interpreters often have to challenge preconceived corporate notions. Thus, different to mediators, interpreters seek to influence corporate decisions actively. Illustrating this point, practitioner CG shared a case in which a mining company had a poor understanding of the community context, and she had to identify possible mismatches and explain to them how to intervene in such a specific local context.

> A foreign company has policies that cause conflict when implemented in other locations. In addition, these companies prefer to hire foreigners who have no knowledge of the context. Entering Colombia is complicated due to the armed conflict. There are areas where intervention is possible, while others are not. The company wanted to start prospecting for gold. However, it turned out that a massacre took place in this community more than 25 years ago. So, they must be careful when discussing gold (Practitioner CG).

#### 6.6.3.2. Expanding Corporate and Community Mind-sets

Along with the identification of information gaps and the carrying of knowledge, interpreters also pushed for the expansion of both corporate and community mind-sets. In their views, this expansion is key to clear common grounds that favour more collaborative initiatives.

The next quote illustrates a practitioner pushing to change communities' interpretation about negative corporate impacts. He does so in an attempt to convince farmers that mining impacts are not as different to the environmental impacts they also make. By voicing the phrase "this

is my job too", practitioner AR attempts to find equivalent reasons between corporate and community economic models.

> A community, with or without mine, has environmental impacts. Local farmers use many chemicals too, and they also waste a lot of water, but they do not call that environmental impact. When I engage with communities, I also like to use the context that they know best. I typically ask them; -Do you fire the forest to prepare for the next harvest? –they say yes. Then, I tell them, well…we (the miners) also have to open this path to prevent rocks from rolling down the hill, this is my job too (emphasis added), and I am going to do it as safely as I can (Practitioner AR).

Interpreters act different to mediators because, in contrast to their neutral work, they push for the expansion of corporate mind-sets. In the following quotes, we share examples of practitioners aiming to overlap the community vision into the corporate world. The first quote shows a practitioner interpreting for the company the importance of accommodating communities' traditions into the corporate culture.

> I remember an employee whose wife died, but we never knew that mourning in that Community lasts three days, so when the worker returned they had already fired him. So we had to do special management and accommodate that cultural aspect (Practitioner AR)

The next quote also illustrate examples of interpretative practices aiming to expand corporate mind-sets. In particular, these quotes exhibit different practitioners encouraging companies to rethink their understandings about social impacts. They do so because as practitioner SB told us: "they minimize social risk because it is intangible". Thus, as practitioner JM shared to us "we are often arguing with engineers, who say, -if you cannot quantify it, it does not count-. We are always arguing that if people perceive something, that is just as real as if it is backed by a lot of data".

> To make people understand that impact assessment and community development go separately. If your problem is that 100 trailers destroyed the highway, and then you fixed it, then that is apart from community development. It is a remediation measure for an impact that you already made (Practitioner AM).

> Railway tracks were very close to the community, and they were concerned because of the vibration on their walls. This type of impact is often dismissed in the company, engineer say –come on, nothing happens- Unfortunately, the perceived impacts are not taken much into account (Practitioner JM).

To sum up, by the interpreter role what is meant is practitioners attempting to live with the conflict but pushing for the expansion of both corporate and community mind-sets and the facilitation of knowledge.

### 6.6.4. Transformer Role

> Is changing the way we make decisions. A business case will no longer be just about whether a project stacks up financially, but also about what it is going to do for people's wellbeing. You have to engage at a very early stage, it should be a conversation between communities about what do they want, what is their vision for the next generation. Because some of these projects are generational projects, they affect the locality for many years.

In the fourth governance position, illustrated in the top right side of Figure 1, practitioners took on a transformer role. At this position, similarly to the interpreter role, they aimed to foster a more collaborative environment. However, instead of focusing only on the communication aspect, they aspired to shape a more social justice environment in a longer-term perspective.

Practitioners who embodied the transformer role did not attempt to put an end to the conflict, rather they attempted to acknowledge the contestation but addressing it with reflectivity and enabling a "much bigger focus" (Practitioner AA). In addition, transformers also attempted to broad the engagement function, often sharing it with other colleagues from their company, who not necessarily work in the community engagement department.

As our initial quote from this section suggests, transformers aim to change how business make decisions following two specific practices: broadening the community engagement function and involving marginal voices.

#### 6.6.4.1. Broadening the Engagement Function

Practitioners who embodied the transformer role said to have a “genuine interest in people, in what they have to say and how they perceive things” (Practitioner JM). Thus, their motivation to engage is wider than only a box-ticking exercise. As practitioner PH shared with us: “in my opinion, engagement should be about meaningful dialogue, in a let's work together approach […] whereas for others it is just about complying with the requirements of the law and not go one inch further” (Practitioner PH).

From our data, we identified that transformers attempted to expand the engagement function leaving behind short-term and paternalistic aspects. For example, practitioners often criticised how business and companies tend to have a much-reduced notion of the community engagement benefits. On the one hand, practitioners said that firms when "pretending to be good" (Practitioner AA) like to "play to be the father government" (Practitioner JC). On the other hand, they also said that communities, following up these paternalistic benefits, "perceive the company as a blank check or a Santa Claus who must solve all their problems" (Practitioner EA).

To widen these reduced notions about community engagement benefits, practitioners introduced ideas such as social awareness. This idea implies going beyond short-term benefits and instead produce a much better strengthening of community skills that can be used in the long term. This is because, in the words of one practitioner, "money doesn't last long" (Practitioner JA).

> We have identified that the work must be with the people. In the past, the approach was on constructing projects, we were looking for communities who lacked basic services such as roads or public buildings. However, the last 10 years have allowed us to have a different perspective of how to see the community, how to improve resources. We are no longer working so much on assistentialist issues, but rather on focused projects that allows the community to become sustainable (Practitioner VC).

