Achieving Sustainable Development Goals 2030 in Africa: A Critical Review of the Sustainability of Western Approaches

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1 Introduction

Triggered by the serious developmental challenges faced by the African continent, including: poverty, education, health, industrialisation, and environmental protection, this Chapter explores how to accomplish the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) from an African perspective. Focusing on how the strategies of governments and policy makers, as well as the Corporate Responsibility (CR) of business can contribute to meet the SDGs 2030, the Chapter is structured in two parts. In Part I, the authors trace the development of western concepts of Sustainability,[1] CR[2] and

[1] The terms 'the west' and 'western concepts' refer to Europe and the United States signifying their context-specific value systems. This includes capitalist market economy, based on a secular Western modern, democratic world view. Many former European colonies in countries such as: Latin America, Australia, New Zealand, and Asia are also understood to possess these value systems and are accordingly interpreted for the purpose of this study to adopt a 'western' approach.

[2] The term CR is interpreted to reflect the key concepts inherent in the various definitions of CSR defined by the EU commission (EU Commission 2002, p. 3) and social responsibility defined by the ISO 26000 (BMAS 2011, p. 11). For clarification, this chapter uses the terms CR & CSR synonymously, with the exception of quotations and definitions.

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Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)[3] to investigate their suitability, relevance, and impact for achieving the SDGs 2030 in an African-specific context. In Part II, a new proposal is presented aimed at achieving Sustainable Triple Bottom Line (TBL) Development relevant to the specific context of the African dilemma.

2 The African Dilemma

A new day could be dawning in Africa, signaled by a range of signs pointing to a positive growth trajectory. Looking ahead, Sub-Saharan Africa is expected to see a constant increase in activity, with growth rising to 3.2% in 2018 and 3.5% in 2019. This increase is mainly led by Nigeria, South Africa, and Angola (World Bank 2018a). Within Africa, there are 400 companies with revenue of more than US$1 billion per year growing faster and more profitably than their international competitors. Household consumption in Africa is projected to increase at 3.8% per year to reach US$2.1 trillion by 2025. At the same time, business spending can be expected to boost from US$2.6 trillion to US$3.5 trillion by 2025. Politically, much has been achieved. There is an increasing move by most of the countries towards democracy. Moreover, African countries are increasingly holding multi-party elections, and in many countries, the development of democracy, including opposition parties, and numerous civic organisations, has become the norm. In addition, a new generation of African leaders are emerging who are taking on more responsibility for the future development of their countries. Such efforts are co-ordinated through institutions, unions and agencies such as the African Union, the East African Community, the Economic Community of West African States and the New Partnership for Africa's Development/NEPAD to mention a few (Abdulai 2015, p. 428; McKinsey Global Institute 2016, p. 8; The Economist 2013; UNECA 2012; Visser et al. 2006, p. 11). Despite these efforts, Africa still faces serious developmental challenges particularly regarding issues, including poverty eradication, education, industrialisation, health, and environmental protection, which need addressing.

Notwithstanding these issues, potentially, Africa could be considered the wealthiest continent on earth. It is endowed with immense natural resources which, if effectively utilised and managed, can contribute to the continent's exponential growth and development. Paradoxically however, Africa also has one of the largest populations of poor people in the world. The number of Africans living in extreme poverty has almost doubled between 1981 and 2006, from 164 to 314 million. 34 of the 48 poorest countries on this planet are located in Africa (Hayes 2006, p. 95). The problem has even further deteriorated based on data which indicate that in 2013 in Sub-Saharan

[3]The term 'Corporate Social Responsibility' (CSR) is typically the most common label employed in Europe. However, given that not only social, but additionally broader societal, moral, and ecological, as well as other key responsibilities are implied, of which social aspects are merely one (albeit highly salient) component, the term CR is employed in this Chapter to more aptly reflect the broader context of corporate responsibility beyond the social focus (please refer to Footnote 2 for further details).

Africa alone, more than half of the total population[4] lived on less than US$1.9 per day (World Bank 2018b).

What has contributed to Africa's current and sustained poverty and under-development? Numerous internal and external reasons ranging from domestic instability in some African countries to economic mis-management, as well as international economic and global forces are noted causes.[5] A key African dilemma is that although the continent holds abundant natural resources and while its economies are partially operating quite effectively, ultimately too few people profit from the wealth that is created. This is partly due to foreign corporations extracting Africa's mineral resources at immense profit for shareholders with minimal reward for African populations. Due to this, Africa loses approximately US$62.2 billion in illegal outflows and price manipulations each year, mainly due to exports by multinational companies (Smith 2013).

3 The Sustainable Development Goals 2030 (SDGs)

A sustainable wealth-creation approach advocates strategic regard for the interests of present and future generations (Brundtland 1987). The United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development published a report in 1987 under the name of the then Managing Director, Brundtland entitled "Our Common Future" addressing the increasing negative impact of global industrialisation on human and environmental development. This established, the term "sustainable development" as "a way of satisfying the needs of the present without risking the ability of future generations to satisfy their own needs" (United Nations 1987).

The UN leit-motiv can be conceived as closely related to the triple bottom line (TBL) principles: Profits (development of a solid economic structure which facilitates industrialisation and reduces unemployment); People (elimination of poverty, facilitation of human health and education); and Planet (protecting the environment) (Elkington 1997, p. 2).

Today, almost 30 years later, the need for sustainable development and sustainable commerce is more relevant than ever. As part of this initiative, CR can be interpreted as an attempt by organisations to combat global warming, climate change, human rights abuses, and poverty, among others. The UN has championed many CR-focused events and activities worldwide based on the premise that supplying the rapidly increasing world population with healthy food, clean drinking water, air and energy can only succeed if all the necessary and possible measures are taken to design business strategies which leave a 'liveable' world for our descendants. The rationale being that by following an economic approach which is conscious of its impact on

[4] 390.26 million people from a total of 768.51 million people.

[5] Africa's economic under-development and its causes are significant topics in their own right. While they represent some of the key the forces which have triggered the need for this Chapter, their detailed discussion goes beyond the feasible scope of this Chapter.

both ecological and social principles, a permanently peaceful, healthy, global well-being for mankind can be secured.

To achieve this ambitious aim, various UN initiatives including for instance: Climate Change Conferences (e.g., the latest in Paris in 2015), the UN Global Compact programme uniting the world's largest corporate responsibility activities, the eight UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 2000–2015, as well as the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 which was agreed in 2015, all demonstrate the increasing importance of the need for responsible responses from government, society, and business in all areas of our existence.

To elaborate, while the seventeen new SDGs 2030 (United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2018) cover more areas and are more specific than the earlier eight MDGs (Millennium Development Goals 2018) on key themes, they continue to cover many of the original MDG topics (presumably because these issues are so persistent and/or 'wicked' that they remain unsolved). In overview, the SDGs expand on the MDGs to now include: poverty and hunger alleviation; improvement of health, education, and well-being; reduction of gender and other inequalities both within and between nation states; access to clean water, sanitation and affordable renewable energy; maintenance and development of sustainable cities and communities; measures to combat climate change and its impacts, conserve and sustainably use oceans, seas and marine resources, sustainably manage forests and address land degradation and biodiversity loss; approaches to foster sustainable industry, innovation and resilient infrastructure; strategies to establish decent work and economic growth based on responsible consumption and production approaches; general aims to promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies; and, revitalise global partnerships in the interest of sustainable development (United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2018). In summary, targeting the 5Ps (People, Planet, Prosperity [originally Profit], Peace and Partnership), the new SDGs 2030 can be interpreted to comprehensively address key areas of responsibility impacting all spheres and levels of activity and life on this planet.