The transformer role is different to the negotiator or mediator role because it does not adopt defensive nor neutral behaviours. In contrast, transformers seek to alter how firms perceive and intervene in communities. The next quotes illustrate examples of practitioners attempting to transform, for example, how corporations approach to social risks. Practitioners talked about the introduction of systems that produce social and economic values.

> Why do "smart companies" -that say social risk is a number one risk- are still not investing in the systems to mitigate that risk? Because they do not see the link between their own activities and risk exposure. They always think it is someone else's problem. What we need to do (CCE practitioners) is to be much more systematic in demonstrating the predictability of that social risk and we need to put a lot of systems in place to make that happen (Practitioner LZ).

> I prefer to call it social embeddedness. This it when the firm invests with the objective of returning value to its value chain. For example, if they invest in making farmers produce better milk, their ability to purchase quality milk for the workforce increases. Since not all milk is bought by the company, the farmer sells it with more value, the company benefits and the market benefits (Practitioner AR).

Finally, in our data we also found instances of practitioners challenging the current engagement function. They instead suggest taking it to more employees working for other departments. Following the idea, practitioner AR told us: “sometimes they just assign the engagement task to a department. They are the ones in charge of talking to the community, making them happy, letting us work”. Having a similar opinion, practitioner LW told us “engagement gets confused with communications, public relations and spreading and disclosing information”. In contrast, they suggest broadening this responsibility across the whole organisation. In the following quote, we share the experience of practitioner JC about it:

> The Social Impact workgroup had members from the drilling, environmental, administrative, and financial areas. We sat down to reflect on how we work with communities. That opened our eyes and through the employees, we generated proposals that could be long-term projects with a focus on social responsibility and human rights, rather than just a "hit and run" approach (Practitioner JC).

#### 6.6.4.2. Involving Marginal Voices

In our interviews, we discovered that transformers expressed a desire to empower specific voices within the community by granting them greater agency. Acknowledging the existence of diversity within communities, transformers seemed to execute more reflexivity than in other roles and voiced to us their concern for disrupting stablished ways of conducting engagement. “I always tell to the firm when people are not heard, but companies want the leaders” (Practitioner PR).

Acknowledging the repetition of engagement mistakes, they shared with us “the biggest failures I have seen is because firms have not taken into account social aspects”. Transformers talked about adjusting engagement to the needs of the most marginal voices. They mentioned doing so with the purpose of implementing longer-term changes in the corporate decision-making. One practitioner said:

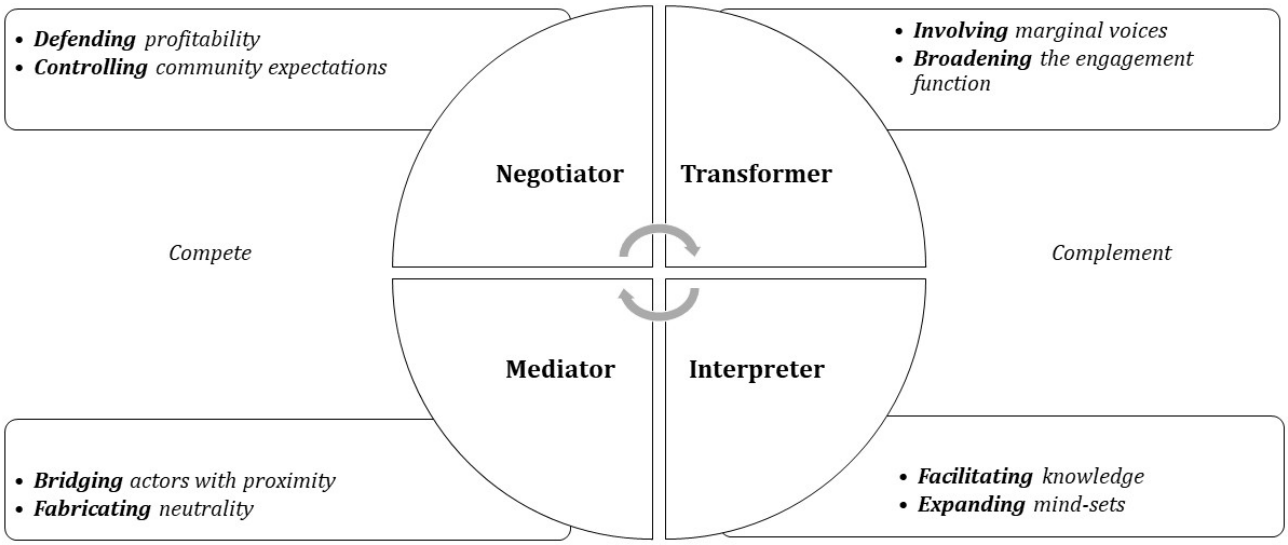
> Once you integrate not just the suggestion but also the community, then you have a very successful project, but you need to develop it with the nearby community as your equal, peer. Your engagement needs to be respectful. That is how you change your engagement, but you are not basing that in the perception of power because you never know. (Practitioner AC).

Another practitioner shared:

> When a conflict arises, the women are blocking the road. Men demand, but do not show their faces. The women are the ones who could convey what our goal is. My work focused on empowering them. Managers questioned me, why are you giving power to them if they can use it against us. When a woman has more knowledge, she cannot be dominated. So, this empowerment served me well because despite their frustration, they could not attack me. Because there is ethics, friendship, they told me, engineer...let us try to change this (Practitioner EA).

To sum up, CCE practitioners took on the role of transformers attempting to address the corporate-community conflict using complementary approaches to broad the engagement function and involve marginal voices.

Figure 12 Practices within CCE Governance Roles




## 6.7.Discussion, Implications and Conclusions

This paper addressed the research question: How do CCE practitioners navigate the tensions they experience? Through the study of CCE experiences, we found four governance roles that practitioners adopt as a dynamic repertoire to navigate the struggles of reconciling corporate and community antagonisms. In doing so, our analysis integrates previously separate pieces of literature. Specifically, by combining the literature on CSR and governance at a micro and local level of analysis, our findings enable us to expand the scope of current micro-CSR research by bringing the voices of those practitioners responsible for engaging with affected stakeholders. Furthermore, our findings also contribute to the governance literature by providing a behavioural perspective to the formation of governance spheres.

### 6.7.1. Implications for Micro-CSR literature: Involving Frontline Practitioners

Although micro-CSR researchers have enriched our understanding of the distinct type of tensions and mechanisms that practitioners perform to sell CSR policies into their organisational domain, nevertheless, this literature still presents some gaps as it has not taken into account the experiences of practitioners engaging at the frontline with local communities.

With our study, we contribute to addressing this gap by broadening the political role of business in micro-CSR research by amplifying the voices of those who sit at cross-boundary and semi-periphery corporate locations. Moreover, through analysing engagement practices, we advance an intellectual activist agenda in CCE because we exemplify the agency of practitioners to perform a fluid repertoire of governance roles according to the contexts they experience.

In our empirical setting, CCE practitioners were willing to go beyond a regulatory enactor position and adopt a more transformational governance role. This role notably emerged when practitioners challenged corporate control over community members by pointing out the significance of developing a more careful and longer-term relationship with them. However, contrary to the transformer role, our case also exemplified the emergence of a negotiator role. This role exemplifies the business case and short-term approach that defends instrumental stakeholder engagement and tends to dismiss the underlying causes of corporate-community antagonism.

### 6.7.2. Implications for Governance Literature:

Previous governance studies have discussed that private and public organisations shape governance spheres to address societal problems (Cashore et al., 2021). Although this concept has been used to study the political space in some global south empirical contexts (Ponte et al., 2021), the current literature presents some gaps as it has yet to move below institutional and organisational levels.

Our study aims to address this research gap by examining the formation of governance spheres between private companies and local communities, looking at the practices of CSR employees. Our findings suggest that when examining these interactions from a micro and local perspective, simplistic notions about collaboration and competition are inappropriate to give justice to the complex environment in which practitioners must develop these

governance spheres. CCE are not simply corporate or community advocates. Instead, they are adopters of a fluid set of governance roles that help them build complex interactions.

This paper contributes to the governance literature by offering new insights on how competitive and complementary practices operate simultaneously at micro governance spheres. For example, we observed instances of competitive practices when practitioners take on the roles of negotiator and mediator. In these situations, the urgency to resolve conflicts make practitioners to compete for the most efficient outputs. In contrast, when practitioners took on the roles of interpreters or transformers, we observed complementary governance practices. Interpreters focused on improving communication and facilitating knowledge exchange, while transformers aimed to empower local communities and promote individual autonomy within local communities.

To conclude, in this paper, we attempt to provide a more nuanced view into the challenges and roles by asking the research question: how do CCE practitioners navigate the tensions they experience? Our findings provide the basis for contributing to a better understanding of the multifaceted roles that CSR practitioners experience when shaping governance spheres at a micro and local level. By exploring the practices of consultants and managers who engage with affected local communities, we found that competitive and complementary practices operate simultaneously at micro governance sphere.

# 7. DISCUSSION

This dissertation undertakes an integrative exploration of the CCE phenomenon implemented by extractive industries. It examines this phenomenon from two distinct levels of analysis: the meso-organisational level, which affects the firm, and the micro-individual level, which shapes the experiences of CCE practitioners. By taking these two interrelated perspectives, this dissertation investigates the different organisational approaches, individual challenges, and roles taken by frontline practitioners when navigating and developing relationships between mining, oil & gas corporations, and the local communities where they operate.

In Chapter Two, the literature review on CSR (including PCSR, agonistic PCSR, and micro-CSR), discusses the opportunities (Gibson, 2022) and limitations (Banerjee, 2018, 2021) faced by businesses in their efforts to enhance societal welfare by facilitating the incorporation of local community perspectives into corporate decision-making processes. In particular, when the views of community members can assist businesses in mitigating their negative impacts.

However, the implementation of a business case in CCE has driven CCE practitioners towards interventions more focused on achieving consensus, instead of interventions that genuinely understand and address the concerns of affected community members (Maher, 2019b; Owen & Kemp, 2017). While the emphasis on consensus has enlightened the business case for CCE -an approach focused on achieving a SLO by aligning the expectations of community members with business imperatives- it has, nevertheless, obscured a deeper examination of the organisational and individual approaches, challenges, and mechanisms that CCE practitioners must balance when navigating and developing relationships between businesses with local communities.

To address this research problem, this dissertation explores how CCE manifests at organisational and individual levels of analysis, and contributes to previous CSR and CCE literature shedding light on the organisational worldviews, tensions, and governance roles faced by practitioners in their community interventions.

In Paper One: Chapter Four, this dissertation uncovers the different CSR (Garriga & Melé, 2004; Secchi, 2007) and stakeholder engagement approaches that influence the adoption of transactional, transitional, and transformational CCE strategies (Bowen et al., 2010; Delannon et al., 2016). This chapter specifically underscores that companies aiming to progress along the CCE continuum, should carefully balance their utilitarian, managerial, and relational approaches to interpret their social responsibilities. Through a series of three propositions, this paper argues that a company's progress along the CCE continuum is not solely determined by its actions in terms of community engagement. Equally crucial are the organisational worldviews that a company employs to interpret its social responsibilities and approaches to stakeholder engagement.