Mankind's ability to optimally meet these SDGs in harmony together triggers key broad-spanning, complex, over-arching questions both in general and specifically spanning the social, technological, economic and political spheres, among others. As key themes for this book, these questions include for instance: How will the governments of the 196 countries in the world respond in meeting these goals? How do the SDGs influence the future role of business in society? e.g., How will corporate entities (small, medium and large) contribute to the achievement of the goals? And how will this impact Corporate Strategy and Corporate Governance; As well as: What new Corporate Responsibility practices will be enacted? And, what measurement criteria will be established to assess whether the goals have been met by corporations?

Against the backdrop of these many questions and their inter-related themes, this chapter contributes to the discussion surrounding SDG 2030 initiative by exploring the specific question of how the government, policy-makers, and business in Africa can most optimally meet the SDG 2030 goals. In doing so, the CR responses particular to Africa are examined and the implications for practitioners, scholars, and other stakeholders are explored.

4 The Sustainable Development Goals 2030 from an African Perspective

In an African context, achieving sustainable wealth-creation in line with the SDGS 2030 requires that growth and development must consider the needs and interests of present and future generations based on TBL principles in order to be sustainable. Within this context, the concept of CR requires that companies take responsibility for the impact of their actions on their various stakeholder groups. CR can thus be interpreted as a general responsibility of companies (Jonker et al. 2011, p. 88). As the leitmotif of the strategic orientation and positioning of organisations, CR involves comprehensively implementing an integrated process of sustainable, social, ecological, and economic themes into all of the business activities. Within this context, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is defined by the Commission of the European Communities as "a concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis" (EU Commission 2002, p. 5). For a further elaboration of CR and CSR concepts please refer to subsequent sections below.

Based on this rationale, the premise for this Chapter proposes that the most valuable economic development for African citizens manifests itself in a sustainable economic wealth-creation approach for both people and nature in Africa, as well as those networks of all those stakeholders inter-dependently impacted by that progress. In cases where foreign-owned companies already have effective sustainability procedures in place, it is essential that these are fostered and encouraged.

5 Research Focus and Design

Given the urgency of the many serious development challenges it faces, in contrast to the western countries, Africa does not have hundreds of years of time to develop its own specific sustainability concept and a resulting CR approach which most suitably fits to its particular environment. Instead, a pragmatic solution is for African economies to look to the most relevant existing constructs and to employ the most appropriate for its particular purposes. However, the existing potentially relevant prevailing concepts were developed decades ago within the context of the industrialisation of western countries largely focusing on environmental destruction issues caused by industrial development (McLamb 2011). To address that complication, this Chapter focuses on the key question of: How to achieve sustainable growth and development in Africa via CR. To answer this question, it examines and critically evaluates whether specific concepts and practices of western sustainability, and in particular CR approaches, are suitable for application in an African context. To address the very specific needs of the African continent, the evolution of the most widely accepted CR approaches in the west are presented and their adaptation requirement to the specific circumstances and needs of the African business operating environment is discussed. Ensuring the acceptance and implementation of the resulting proposed sustainability and CR recommendations for African business is viewed as a critical success factor. The ultimate thesis is that African progress is dependent on its ability to become a fully integrated and appreciated partner in the global business world.

The research design comprises a qualitative, theoretical approach based exclusively on secondary data sources. A key research challenge is the limited amount of literature available on this subject. To help to address this issue, the literature review has been strongly informed by the first author who is considered an African expert.

To explore Africa's current context-specific sustainability and CR situation, the remainder of this Chapter is structured in two parts. In Part I, Western sustainability concepts and CR approaches are explored in order to trace their development and practice over time. That review establishes the information basis for Part II which examines how far those Western constructs can be employed and adapted in an African-specific context. A new proposal is presented to address what has been termed in this Chapter 'the African dilemma' aimed at achieving sustainable TBL development via a CR rationale relevant to the specific context of the African environment and its particular challenges.

6 Definition of Underpinning Concepts and Their Historical Development

The dilemmas and challenges noted above prompt the need to define and critically reflect upon selected key related terms and their underpinning concepts. This section first considers varying interpretations of the concept of growth within a country, before elaborating on western concepts of sustainability, sustainable development, and CR.

6.1 Development and Growth

What could be considered to construe 'development' in a country, and more specifically, what might this mean when applied to the African context? According to the late Myrdal (1974, p. 729), "development [is] the movement upward of the entire social system". But this definition can be misleading. Does it refer to economic development only or does it also include economic growth? According to Todaro and Smith (2012, pp. 2–6, 37–56), economic development is frequently understood as an increase in living standards. In most cases, it typically refers to improvements in literacy, life expectancy rates, as well as decreasing poverty. This interpretation refers to the general well-being of the people. In contrast, the term 'economic growth' is frequently understood to mean an increase in a country's output i.e., Gross National Product (GNP). Clearly however, this concept of economic growth does not take into account the informal sector,[6] environmental issues, literacy rates as well as life-expectancy aspects which typically define the notion of *sustainable development*. Sustainable development, according to the Brundtland Report (United Nations 1987, p. 39), "seeks to meet the needs and aspirations of present generations without compromising the ability to meet those of the future". Amarta Sen, a Nobel Laureate in Economics, states, "Growth of GNP or of individual incomes can, of course, be very important as a *means* to expand the freedom[7] enjoyed by the members of the society. But freedom depends also on other determinants, such as social and economic arrangements (for example, facilities for education and health care), as well as political and civil rights (for example the freedom to participate in public discussion and scrutiny)" (Sen 1999, p. 3). According to Sen, development "requires the removal of major sources of 'unfreedom'[8]: poverty as well as tyranny, poor economic opportunities, as well as systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities, as well as intolerance or over-activity of repressive states" (Sen 1999, p. 3).

Having considered the varying interpretations of how development and growth in a country could be construed, the remainder of this section elaborates in greater detail on western concepts of sustainability, sustainable development, and CR.

6.2 The Development of Sustainability, Sustainable Development, and CR in Western Concepts

6.2.1 History of Western Concepts of Sustainability from Antiquity to the Middle Ages

In its most fundamental meaning, the concept of sustainability has existed ever since human beings walked the earth. One of the main reasons why the pre-agricultural

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[6]The informal sector is a typical concept in developing countries. It encompasses all jobs which are not recognised as normal income sources, and on which taxes therefore are not paid. The term is sometimes used to refer to illegal activity, such as not declaring earnings in the case of income tax, or situations where people are forced to work without pay. However, the informal sector could also be interpreted to include legal activities, such as jobs which are performed in exchange for something other than money, for example barter etc. (Business Dictionary 2017).

[7]The term "freedom" here is employed to mean freedom from hunger and oppression in its fundamental form.