Furthermore, this chapter highlights the importance of distinguishing between instrumental, descriptive, and normative modes of engagement with local communities. By making this distinction, firms can align their business models with societal welfare goals, instead of merely aligning the expectations of community members with business imperatives, as has been extensively pursued in the business case for CCE (García-Chiang, 2018). Lastly, through deeper understanding on organisational worldviews, businesses can better identify the diverse challenges that CCE practitioners encounter at the individual level of analysis.

In Paper Two: Chapter Five, this dissertation uncovers the different tensions that CCE practitioners must navigate when attempting to reconcile business interests with community demands. The tensions explored in this Chapter, including intertemporal, rhythmical, and point of advocacy tensions, are interrelated with the contradictory CSR and stakeholder engagement approaches discussed in Paper One: Chapter Four. For example, the inconsistent application of utilitarian/instrumental and relational/normative organisational worldviews in CCE strategies gives rise to the intertemporal tensions that practitioners need to grapple when engaging with local communities.

Moreover, this paper underscores the importance of adopting an agonistic approach to PCSR (Dawkins, 2021a, 2021b) as opposed to the deliberative PCSR perspective for addressing these tensions (Scherer & Palazzo, 2007; Scherer et al., 2016). This is because the agonistic approach allows the acknowledgement of conflicting interest and values, which are fundamental for reaching a conflictual consensus (Mouffe, 2005) that allows practitioners not only to promote corporate objectives but also embrace disagreements as integral part of the CCE process.

Lastly, as the tensions discussed in Paper Two need a type of individual response, Paper Three: Chapter Six of this dissertation delves into the governance roles adopted by CCE practitioners. This Chapter categorised four governance roles: negotiator, mediator, interpreter and transformer. Balancing these roles becomes a fundamental task when navigating intertemporal, rhythmical and point of advocacy tensions. Furthermore, it also plays a crucial role in creating governance spheres where public, private, and social actors can engage in agonistic politics to address their challenges (Cashore et al., 2021; Ponte et al., 2021). For example, the negotiator role is crucial in achieving short-term and concrete business objectives. However, it can be detrimental in the formulation of a collaborative and long-term developmental agenda between businesses and community members, a task for which an interpreter is better equipped.

Table 11 Research Questions

| Paper Title | Research Question |
|---|---|
| Exploring the Continuum of Corporate Community Engagement | What approaches inform an organisation's CCE strategy? |
| Antagonism in PCSR: Exploring Tensions in Corporate Community Engagement Interventions | How do practitioners experience CCE? |
| Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Corporate Community Engagement Practitioners Adopting Governance Roles | How do CCE practitioners navigate the tensions they experience? |

To explore the contributions of this dissertation, I undertake an examination of three overarching themes that address the research problem introduced earlier (See Table 11). This examination involves looking into the findings presented in the three papers, along with a discussion of how these findings relate to previous management literature. By doing so, this dissertation takes empirical insights from the unique experiences of 51 Corporate Community Engagement (CCE) practitioners to enrich existing theories concerning CSR/stakeholder engagement, agonistic PCSR, and micro-CSR.

## 7.1.The impact of Conflicting Worldviews on Tension Navigation and Governance Sphere Formation

The three research questions addressed in the chapters of this dissertation shed light on the presence of conflict as an inherent dimension of the corporate and community relationship. While previous research in CCE has explored this dimension, for instance, suggesting

institutional mechanisms for conflict resolution (Egbon et al., 2018; Idemudia, 2009; Idemudia & Ite, 2006), few studies have previously explored the underlying and intangible organisational worldviews that can trigger conflicts between corporations and communities.

In addressing the research question formulated in Chapter Four: "What approaches inform an organisation's CCE strategy", the first paper argues that when extractive companies implement transformational CCE strategies without aligning their underlying organisational worldviews with normative approaches, it results in a negative clash between the firm's actions and its approaches of implementation. This is because instrumental and utilitarian approaches alter the intended purpose of transformational engagement strategies, ultimately hindering the effectiveness and legitimacy of the CCE function.

Consequently, in contrast to scholars like Delannon et al. (2016), who advocate for an integrative strategy within the CCE continuum (Bowen et al., 2010), the paper presented in Chapter Four argues that this integrative strategy leads to further conflict and tensions as it requires a forced combination of contradictory organisational worldviews. Therefore, over time, the implementation of an integrative strategy as proposed by Delannon et al. (2016) could result in creating negative perceptions that undermine the legitimacy of CCE's purpose and increase the sense of corporate hypocrisy, as discussed by Kougiannou and O'Meara Wallis (2020).

Extractive companies seeking to progress along the CCE continuum without adjusting their organisational worldviews trigger challenges that manifest at the individual level of analysis. In addressing the research question formulated in Chapter Five: "How do practitioners experience CCE?" Paper Two argues that CCE practitioners experience corporate and community antagonism through the emergence of various organisational tensions related to time, rhythm, and point of advocacy. By providing this answer, Paper Two identifies a set of organisational tensions triggered by the contradictory and inconsistent combination of organisational worldviews that end up affecting the daily life of CCE practitioners.

The link between Paper One and Paper Two emerges when the conflict between distinct worldviews gives rise to organisational tensions that CCE practitioners must navigate. For instance, CCE practitioners who engage with both utilitarian and relational worldviews navigate the intertemporal tension between the past and the present. A utilitarian worldview

encourages practitioners to prioritise decisions in the present, while relational worldviews incite them to acknowledge the legacy issues that community members are demanding (Secchi, 2007). Similarly, descriptive and normative worldviews also trigger point of advocacy tensions. Whereas a descriptive worldview pushes practitioners to embody a parental advocacy role, normative approaches encourage them to adopt a partner advocacy role (Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Egels-Zanden & Sandberg, 2010; Kaler, 2003). This interplay of conflicting worldviews and their impact on the emergence of tensions highlights the complexity that CCE practitioners face in their daily work.