[8]The term "unfreedom" as used by Sen refers to "barriers to freedom" including lack of political, social and economic rights on a more structural level. By definition, "freedom" is achieved once the unfreedom of hunger and oppression which limit personal free development have been removed.

societies of hunters and gatherers, such as the Native American tribes, as well as early agricultural societies successfully thrived for thousands of years was their choice of locations with sufficient healthy air, clean water, rich soil, and/or abundant wildlife to guarantee their permanent existence. Their lifestyle did not form a threat to these basic conditions, and all waste was bio-degradable. Bosselmann explains this harmonious co-existence with nature: "Ancient civilizations were grounded in value systems that did not separate the human sphere from the natural sphere. It was inconceivable [...] to seek economic prosperity at the cost of ecological sustainability" (Bosselmann 2009, p. 12). However, from a modern western perspective, these early societies paid a very high price for their totally sustainable life, in particular with a very low living standard and short life expectancy (Arking 2006, p. 136). Another reason why sustainability was not a real topic from antiquity to the Middle Ages is the fact that in the past, given that the population was much smaller than today, less resource issues occurred than is the case in modern times. In the 14th century, towards the end of the Middle Ages, Europeans faced a major ecological crisis: a severe timber shortage due to an excessive use of wood for heating, cooking, house construction and tool-making purposes (Bosselmann 2009, p. 13; Hughes 2009, pp. 90–95). In seafaring nations, such as the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Spain, and Portugal, and later in France, the large-scale building of wooden ships, particularly during the Tudor period (1485–1603), transformed these countries into leading colonial powers. Yet the consequence was a dramatic deforestation, often resulting in erosion, flooding, and even starvation. So, for the very first time in European history, tree-planting became a political concern. Up to the end of the 17th century, the term 'sustainability', which is noted in greater detail below, had not yet been invented, but local sustainability laws, e.g., within the 'Allmende'[9] land-use system focusing on common property, already took into account some of the needs of existing societies, as well as concerns for future generations. This led to the first form of sustainable timber management that often included a system of rotational land use which was quite successful until the end of the 18th century (Bosselmann 2009, p. 14; Grober 2012, pp. 72, 120; Hughes 2009, pp. 90–95; Sieferle 1998, pp. 304–307; The British Monarchy 2014; Woodland Trust Scotland 2014).

[9]This approach to sustainability laws centered around a land use system used for governing German principalities known as 'Allmende' in German meaning 'Commons' in English. In this system, the land was seen as a 'common' public good and limitations were set for individual land use rights.To elaborate, the 'commons' refers to the cultural and natural resources accessible to all members of a society, including natural materials such as air, water, and a habitable earth. Because these resources are held in common i.e., not owned privately, this concept addresses how to govern the natural resources available to groups of people (communities, user groups). A paper entitled "Tragedy of the Commons" by Hardin (1986, pp. 1243–1248) addressed the complex challenge of how to manage such resources, a question invoking a decision-making dilemma surrounding perspectives of individual and collective benefit. Characteristically, solving this dilemma is a controversial task requiring underlying decisions on a variety of informal (often discretionary) norms and values (social practice) to realise a governance mechanism.

6.2.2 Origin and Development of the Term ‘Sustainability’ Between the 17th and the 20th Centuries

In the 18th and 19th centuries, two major changes began to strongly influence European development: a fast-growing population, and later the Industrial Revolution.[10] Both transformations Transformation resulted in the emergence of the modern economic system we know today with its focus on the intensive private use of natural resources and short-term profits. One important consequence was that the related legal changes favoured private property rights whilst, at the same time, down-played environmental protection. Europe fast experienced a second environmental crisis (Bosselmann 2009, p. 15; Marquardt 2005, pp. 243–252).

About that time, the term ‘sustainability’[11] officially appeared for the first time. It can be dated back to the year 1713 when the German forest scientist Hans Carl von Carlowitz introduced it in his book: *Sylviculturaoeconomica oder Hauswirthliche [Sic] Nachricht und Naturmässige Anweisung zur Wilden Baum-Zucht*[12] (Thomasius and Bendix 1713/2013, p. 10). Carlowitz’s basic idea was that only what they termed a ‘proper’ timber management could stop the destruction of over-exploited German forests (Bosselmann 2009, p. 18; Thomasius and Bendix 2013, pp. 5, 7, 11). Here we interpret ‘proper’ to mean a professional or restorative approach to timber management.

In his book, Carlowitz outlines the essential concepts related to sustainability, including, as Grober puts it, “respect for nature, management of resources, strengthening the community; and in addition, taking responsibility for succeeding generations“ (Grober 2012, p. 85). This quotation already includes the crucial elements of modern concepts of sustainability, namely: the combination of economic, social, and ecological aspects on an inter-generational basis.

It took German foresters about 100 years to put the new systematic approach of sustainability into practice. Forests were measured, soil quality was analysed, and climatic conditions were taken into account. The total woodland was divided into a certain number of felling areas equalling the years of the rotation period. Each year, only the trees within one felling area were cut down in order to secure sufficient time for reforestation (Grober 2012, pp. 119–120)—measures which are still in use today.

Similar concepts and academic institutions teaching sustainable forest management could also be found in other European countries at that time and the related concepts influenced each other. Important representatives were John Evelyn (1620–1706), Jean-Baptiste Colbert (1619–1683), Carl Nilsson Linnaeus (1707–1778), Karl Kasthofer (1777–1853), Robert Malthus (1766–1834) and John Stuart Mill (1806–1873). The spirit of sustainability also spread into literature and

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[10]The Industrial Revolution started in England at the end of the 18th century and was spreading into central Europe at the beginning of the 19th century.

[11]German translation: Nachhaltigkeit.

[12]English translation: Forest Economy or Natural Guide to Tree Cultivation; Carlowitz’s book popularised the term ‘Nachhaltigkeit’ making it known to a broader public and introduced the measuring units which established the basis of the scientific evaluation processes in general which were developed in the 19th century in Europe (Thomasius and Bendix 1713/2013, p. 327).

music of the 18th and 19th centuries (e.g., in the Romantic period), particularly into the works of Goethe, Schiller, Herder, and Beethoven (Grober 2012, pp. 66–101; Hentze and Thies 2012, p. 75).

Later, the principle of sustainability was transferred from forest management to other sectors. Despite a shift to fossil fuels during the large-scale industrialisation in the 19th century (Bosselmann 2009, p. 22), a further scarcity of timber and other natural resources ensued. Furthermore, given the ever-increasing need for natural resources, raw materials, and cheap labour required by Europe and the United States, exploitation of natural resources forced these countries to look elsewhere—in the United States mainly to South America and Asia, and in Europe mainly to Africa (Drayton 2005; Dupree 2014; Vinitius 2009). Despite some critical voices including Charles Dickens (1812–1870), the consequences of social and environmental destruction were not viewed as a major problem by western societies up to the middle of the 20th century.

6.2.3 Modern Western Concepts of Sustainability

The 1960s were a turning point for the idea and concepts of sustainability: A number of fundamental developments, including a shift in perspective in particular due to the landing on the moon and pictures of the 'vulnerable' planet earth from space, a shortage of fossil fuels, large-scale environmental pollution, global population growth, and the accelerated process of globalisation, including the fast increase of international communication and transportation, all led to a global re-thinking of man's relationship with nature. Core events at that time were the publication of the environmental book: *Silent Spring* by the American biologist Rachel Carson in 1962 (Carson 2000) and the report: *Limits to Growth* by the Club of Rome (Meadows, Meadows, Randers, and Behrens 1972). Indeed, the latter publication, for the first time, employed the term 'sustainable' in a modern sense (i.e., beyond its environmental meaning) when critically reflecting on how the human race and the planet could survive.[13] These developments had the effect of expanding the term beyond its original scope which was up to then limited to subsistence farming or forest management to encompass social aspects. The classical foresters' conception of sustainability was that economic activities should not destroy the very resources upon which those activities rely. This early understanding was replaced by much broader and less anthropocentric formula of sustainability including not only human needs but more comprehensively the entire preservation of creation as narrated and demanded by the Bible and by creation myths in other cultures (Grober 2012, p. 20).

More specifically, the Club of Rome advised applying a combination of technical solutions, reasonable management of worldwide resources, and an elementary

[13] For clarification, while the Club of Rome *Limits to Growth* report (Meadows et al. 1972) employed the term 'sustainability' in the modern sense, the definition its adopts is based on ancient, medieval, and enlightened concepts of sustainability which encourages mankind to live on the yield, not on the substance of nature.

renewal of the global value system with a focus on long-term economic and ecological stability, as well as immaterial rather than material growth (Grober 2012, p. 159). In this regard, the researchers already foresaw a conflict between economic growth and ecological sustainability. While the Club of Rome clearly preferred environmental preservation to economic growth, the Brundtland Report tried to reconcile the two by creating the term 'sustainable development' (Bosselmann 2009, p. 25; Meakin 1992; United Nations, 1987, p. 95). Yet establishing a reasonable balance between economic activities and the protection of the environment could be viewed as challenging due to the extreme complexity of the globalisation process together with the significant gap in needs which separates the industrialised from the developing world. This resulting complexity is driven by economic and political forces, such as deregulation, international co-operation and integration, opening of planned economies, such as the former USSR, the appearance of new competitors, such as Brazil or South Africa, rapid technological development (particularly in the fields of electronic communication and transport systems), as well as worldwide socio-economical, and socio-cultural changes.

To further convolute matters, the Brundtland Commission's definition with its proposed aim to harmonise the interests of both economic development and the ecological environment kept the concept of sustainability very vague, thus helping to create several different definitions of what sustainable development could actually be interpreted to construe. The Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit of 1992 made a reference to the triangle of sustainability with its economic, ecological, and social aspects (Meakin 1992). These aspects or principles were later popularised by the phrase 'Triple Bottom Line' (TBL) by John Elkington in his book: Cannibals with Forks (Elkington 1997), which employed the terms: People, Profit, Planet (explained in greater detail below). Even those researchers who agree on the usefulness of this triangular concept disagree on a range of issues associated with its use, including the lack of mutual exclusivity of its components, i.e., the aspects are not necessarily isolated from each other, nor are they potentially complete, e.g., some advocate including prosperity and other aspects as inherent factors of sustainable development. Moreover, the question of what weighting to apply to each of the three points is a further point of contention. Does the overall outcome depend on a sound economic basis? Is ecological sustainability the underlying principle? Or is social justice the assumed basis for the other aspects? Notwithstanding which interpretation is adopted in this hotly debated arena, all related CR concepts combine the common aim to achieve harmonisation by striking some kind of mutual resonance between the various aspects which have been consciously added to the ultimate sustainability equation.

As far as the implementation of sustainability in western countries is concerned, experience shows that at times of prosperity, the social and environmental aspects of the TBL become more dominant, whereas in times of economic crisis, economic aspects of sustainability are given absolute priority. Moreover, possibly reflecting the broad range of current western sustainability definitions discussed above, a comprehensive range of western CR concepts have emerged. The subsequent sections now turn to address the evolving concept of CR in greater detail.

6.2.4 The Development of Western CR

The link between CR and sustainable development is relatively new. The concept of CR developed in the middle of the 20th century in the USA (Murphy 1978, p. 20). In tracing its historical development, Murphy distinguishes four main periods of development. These include the years before 1950s which he terms: The "Philanthropic Era" based on the rationale companies mainly donated money to welfare institutions. According to Murphy, the "Awareness Era" between 1953 and 1967 exemplified a more comprehensive degree of corporate social responsibility. In this era, the book *Social Responsibilities of the Businessman* written by Howard R. Bowen in 1953 is often seen as a milestone initiating the modern period of Corporate Social Responsibility (Bowen 2013; Breuer 2011, p. 20; Carroll 2008, pp. 24–26; Hentze and Thies 2012, p. 84). Bowen states in this book that because companies have an enormous impact on their surroundings, society expects them to take on a corresponding social responsibility and, therefore, exerts a certain degree of pressure on companies (Bowen 2013, p. 21; Breuer 2011, p. 21; Lin-Hi 2009, p. 11; Schultz 2011, p. 20). According to Murphy, the following "Issue Era" between 1968 and 1973 continued the broader CR approach focusing now however on specific responsibility topics, such as racial discrimination or environmental pollution. It was during this "Issue Era" that the modern notion of sustainability and the stakeholder approach (explained in greater detail below) first came into being. Since 1974 the "Responsiveness Era" has taken over with an increasing concern for the practical implementation of CR activities. Based on these developments, the CR concept spread throughout Europe gaining particular momentum in the 1990s (Breuer 2011, p. 20; Carroll 2008, pp. 24–26; Murphy 1978, p. 20).

6.2.5 The Expansion of CR in a Business Context

Parallel to these developments, the economic community became more responsible with respect to CR (Breuer 2011, pp. 22–25). In 1971, the European Management Forum met for the first time to promote co-operation between European and international businesses and develop concepts of responsible management. A further milestone was set, in 1971 by the Committee for Economic Development (CED) in its publication: *Social Responsibilities of Business Corporations* (CED 1971). The European Management Symposium which later became the World Economic Forum (WEF) is a multi-stakeholder forum with roots going back to the 1970s. This non-profit organisation (NPO) brings companies, politicians, society, and other stakeholders together to address global challenges. In the *Davoser Manifest* of 1973 for example, under the premise that the existence of the company is first safeguarded, it decided to promote CR for customers, employees, investors, and society beyond a limited profit orientation focus. Business for Social Responsibility (BSR) is an example of another important NPO which was founded in 1992 offering a platform for CR activities.

6.2.6 Realising Sustainable Development and CSR

There is a close link between the definition of sustainable development and the current western concepts of CR. The United Nations Agenda 21 (United Nations 1992) explicitly mentions the important role which companies play in enabling sustainable development. Agenda 21 for instance, provides numerous examples of how to integrate environmental and social aspects within entrepreneurial activities (United Nations 1992, pp. 168, 293–299).

From 1992 onwards, the idea to strategically integrate sustainable and social aspects within core business activities caught on. A paper published by the EU Commission in 2002 titled: *Corporate Social Responsibility: A business contribution to Sustainable Development* (Commission of the European Communities 2002, p. 1), defining CSR[14] as “a concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis” (Commission of the European Communities 2002, p. 3). In this definition, CSR is specifically portrayed as a way in which businesses can contribute to sustainable development. Also in 2002, the European Union founded the European Multi-Stakeholder Forum aiming to support and develop CSR (via innovation, transparency, structuring of activities, etc.), particularly regarding the links between CSR and sustainable development (European Stakeholder Forum on CSR 2004, p. 2).