CCE practitioners can navigate these temporal, rhythmical, and point of advocacy tensions by either prioritizing one extreme of the antagonism or by utilising more agonistic approaches to balance both sides of the contradiction. In contrast to an antagonistic approach in which the CCE practitioner might think that conflict can be resolved by eliminating one extreme of the political position (Mouffe, 2005), an agonistic approach acknowledges the legitimacy of diverse political positions. This political approach encourages political actors to engage in a continuous process of contestation with the purpose of finding temporary settlements that respect differences rather than seeking to erase them (Brand et al., 2020; Burchell & Cook, 2013; Dawkins, 2021a; Fougère & Solitander, 2020).

CCE practitioners seeking to engage in agonistic politics need to generate and maintain governance spheres in which all political actors (public, private, and social) engage in both synergetic and contentious dynamics (Cashore et al., 2021). In addressing the research question formulated in Chapter Six: How do CCE practitioners navigate the tensions they experience? Paper three argues that practitioners navigate corporate and community antagonism by adopting and balancing four governance roles. The roles of negotiator, mediator, interpreter and transformer serve practitioners as a dynamic repertoire, allowing them to engage in agonistic politics and generate and maintain governance spheres.

The concept of governance role, as defined in Chapter Six: Paper Three, relates to behaviours enacted by practitioners to facilitate the corporate-community relationship. For example, the previously discussed conflicting relationship between instrumental and relational worldviews demands that practitioners undertake an adaptive combination of roles, involving negotiation and transformation. This is similar to the analysis of Burchell and Cook (2013) on co-optation

and resistance dynamics among business and civil society actors, however, this paper delves deeper into this subject. The governance role of negotiator is well equipped to defend business profitability and control community expectations, while the role of transformers is positioned to involve marginal actors in the CCE process and to broaden the community engagement function beyond the instrumental acquisition of social licences to operate.

This balance of roles is essential for building trust within both business and community settings. As these governance roles are not rigid positions, they work as adaptable stances that practitioners take based on specific situations and the audiences they engage with. By exploring the interventions of CCE practitioners, Paper Three adds to previous PCSR studies (Brand et al., 2020; Burchell & Cook, 2013; Dawkins, 2021a; Fougère & Solitander, 2020) concluding that agonistic politics could be cultivated when competitive and complementary practices operate simultaneously at micro governance spheres (Cashore et al., 2021).

This dissertation's central theme focused on the impact of conflicting organisational worldviews on the formation of governance roles. The research discussed the inherent dimension of conflict within the CCE continuum, emphasising how CCE practitioners face a range of organisational tensions related to time, rhythm, and points of advocacy. These tensions emerge due to the inconsistent combination of organizational worldviews. To manage these tensions and maintain a level of trust in both businesses and communities, CCE practitioners must embrace a combination of collaborative and competitive governance roles. By doing so, they can generate and maintain governance spheres where political actors have the opportunity to engage and address some of their concerns and challenges.

### 7.2. Beyond the Business Case: A more Nuanced Perspective of CCE

The responses to the three research questions within this dissertation have illuminated a more nuanced understanding of the CCE function. In contrast to the business case to CCE, which views it as a method to mitigate non-technical risks and obtain a pragmatic SLO (Dare et al., 2014; Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017; Owen & Kemp, 2013; Tomlinson, 2018), this dissertation argues that CCE can encompass both acts of corporate responsibility and corporate irresponsibility.

While prior research has categorised the diversity within CCE, using various dichotomous and continuous typologies (Bowen et al., 2010; Liu et al., 2013; Voort et al., 2009), and scholars such as Dougherty (2019) and Wong and Ho (2015) have identified specific roles taken by CCE practitioners, there has been limited exploration into the multifaceted aspects that shape the CCE function. In particular, there is a gap in the understanding of which CCE actions and approaches are genuinely meaningful or pure symbolic.

Therefore, in Paper One: Chapter Four, the response to the question "What approaches inform an organisation's CCE strategy" sheds light on the multifaceted aspects affecting the CCE function. This paper has illustrated various orientations, structures, practices and organisational worldviews that align with not only the visible but also the hidden aspects of CCE. Understanding this less visible aspect within the CCE continuum is of great importance, as it carries the potential to facilitate progress along this continuum. In doing so, the paper showed that the CCE continuum goes beyond a single driving factor, encompassing a spectrum of possibilities.

In essence, the three propositions developed in Paper One emphasized that meaningful CCE necessitates more than just the superficial adoption of different engagement practices. This paper underscores the imperative of aligning organisational worldviews in order to progress along the CCE continuum (Bowen et al., 2010). For instance, companies shifting from one-way engagement practices to more inclusive two-way engagement practices (Bowen et al., 2010; Dare et al., 2014) must root their interventions in relational-based perspectives (Secchi, 2007) beyond mere increasing the frequency of their interactions (Anguelovski, 2011).

Rooting CCE in relational CSR approaches also involves the evolution from instrumental to normative stakeholder engagement, where stakeholders' intrinsic value is emphasized (Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Egels-Zanden & Sandberg, 2010; Kaler, 2003). Moreover, this shift must involve the whole organisation instead that solely the CCE department. To effectively achieve a less symbolic CCE, it is crucial that the shift in organisational worldview is widespread throughout the whole company.

Extractive companies progressing along the CCE continuum need work from practitioners responsible for navigating and developing interactions between businesses and local communities. In addressing the research question formulated in Paper Two, Chapter Five:

“How do practitioners experience CCE?” this paper argues that CCE practitioners play a multifaceted role in bridging business interests and local community’s needs. In contrast to previous studies (Dougherty, 2019; Rajak, 2011), their responsibilities go beyond merely providing gifts or facilitating compliance with regulations. They also engage in political dynamics but aim for outcomes that transcends mere consensus-building (Scherer & Palazzo, 2007; Scherer et al., 2016).

In other words, for CCE practitioners the experience of organisational tensions means the return of the political in its dimension of conflict (Mouffe, 2005). However, conducting this political work requires them to navigate organisational tensions while being conscious of the conflicting alternatives. Consequently, an agonistic approach becomes essential for them, as this framework allows them to consider the variety of competing interests coexisting in their interventions. In addition, agonistic politics also prevents damaging trust within local communities and creating misunderstandings within the company itself. By using agonistic politics, CCE practitioners perceive opposing interests as adversaries that should be tolerated rather than enemies to be eradicated.

For instance, when faced with the intertemporal tension “past versus present”, CCE practitioners acknowledge the existence of legacy issues. However, instead of striving to erase them, they embrace an agonistic approach (Mouffe, 2005). In doing so, CCE practitioners intentionally engage with the tension itself. Another example is the point of advocacy tension “corporate versus community”. Some practitioners admitted that they must surface internal problems within the corporation while also safeguarding the company's reputation by hiding issues that could potentially compromise it. When practitioners surface issues, they behave as community advocates, but when they hide them, they act as advocates for corporations. As such, Paper Two provides an insider's perspective on the organisational tensions related to time, rhythm, and point of advocacy within corporate-community relations, showing that agonistic politics enables CCE practitioners to maintain a close relationship with the different alternatives forming these tensions.

By adopting an agonistic approach, CCE practitioners can bring together various political actors within governance spheres. In addressing the research question formulated in Chapter Six: How do CCE practitioners navigate the tensions they experience? Paper three argues that

practitioners navigate them adopting and balancing four governance roles. Although previous micro-CSR literature has discussed a broad range of mechanisms to make opposing preferences compatible (Brès & Gond, 2014; Mitra & Buzzanell, 2017), existing findings only relate to the practices of top management employees, overlooking frontline practitioners experiences.

CCE practitioners, in contrast to other CSR practitioners (Brès et al., 2019; Fontana et al., 2023), engage with affected community members. This means that their interactions materialise in both competitive and collaborative forms (Cashore et al., 2021). For instance, the roles of negotiators and mediators triggers practitioners to employ a competitive strategy to bring an end corporate and community conflicts. In contrast, the roles of interpreters and transformers provoke practitioners to adopt a complementary approach, taking a long-term view of the corporate and community relationship. These practitioners, in contrast to negotiators, recognise that reshaping the corporate-community relationship demands ongoing communication effort and internal organisational change. Essentially, these four governance roles (negotiator, mediator, interpreter, and transformer) provide a more encompassing lens for understanding CCE activities.

In summary, the central theme of this dissertation offers a more nuanced perspective on CCE, which challenges the business case of CSR (Carroll & Shabana, 2010; García-Chiang, 2018). As previously discussed by Dare et al. (2014); Mercer-Mapstone et al. (2017); Owen and Kemp (2013), a business case of justifies community engagement as a means to achieve a SLO. Conversely, this dissertation aligns with Greenwood (2007) and argues that CCE can encompass a continuum of actions and worldviews, including both corporate responsibility and irresponsibility.

In the first paper, we delve into the multifaceted organisational worldviews that inform CCE strategies, emphasising that meaningful CCE goes beyond superficial engagement practices and requires a shift towards normative stakeholder engagement rooted in relational CSR perspectives. The second paper underscores that CCE practitioners engage in political dynamics, in particular, agonistic politics, an approach that transcends consensus building and views opposing interests as adversaries to be respected. Finally, the third paper explores how CCE practitioners navigate organizational tensions through four governance roles. These roles

allow them to engage both competitively and collaboratively with affected community members. This comprehensive lens provides a deeper understanding of CCE activities, especially in comparison to other CSR practitioners who may not engage as directly with affected communities.

# 8. CONCLUSION

This chapter concludes the dissertation summarising the findings and contributions of each of the three papers.

## 8.1.Summary of Findings and Contributions

The first paper of this dissertation addressed the research question: *What approaches inform an organisation's CCE strategy?* Drawing upon insights from previous systematic literature reviews, provided by scholars such as Donaldson and Preston (1995), Secchi (2007), and Garriga and Melé (2004), the paper identified three distinct organisational worldviews – namely, the utilitarian/instrumental, managerial/ descriptive, and relational/normative. These worldviews have a significant role in the implementation of CCE strategies as they constitute how businesses interpret their social responsibilities when engaging with stakeholders.

Previous research on CCE strategies (Bowen et al., 2010; Pater & Van Lierop, 2006; Vanclay & Hanna, 2019), has focused on distinguishing various engagement interventions by examining their material practices. However, Paper One of this dissertation took a different approach by addressing the research gap of investigating the influence of organisational worldviews on the implementation of CCE strategies. As a result, this paper contributes to previous CCE literature enriching the CCE continuum by extending its theoretical dimensions through the examination of three distinct organisational worldviews that inform transactional, transitional, and transformational CCE strategies.

With this contribution, Paper One of this dissertation challenges the implicit assumption that extractive companies can progress along the continuum of CCE solely by changing their material practices (Delannon et al., 2016; García-Chiang, 2018). Instead, it argues that meaningful CCE is achieved when all the different departments from one organisation align both their worldviews and material practices of CCE.

Having explored the various organisational approaches affecting the implementation of CCE strategies, the second paper of this dissertation delved into the individual and empirical level of analysis. In particular, this paper formulated the following research question: *How do practitioners experience CCE?* Paper Two illustrates that CCE practitioners deal with antagonism as a result of the emergence of various organisational tensions. These tensions

are related to conflicting corporate and community priorities regarding time, rhythm, and point of advocacy of the CCE function.