These developments were supported by further progress at national level. In its document: *Aktionsplan CSR* (Action Plan CSR), the German government refers to the strategic nature of CSR as a company tool for managing its core business (Bundesregierung 2010, p. 1). In other fields, such as the social sciences, Vitols defines CSR as a voluntary contribution of the economy to facilitate sustainable development beyond legal obligations (Hentze and Thies 2012, p. 84; Vitols 2011, p. 7).

During the UN conference in Rio de Janeiro in 2012, the role of CSR was again emphasised:

> We acknowledge that the implementation of sustainable development will depend on the active engagement of both the public and the private sectors. We recognize that the active participation of the private sector can contribute to the achievement of sustainable development… (Hentze and Thies 2012, p. 80; United Nations 2012, p. 9).

Since the 21st century, according to Carroll (Breuer 2011, p. 26; Carroll 2008, p. 20), CSR, in its current form, integrates the idea of sustainable development with the TBL principles (noted previously as the term shaped by Elkington (1997) proposing the need to broaden the business aim to encompass not merely profit objectives but also the interests of people and the planet). Since then, the concept has increasingly become an integral part of strategic management in industrialised countries.

Essentially this concept exemplifies the discrepancy between industrialised nations and developing countries particularly clearly: At the core of the discord lies

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[14] For clarification, as previously explained, the term CSR is used here merely to preserve the correct terminology employed in the stated citations. We equate this term with the chosen label ‘corporate responsibility’ (CR) which has been adopted throughout this Chapter.

the fundamental inconsistency that, while the rich industrialised countries are responsible for most of the global environmental problems, the poor developing countries face the brunt of their negative consequences (Breuer 2011, p. 68; Elkington 1997, p. 2; Hentze and Thies 2012, p. 81; Schultz 2011, p. 34).

The Triple-Bottom-Line approach accordingly presents a challenge for companies attempting to harmonise the three aspects of economic, social, and ecological sustainability when striving to create an optimal outcome for a range of stakeholder interests. A key element of this approach is the requirement to intrinsically embed corporate sustainability into company structures and strategies from the planning to performance measurement phases, as well as from raw material extraction to waste disposal (Breuer 2011, p. 69). In this regard, the International Institute for Sustainable Development, proposes seven steps for companies aimed at achieving sustainability including: stakeholder analysis, development of guidelines and goals, implementation plan, supportive company culture, as well as performance standards with appropriate measuring, reporting, and facilitation of internal monitoring processes (International Institute for Sustainable Development et al. 1992, pp. 5–16).

Today, when many western companies address the theme of CR on their websites and in their annual reports, they typically link their intentions with sustainable development. In particular, this tends to be the case with prominent medium-sized family-owned businesses, such as the example of Gerhard Rösch GmbH located in Tübingen, Germany, which produces its textiles in Hungary based on a transparent social and ecological code of conduct (Gerhard Rösch GmbH 2014). Furthermore, for instance in Germany, many committed small businesses also practice what they preach. Some large German companies, such as Daimler, Bayer, or Otto, choose to follow the requirements of the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) of the UN Global Compact and publish their own GRI-Index analysing economic, ecological, and social indicators relevant to sustainability. More broadly in this regard, in 2014, 8000 companies from 145 countries had signed up as voluntary members of the United Nations Global Compact (Branco 2009, p. 2; Breuer 2011, pp. 101–106; Global Reporting Initiative/GRI 2002; Hentze and Thies 2012, p. 95; United Nations Global Compact 2014). Other important international CR guidelines typically used by western companies include the Eco Management and Audit Scheme/EMAS, ISO 14001, and ISO 26000 certificates (Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales/BMAS 2011, p. 11; Eco Management and Audit Scheme/EMAS 2018; Umweltbundesamt 2018).

6.2.7 Shareholder and Stakeholder Perspectives on Sustainability and CR

Despite the above developments, the concepts of Sustainability and CR have not been completely accepted by the academic and business communities *en masse*. For example, Friedman (1998), a major representative of the neoclassical economic theory argues that besides the rejection of deception and fraud[15], a company's only responsibility is to generate profit for its shareholders within the current legal and ethical framework. According to him, because managers are agents and not the owners of a company, they are not authorised to spend money on CR activities. He bases his claim on the rationale that the funds required for CR are the property of others for an exclusively economic purpose. In addition, deriving from this logic that CR is a cost to the business, Friedman reasons that the whole concept of CR contradicts the system of free enterprise and private property within which social problems are exclusively dealt with by the state. Friedman's approach is also called the "shareholder" perspective on CR (Branco 2009, pp. 11, 13; Breuer 2011, p. 8; Friedmann 1998). In line with Friedman's perspective, western CR concepts—-particularly in the United States, the United Kingdom, and some European and Commonwealth countries—tend to follow the shareholder approach as reflected in laws and other governance structures (Hansen and Ryan 2006, p. 45).

In contrast, the stakeholder perspective is a more recent line of reasoning. Freeman defines that "a stakeholder is any group or individual who can affect, or is affected by, the achievement of a corporation's purpose" (Freeman 2010, p. vi). According to Lin-Hi (2009, p. 14), there is not one stakeholder approach but many concepts based on a network rationale. The underpinning logic in the stakeholder concept assumes that given the increasingly complex global operating environment, companies cannot hope to be successful in the long run without integrating stakeholder interests with their own business purpose in some concrete way (Branco 2009, pp. 16–20). Based on this rationale, any potential costs arising from CR activities, such as employment, education, training, health, and environmental protection might help the corporation and its surrounding society to become stable, as well as professional (Hansen and Ryan 2006, p. 47) thereby rendering the business more profitable in the long run.

The sheer number of possible stakeholders has led to a differentiation between primary and secondary stakeholders. Yet researchers disagree on who might best be classified into either of these two groups. The restricted version defines stakeholders as all those groups who can greatly influence the survival of the company concerned. The liberal version refers to stakeholders as all the groups affected by the actions of the company (Breuer 2011, pp. 10–12). In the literature, the high complexity of stakeholder management is highlighted by the context-specific, subjective moral and strategic decisions which arise in relation to questions regarding the inter-dependent aspects of the power, the legitimacy, and the urgency of various stakeholder groups (Freeman, 1984; Mitchell, Agle, and Wood 1997, p. 854). Decision-makers face the challenging task of answering these questions when attempting to connect the demands and interests of individual stakeholders with those of companies and society in general. Despite these challenges, much of Continental Europe tends to practice a relatively broad stakeholder approach including aspects such as the community and the environment. This, is frequently expressed in the relevant laws and rules (Hansen and Ryan 2006, p. 46).

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[15] Although theories exist which deny any company obligation of a legal kind, these are not addressed in this Chapter.

From the many attempts which have been made to define CR within the stakeholder perspective, very common models according to Breuer (2011, pp. 81–94) are those presented by Carroll and Buchholtz (2003), Schwartz and Carroll (2003), or Zadek (2004). This Chapter purposefully focuses on the five definitions presented by Breuer (2011, pp. 30–66).

1. The Charity Principle refers to social responsibility addressing humanitarian concerns which lie outside the strategic scope of the core business operations and can be considered philanthropic in nature.
2. The Stewardship Principle is based on the concept of stakeholder management with managers adopting the role of stewards taking custodianship of society. Important representatives with different concepts regarding this approach are Burke and Logsdon (1996), DeGeorge (2010), Kirchhoff (2006), Porter and Kramer (2006), and Robbins (1994). This principle can address both philanthropic and strategic corporate activities.
3. Corporate Social Responsiveness, according to Breuer, refers to the way in which companies react to demands of the Charity and Stewardship Principles. It includes numerous company options for future action, such as those developed by various researchers, including Brammer et al. (2006), Carroll (1979), or Kirchhoff (2006). Again, this concept can address both philanthropic and strategic corporate activities.
4. Corporate Social Performance[16] refers to the analysis and comparison of companies' responsible activities across industries and nations. Researchers investigating this approach include for example: Carroll (1979), Sethi (1975), Wartick and Cochran (1985), or Wood (1991).
5. Corporate Citizenship, according to Breuer, is a term that first appeared in the 1990s. It links the activities of a company to its responsibility for the society to which the company belongs. The concept of corporate citizenship helps companies to improve their relationships with business partners and to develop trust with their stakeholders based on the rationale that it will lead to a good reputation, increased information flow, and security, also with respect to clients and decision-makers. This approach is analysed in greater detail by, e.g., Beckmann (2007), Habisch and Schmidpeter (2008), Jonker et al. (2011, pp. 5–7), Loew et al. (2004), Mirvis and Googins (2006).

Accordingly, Corporate Citizenship can be interpreted to mean that companies shape their environment and take on responsibility via a commitment which goes

[16]The intellectual roots of Corporate social performance (CSP) are quite deep, spanning history, philosophy, legal studies, economics, social science, and more. CSP refers to the principles, practices, and outcomes of businesses' relationships with people, organisations, institutions, communities, societies, and the earth, in terms of the deliberate actions of businesses toward these stakeholders as well as the unintended externalities of business activity. The development of the CSP concept, beginning in the 1950s and 1960s, is important for understanding how CSP is related to other core topics and concepts in business and society/business ethics. As the CSP concept was refined, an earlier term, corporate social responsibility, was incorporated as one element of CSP, emphasising in particular, the ethical and/or structural principles of social responsibility, or business engagement with others (Wood 2016).

beyond the company's core business in areas such as health, education, youth, environmental protection, and culture. Accordingly, in its narrow definition, corporate citizenship can be understood as less strategic than CSR based on the rationale that it addresses how a company *spends* but not how it *earns* its profits.

In short, the overwhelming number of varying interpretations and over-lapping concepts, as well as lack of consensus on their interpretation in both theory and practice can be perceived as rather confusing. Though Breuer's five concepts help to provide an overview, they additionally point to many duplications and inconsistencies thereby underscoring the general issue of the lack of an over-arching CR theory in the Western World. To address this issue many researchers and practitioners develop their own perspective which further complicates the issue. One example of an attempt to integrate various approaches is the proposal by Garriga and Melé who mapped the most relevant CR theories and related approaches. Based on their four aspects of social reality, i.e., economics, politics, social integration, and ethics, they build their four groups of instrumental, political, integrative and ethical theories (for further reading, please refer to: Garriga and Melé 2004).

6.2.8 Relationship Between States and Companies

A key aspect in the realisation of CR comprises the relationship between the state and the economy. Hall and Gingerich (2009) distinguish between Liberal Market Economies (LMEs) and Co-ordinated Market Economies (CMEs). In LMEs, such as the USA and Great Britain, classical economic liberalism with its belief in the invisible hand of the free market prevails. In CMEs, such as Germany, Austria, and other countries in continental Europe, strategic (institutionalised) co-operation between companies, unions, and public finance is dominant. This difference leads to varying approaches to CR implementation. States in continental Europe try to push voluntary contributions to CR in ways not common in LMEs, e.g., by organising competitions encouraging companies to apply e.g., for funding, awards and certifications to help implement their ideas, improve their standards thereby setting example for others to follow (Breuer 2011, pp. 3, 26–28; Hall and Gingerich 2009, pp. 5–7). For instance, a recent German CR project by the "Staatskanzlei"[17] from the Saarland (CSR Sarland 2018) was financed by the European Social Fund (ESF) program of the European Union which supports small and medium-size companies to improve their CR competence. The project addresses the concept of sustainable development in its coverage of issues relating to the market, environment, region/community, management, and employees.

[17] The "Staatskanzlei" can be translated into State Chancellery, referring to the office of the ministerial president of the Saarland, one of the 16 German states.

7 Limitations of Western Sustainability and CR Concepts

While some researchers might be more optimistic that business can serve as a catalyst to enable change in society (e.g., Idowu and Louche 2011, p. 265; O'Riordan 2017), and leverage the resources they invest in a positive to reach new solutions, other researchers are more pessimistic. Nevertheless, all researchers note the inherent challenges in the lack of a uniform understanding of CR, and its evolvement over time making it difficult to determine and measure any specific concrete meaning.

First, difficulties in clearly separating terms, such as the Charity Principle and the Stewardship Principle, Corporate Social Responsiveness, and Corporate Citizenship (Jamali and Mirshak 2007, pp. 244–246; Lin-Hi 2009, p. 12) are noted. This lack of a clear definition complicates its employment as a solution for the issues facing mankind.

Second, CR is often misused. Researchers frequently focus their criticism on the practice of *greenwashing*, i.e., the practice of deceptively creating the impression that an organisation's products are responsible from a social or environmentally friendly perspective. Greenwashing can be explained by the issue that many companies still see CR more as a marketing tool than as a serious responsibility (Steer and Struve 2017) or a route to competitive advantage (O'Riordan 2017). This occurs when a company singles out one sustainability project but refuses to integrate CR strategically into its core operations. To address this issue, some scholars recommend an integrated strategic CR focus and communication related specifically to their core business e.g., their own products and their complete processes, in order to generate an authentic and trustworthy CR response. For instance, Demmerling (2013, pp. 70–73), Galbreath (2011, p. 103), and Öberseder et al. (2011, p. 5) suggest that companies should only adopt and finance the CR activities which are clearly related to and most decisive for their own industry.

Third, current Sustainability and CR approaches are deemed limited due to difficulties associated with fairly addressing or harmonising the interests of the various stakeholder groups in a way that truly promotes responsible solutions, particularly, when some of those stakeholder groups cannot voice their opinions, e.g., nature or future generations.

Fourth, western concepts of Sustainability and CR are limited by existing laws and regulations based on the fact that these have mainly been formulated for large international corporations. In practice however, small and medium-sized companies (SMEs) are strongly affected by CR. As many of them are increasingly becoming global players, it remains a real challenge for them to integrate and realise CR within their organisational processes and their (often limited) financial means. In short, researchers agree that a lot of research remains to be done on this topic (Breuer 2011, p. 7). Demmerling (2013, p. 45) additionally points out that many SMEs and their stakeholders are insufficiently familiar with CR management and/or communication concepts. As a result, CR is often not yet sufficiently visible or not truly integrated into the business operations. Moreover, in this regard, Pech (2007, pp. 146, 148, 150, 190–192) and Tietmeyer (2001, pp. 61–84) supported by Draba (2012, p. 20) refer to problems which companies might face when they find themselves squeezed between national and international legislation, or in cases of lack of regulation versus over-regulation.