Additionally, the paper argues that CCE practitioners respond to these tensions utilising a political approach called agonistic politics (Brand et al., 2020; Dawkins, 2021a; Fougère & Solitander, 2020; Mouffe, 2013). This approach involves recognizing the existence of conflicting perspectives as a means to reach a consensus accompanied by dissent (Fougère & Solitander, 2020).

Previous research on agonistic PCSR, as exemplified in the works of Burchell and Cook (2013); Dawkins (2021a); Fougère and Solitander (2020), has focused on illuminating conflicts and antagonisms that arise between businesses and other formal organisations. This body of work has primarily delved into the examination of private governance mechanisms operating at a global scale such as MSIs. However, Paper Two of this dissertation took a different approach by addressing the research gap of investigating the tensions that CCE practitioners experience when they strive to achieve corporate objectives while simultaneously acknowledging that disagreements are a fundamental aspect of the CCE process.

As a result, Paper Two of this dissertation makes a contribution to the field of agonistic PCSR research. It challenges the Habermasian perspective of PCSR (Scherer & Palazzo, 2007), highlighting the political dimension of conflict inherent in CCE interventions. This paper also exhibits how CCE practitioners may employ agonistic politics to challenge the notion that CCE's sole objective is to secure social licenses for business operations, a perspective also criticised by Mercer-Mapstone et al. (2017); Owen and Kemp (2013).

After examining the intertemporal, rhythmical, and point of advocacy tensions affecting the on the ground experiences of CCE practitioners, the third paper of this dissertation addressed the following research question: *How do CCE practitioners navigate the tensions they experience?* Paper Three delved into the mechanisms that CCE practitioners put in place to navigate corporate and community antagonism. It identified four governance roles used by practitioners as a dynamic repertoire of agonistic strategies: negotiator, mediator, interpreter, and transformer.

While previous literature has indeed identified certain tensions and mechanisms experienced by practitioners as they work to reconcile business and social interest (Brès et al., 2019;

Fontana et al., 2023; Mitra & Buzzanell, 2016; Wong & Ho, 2015), nevertheless, what has often been overlooked are the perspectives of practitioners directly engaging with affected stakeholders. Therefore, this last paper contributes to micro-CSR research providing a voice to the perspectives of CCE practitioners emphasising their ability to adapt and employ a flexible repertoire of governance roles in response to the specific contexts they encounter.

In conclusion, this dissertation addresses a research problem emerging from the limited exploration of the conflicting approaches, challenges, and mechanisms CCE practitioners must balance while engaging with businesses and local communities. As a result, this dissertation delved into various aspects of Corporate Community Engagement (CCE) from both organizational and individual perspectives.

The first paper identified three distinct organisational worldviews playing a significant role in shaping these strategies. The second paper delved into the experiences of CCE practitioners, emphasising how the experience antagonism in CCE interventions as a result of organisational tensions related to time, rhythm, and point of advocacy. Lastly, the third paper focused on the mechanisms employed by CCE practitioners to navigate corporate and community antagonism, identifying four dynamic governance roles within their agonistic repertoire. In sum, this dissertation sheds light on the multifaceted nature of CCE, emphasizing the political dimension and the critical role played by practitioners in achieving meaningful CCE.

## 8.2. Research Limitations and Future Research

As this dissertation required several decisions to narrow its focus, there remains room for additional research to delve into theoretical and methodological aspects not covered in this study.

Firstly, this research has primarily focused on the first-hand experiences of CCE practitioners within the mining and oil and gas companies. This is due to the fact that in recent decades extractive industries have increasingly institutionalized CCE within their internal governance systems. However, future research could offer additional insights by exploring the organisational worldviews, tensions and roles encountered by CCE practitioners in different industries, such as renewable or large-scale infrastructure projects.

Second, this research predominantly relies on the perspectives and experiences shared by CCE practitioners. This focused approach opens opportunities for future research to explore alternative perspectives including those of social actors (like community members and NGOs) and public actors (such as public servants, local officials). For instance, investigating how community members influence or are influenced by corporate organisational worldviews, or they contribute to managing tensions, whether through agonistic or antagonistic approaches. This could provide a deeper understanding of the broader dynamics surrounding CCE and the formation of governance spheres.

In addition to the scope-related decisions previously mentioned, it is important to consider the potential limitations associated with a cross-sectional research design. As highlighted earlier, due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, this study relied on digital data collection methods. Consequently, future research could consider adopting an ethnographic approach, involving on-site visits to local communities and immersing within industry environments to deeply explore the tensions experienced in a single-case study setting. This approach could provide a richer and more context-specific understanding of the dynamics at play in CCE.

### 8.3. Concluding Remarks

Throughout this dissertation, I have engaged with the research problem of exploring how CCE manifests at organisational and individual levels of analysis. By following a cross-sectional research design, I developed conceptual work and analysed empirical data drawing from the experiences shared by 51 CCE practitioners working for mining and oil and gas companies.

This multifaceted exploration has yield an enriched perspective on CCE. It challenges the traditional business case, which often portrays engagement with local communities as a mere instrument to secure a SLO that protects business profitability. Instead, I have delved deeper into the CCE continuum, recognising it as a contradictory yet interrelated set of actions and worldviews that extend beyond instrumental purposes.

Moreover, I have illuminated the challenges and antagonisms that CCE practitioners confront when balancing business interests with the demands of local communities. In doing so, I acknowledge the inherent tensions of CCE and the need to embrace a more adaptive approach that can foster meaningful relationships, address the multifaceted challenges, and ultimately contribute to the broader welfare of society.