Fifth, Paz-Vega (2010, p. 265) points out that multinational companies operate in a variety of very complex societies and cultures. In this regard, Jones (1999) emphasises the influence of the national social-cultural environment with its institutional structures, as well as the degree of the national economic development on how CR concepts evolve. This broader view of CR encompasses environmental protection, community development, resource conservation, and donations. As a result, a systemic approach to CR is required which recognises the inherent complexity of global business, attempting to concentrate on the unity the interaction between the key elements focusing on "many dimensions; different levels of analysis; various agents; phenomena such as complex causality, equi-finality,[18] and multi-finality; and an obvious conception of the firm as an open system" (Paz-Vega 2010, p. 265). Moreover, Paz-Vega (2010, p. 267) claims that mainstream CR scholarship focuses on western ethnocentrism, which is very likely to require adaptation when applying these insights in a broader international context, e.g., cross-cultural settings with their different environments of beliefs, values, and institutions, as will for instance, become apparent in the African context.

Sixth, Braungart, a prominent representative of sustainability, criticises the existing CR approaches as altogether wrong based on the rationale that they mainly focus on eco-efficiency[19] and not on eco-effectiveness. His own concept of *Cradle to Cradle* tries to side-step the potential conflict which may arise when attempting to balance economic, ecological and social concerns by envisaging a prosperous technological world without any non-degradable waste. According to Braungart, in line with natural processes (bio-mimicry), whatever is produced should either be fully biodegradable or be re-used infinitely without causing any waste. If every country in the world re-structured its economic activities according to the *Cradle to Cradle* concept instead of continuing the current system of *Cradle to Grave* (with *Grave* standing for non-degradable waste), there would be no more waste and no more Carbon Dioxide (CO_2) production. Clearly, such an approach would reduce the current exhaustion of natural resources issue (Braungart and McDonough 2009). It is however also clear that this approach would require an entirely new system and infrastructure for such a concept to be integrated successfully by business.

The various definitions and critical review of the western theoretical solutions to Sustainability, Sustainable Development, and CR which were presented in Part I of this Chapter including many of the related key terms and their underpinning concepts, now form the basis for Part II of the Chapter which investigates their suitability for application or potential requirement for adaptation in an African context.

[18]The term 'Equi-finality' refers to the concept that whatever the input, the outcome is the same. The term 'Multi-finality' means that the same input can result in different outcomes.

[19]Eco-efficiency focuses on the reduction of waste, while eco-effectiveness aims at developing products without any waste which generate positive side-effects.

8 The Development of Sustainability and CR in Africa

8.1 African Perspective on Sustainability and the Ubuntu Ethos

African subsistence farmers have lived sustainably and in harmony with nature for thousands of years (Abdulai 2015, p. 430). As the continent was so sustainable for a long time, there was no real need to develop any specific concepts of sustainability or CR until very recent times. This situation began to change with the start of the "Scramble for Africa." At the Berlin Conference, in 1884–85, European countries divided Africa into a "quilt" and turned it into their fiefdoms[20] in their effort to utilise, rule, and control the continent's rich natural resources and manpower. Numerous western companies established themselves during that time and are still operating in these territories today, in particular for instance, in the mineral and oil sectors. While from an isolated economic perspective, they are successful, the collective negative social and ecological consequences of these activities are not taken into consideration. The British exploitation for gold, copper, and coal in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe and Zambia) in the 19th century, as well as the exploration of oil by the Royal Dutch Shell plc in Nigeria in the 20th century, are examples of how unsustainable a sheer focus on economic expansion can be (Howden 2014; Merriam-Webster 2016; Pakenham 2003; World Development Movement 2015).

This European exploitative approach to Africa forms a striking contrast to the African philosophy of *Ubuntu*. It is an Nguni word from Southern Africa meaning "I am what I am because of who we are". The Zulu translate *Ubuntu* as, "a person is a person through other persons" pointing at the inter-dependency of people from the holistic perspective of humanity and the over-arching connection between every form of life. In this context, *Ubuntu* also focuses on the inter-connectedness of companies with the people and the resources they employ in their value creation processes (Abdulai 2015, p. 433). Overall, there is a strong African belief that no individual stands alone in a strong society (Hansen and Ryan 2006, p. 43; Shuttle 1993, p. 46).

8.2 African Perspective on CR

This *Ubuntu* concept of citizenship can easily be applied to corporations in Africa, based on the rationale that they can be interpreted as somehow embedded into African society. Within this context, they are therefore expected to fulfill certain social demands, such as ethical behaviour, transparency, commitment, and environmental stewardship (Hansen and Ryan 2006, p. 43). This means that if international companies do not support such CR activities in the individual African countries in which they operate, the effects can generate social and environmental issues and risks

[20] An area of land, in particular one that is controlled and rented or paid for by work.

leading among others to unemployment, poverty, and instability, which will in turn negatively affect the operations of the company (Abdulai 2015, p. 437). Based on this logic it becomes clear that the African perspective of CR determines that there is neither a dominance of economic interests nor a balance between economy, ecology, and social affairs. Instead people clearly take precedence over profits because people are the creators of profits (Abdulai 2015, p. 434). This means that the social aspects of the triple bottom line are dominant from an African perspective and that future systems need to be developed to ensure that the economic and environmental factors are addressed in harmony with social interests.

What does that mean in detail? As noted previously, developing increasing living standards via improved life expectancy, literacy, and decreased poverty rates etc. requires looking beyond mere economic considerations, such as growth in GNP. In his book, *Development as Freedom*, Sen (1999) suggested the need to look at the impact which democracy and political freedoms have on the lives and capabilities of the citizens. In this regard Sen suggests that development consists of the removal of the various types of 'unfreedoms' as Sen calls them, or in other words violations of freedom, which leave people with little choice and little opportunity:

> Sometimes the lack of substantive freedoms relates directly to economic poverty, which robs people of the freedom to satisfy hunger, or to achieve sufficient nutrition, or to obtain remedies for treatable illnesses, or the opportunity to be adequately clothed or sheltered, or to enjoy clean water or sanitary facilities. In other cases, the 'unfreedom' links closely to the lack of public facilities and social care, such as the absence of epidemiological programs, or of organized arrangements for healthcare or educational facilities, or of effective institutions for the maintenance of local peace and order. In still other cases, the violation of freedom results directly from a denial of political and civil liberties by authoritarian regimes and from imposed restrictions on the freedom to participate in the social, political, and economic life of the community. (Sen 1999, p. 4)

Despite many open problems, recent developments including the removal of most of Africa's dictators and efforts to get rid of corruption are all steps in the right direction to address these violations of freedoms.

If we assume that the social components of the triple bottom line are particularly important, then it is its collaborative nature of including various stakeholder interests which deems CR a crucial part of Africa's long-term sustainable development. This however requires a new mindset entailing the effective consultation and incorporation of CR views with the aspirations of the community in which the organisations operate. Within this context, by definition, any decision relating to Sustainability and CR requires a long-term strategic approach integrated with the interests of the inherent stakeholders. A refusal to do so can create numerous challenges for the organisations involved as has been demonstrated by the case with the operations of Shell mentioned previously. The environmental degradation due to their operations in the Niger delta has considerably contributed to under-development and poverty as most of the farmlands and rivers for farming and fishing have been polluted by oil spills (Omoweh 2005, pp. 129–257). To address this matter, in 2012, Friends of the Earth, an environmental group, and four Nigerian farmers took the oil giant (Shell) to court in the Netherlands to seek compensation for pollution in the Niger

Delta (Smith-Spark 2012). This example indicates that to avoid the re-occurrence of such negative impacts on society and the environment, companies operating in Africa might generate a more favourable impression if they take the *Ubuntu* ethos seriously and include the needs and concerns of communities and countries in addition to their economic interests. Presumably the lesson learned by Shell and other companies involved in such issues serve as opportunities for corrective action to reminding corporate decision-makers to include a more positive impact on society and the environment in their calculations when investing their resources going forward. By concentrating on stakeholder responsiveness, solutions to social issues can be linked with the planning activities of corporate strategy.