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# 10. APPENDIX

## 10.1. Book Review: The Past, Present and Future of Sustainable Management

| | |
|---|---|
| **Acknowledgement** | I would like to thank my supervisor Dr Sarah Ivory for her encouragement to conduct this book review and her guidance to improve the quality of the writing. |
| **Published** | **(Hernandez, 2022)**<br>The Past, Present and Future of Sustainable Management: From the Conservation Movement to Climate Change. Academy of Management Learning & Education, 21(2), 338-339. https://doi.org/10.5465/amle.2021.0359 |

**Book Review**

Sustainable Management seems the discovery of recent times that will help us to address our current and most urgent problems. However, why didn't it emerge until now? Some voices would argue that the principles of Sustainable Management were not needed before. Others would claim that these ideas are a result of the cognitive evolution and adaptability of the modern human being. These arguments would make sense for the producers and followers of main conventional histories. But is there an alternative explanation to consider?

Yes, there is, according to Cummings and Bridgman in this new book on Sustainable Management. They invite us to appreciate sustainability from a broader historical perspective. With this alternative lens, the authors explain how the environmental and social agenda is not a recent issue for management thinkers, but was part of the discipline's origins. However, it was intentionally relegated and thus, they explain, is now seen as a revolutionary discovery.

To construct their arguments, the authors go back to the first decade of the twentieth century to contest the conventional history of Management. By exploring classic managerial case studies and key authors from the field, Cummings and Bridgman show how what we now conceptualise as sustainability is far from being a modern concept nor a topic that deserves to be treated as an appendix. Rather, sustainability is just a new word for an old and key concern that the initial thinkers of Management were trying to address. If the advocates of Management had already integrated sustainability notions into their initial reflections, why have we been so slow in achieving the objectives that those thinkers initially conceived? The answer, they say, is clear: we missed this focus.

Cummings and Bridgman critically reflect on the origin of our discipline to inspire scholars in how to move forward. In this book, they challenge our most typically solid notions of Management. For instance, they argue that economic efficiency is not the major purpose of management. To convince us, the authors encourage us to appreciate two major streams in the development of management. On the one hand, the stream that pushed management as an ideology and political movement. On the other hand, the stream that pushed it as an institutionalised body of knowledge taught in private institutions. By separating these streams, the authors discuss how the latter took a different direction from the former, which created a discontinuity. In other words, the authors suggest that although the teaching of

Management in private universities increased the number of people concerned with these ideas, scholars gained academic legitimacy and popularity by making economic efficiency the false prophet that everyone in management idolized.

Pursuing economic efficiency would not necessarily represent a problem if we could still recognize the end of all this efficiency. However, the authors insist that we have made economic efficiency a goal without understanding the fundamental reasons why becoming efficient is so important. Because we have forgotten those reasons, the authors help us to remember them. They employ a Foucauldian approach to reconstruct a story that states that the purpose of any managerial effort must be the improvement of environmental and social goods.

In their book, Cummings and Bridgman expose a series of discontinuities that might appear surprising to some readers. Perhaps one of the most appealing is that initial advocates of Scientific Management - as an ideological movement - were interested in efficiency (not economic efficiency) as a means to regulate the excesses of the laissez-fair industrialization. In other words, thinkers such as Mary Parker Follett, Louis Brandeis, and Frederick Taylor were not interested in advancing the free market, but they were concerned about how this was harming the liberty of workers and the conservation of natural resources. This concern and the struggles that emerged in the political arena of the 20th century is the foundation of the authors' argument that it is an error to think of economic efficiency as the end of management, when it was originally conceived as a means to enjoy more empowerment and freedom.

The exposition of discontinuities in the formation of the management field has a purpose. This is to transform our current understanding of sustainable management. There are several ways in which we can use this book. First, this is an opportunity to feel less anxious in trying to justify the importance of sustainability ideas and less obsessed in finding win-win solutions to each of their dilemmas. Second, we can use the ideas in this book to reduce some of the faith that has been allocated to economic principles such as competition and self-interest. Third, this book is a great opportunity to reflect more on the other building blocks in the discipline, such as human cooperation and community belonging.

However, we need to be cautious. Although turning back to the 20th century was a necessary step to understand where we are now, that does not mean that the solution to our problems is contained in the ideas written a hundred years ago. For instance, the conservationist movement lived in the United States had conditions that we can hardly replicate now. We cannot address our current sustainability problems only by becoming champions of the environment and admirers of their beauty. We need to find the way to integrate past lessons with the current conditions we are now experiencing. We have reached a moment in which appreciation of nature alone is not enough if we do not deliberate and learn as a society on how to live in harmony with our ecosystems at a local, national and global scale. To effectively face our current tragedies, we have to embrace cooperation, mutual understanding, sympathy, and inclusion of public, private, local and global communities.

Fortunately, this book gives us these and other elements to reflect on in encouraging us to think about management differently. While the authors touch on sensitive nerves by questioning the 'founders' and founding intentions of the management discipline, it is only by doing this that we may have the foundations, the direction, and the courage to rethink and revolutionise the future.

## 10.2. List of Abbreviations

| Abbreviation | Definition |
|---|---|
| CA | Corporate Accountability |
| CC | Corporate Citizenship |
| CCE | Corporate Community Engagement |
| CCI | Corporate Community Involvement |
| CCInv | Corporate Community Investment |
| CDA | Community Development Agreement |
| CLO | Community Liaison Officer |
| CMS | Critical Management Studies |
| CRD | Community Relations and Development |
| CS | Corporate Sustainability |
| CSR | Corporate Social Responsibility |
| ICF | Informed Consent Form |
| ICMM | International Council for Mining and Metals |
| IFC | International Finance Corporation |
| IOGP | International Association of Oil and Gas Producers |
| IPIECA | International Petroleum Industry Environmental Conservation Association |
| MNC | Multinational Companies |
| MSI | Multi Stakeholder Initiative |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organisation |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development |
| PCSR | Political Corporate Social Responsibility |
| PIS | Participant Information Sheet |
| SD | Sustainable Development |
| SED | Sustainable Economic Development |
| SLO | Social Licence to Operate |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| UNWCED | United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development |