8.3 Shareholder and Stakeholder Approach in an African Context

Seeking to implement the *Ubuntu* principle into the corporate strategies of African companies raises a number of issues including the fundamental question of whether western theoretical models can be applied at all in an African context, or at least how far they might have to be modified in Africa. First, Africa exhibits a distinct set of differences in factors rarely found in Europe, including: economics, politics, cultures, languages, tribes, and religions which have in the past played a role in contributing to instability and conflicts on the continent (Visser et al. 2006, p. 13). As a result, questions such as how to connect oppressive regimes and transparent governance, economic empowerment and social investment, job creation, and environmental protection, have to be dealt with on a suitably profound level in Africa[21] and cannot merely be directly copied from the approach adopted in the western world.

To address the inherent complexity, any CR concept aimed at contributing to sustainable development in Africa has to focus on the *Ubuntu* principle, which can be interpreted as a form of stakeholder approach. To be effective, such CR programmes should no longer be externally driven, i.e., mainly by global shareholder concerns with their major interests in market access, investment incentives, standardisation, and supply chain issues, to mention a few. CR programmes which appeal to external players but are inconsistent with the practical realities on the ground neglect the stakeholder perspective, and are therefore bound to be unsustainable. For instance, such programmes operating from the outside can spark public protests as demonstrated in the example of the Marikana miner's strike at the Lonmin mining company near Rustenberg, South Africa, in 2012, which resulted in 34 miners being shot dead by police. 78 people were wounded and 250 people were arrested (South African History Online 2015). Accordingly, if CR is not effectively applied, the accompanying social instability and environmental destruction can affect the viability and sustainability of the operations of a company. To circumvent these risks,

[21] To deal with African issues, according to Visser et al. (2006), complexity theory, holism, chaos theory, and spiral dynamics might include suitable approaches.

when formulating their strategies, effective organisations respond to their operating environment in ways which are critically aware of the internal pressures and dynamics in the host country, as well as within the communities in which they operate without losing their *raison d'être* as businesses. In this regard, simple prescriptive propositions, such as the examples suggested by Freeman and Reed (1983) including: generalizing the marketing approach to include the needs of each stakeholder in a similar fashion to the way customer needs are evaluated; establishing negotiating process to understand the political nature and interests of key stakeholders; develop a decision-making approach that is pro- rather than re-active; and allocate organisation resources based on the degree of importance of the environmental turbulence; serve as potential guidelines.

Consequently, we propose the need to re-define the vague term "CR" or "CSR" to adapt it to an African perspective of responsibility focusing on corporate responses in which companies regard the countries in which they operate as their home (Abdulai 2015, p. 432). Moreover, this stakeholder-based approach can best operate when it includes the demands of mainly national, regional, and local government authorities, local suppliers, international companies, and NGOs. This definition requires companies in Africa to strategically integrate sustainable development into their action plans which they have worked out and implemented in partnership with the local communities concerned. African governments can play an important role in supporting such investments by providing the necessary legal framework, infrastructure, and financial incentives (Abdulai 2015, pp. 432–435). Via this proposed approach, the relationship between the state and the economy progresses towards a system of co-ordinated market economies (CMEs) which prove successful at integrating the stakeholder approach. In this way, all forms of CR definitions, including Corporate Citizenship, Corporate Social Performance, Corporate Responsiveness, Corporate Governance, etc. can develop and support the implementation of the African-specific CR approach. For instance, South Africa is an example of a country in which the stakeholder approach is becoming of increasing importance (Hansen and Ryan 2006, p. 48). Evidence of this development can be seen, for example, in the integration of sustainability indicators into important political and financial documents, such as the Johannesburg Stock Exchange/JSE Socially Responsible Investment Index/GRI Index (2004) or the *King III Report* (Institute of Directors in South Africa/IoDSA 2009).

8.4 From Zero Sum Philanthropy to the African Philosophy of Ubuntu

So far CR activities in Africa can be interpreted to have been of an archaic, paternalistic, philanthropic nature mainly focused on the narrow interests of achieving corporate profits. As a result, any CR effort of companies acting under the old mindset in Africa can to date be interpreted as 'charity'. Going forward, in order to ensure responsible behaviour, it will be necessary for companies operating in Africa to move beyond this Charity Principle and focus more on concepts such as Corporate Social Responsiveness, Corporate Social Performance and Corporate Citizenship in line with western CR/CSR concepts as discussed in this Chapter. While the *Ubuntu* principle places particular emphasis on social aspects by definition, its inter-dependent nature can clearly include favourable outcomes in form of broader sustainable development. This can additionally result from the mutual benefits of integrating environmental aspects with the economic interests of companies ultimately leading to longer-lasting profits. In the new approach, rights and responsibilities are connected via a form of corporate responsiveness which is aware of the benefits of including stakeholder interests in the overall business rationale. This approach varies significantly from the traditional logic in which the rights to profits are privatised in favor of the company while the social and environmental costs, such as pollution, inequality, poverty, or human rights abuses are socialised thereby moving the responsibilities to the communities. So far, the financial discrepancy between profits accrued to companies and the low costs of CR-related activities require serious re-consideration. To address this issue, company activities do not only have to be improved in favour of CR strategies, but when sustainable projects are adopted they require a long-term comprehensive perspective (Abdulai 2015, pp. 431, 438–440; Kambewa et al. 2010, p. 218). For example, when, in a sustainable project, the construction of an office building is included, the question is not only how to finance it and profit from it, but also how to keep it occupied with satisfied and healthy inhabitants and maintained in the long run (ibid.).

When researchers, such as Abdulai (2015) and Kambewa et al. (2010) explore ways in which businesses and companies operating in Africa can contribute to the sustainable development of the continent, they propose the requirement for a fundamental change of mindset and the adoption of a totally new paradigm within such companies. In order to avoid future accusations of deception and potential whitewashing, this new mindset should be devoid of the past exploitative behaviour of many businesses in Africa, particularly, those multinational corporations which, so far, have been operating on a win-lose paradigm where the foreign business reaps all the benefits and the Africans lose out in the mistreatment of their resources. Instead, the *Ubuntu* concept suggests that this new way of doing business is not a zero-sum game in which one party loses when the other one wins but that instead, the outcomes of the connections between organisations and society can be positive for both. This requires the need for African countries to view the companies operating in their respective countries as partners. Based on the rationale that an unhealthy business environment will adversely impact any development effort, to achieve sustainable development the African Government and communities must work together successfully with those organisations.

As demonstrated by the many past scandals, including the treatment of the community and environment by Shell in Nigeria (Zick 2015), as well as the working conditions (e.g., child labour) and human rights issues in the mines in South Africa[22] (Mining in Africa 2018), and complicated by corruption and the lack of local political, social, and environmental constructs, a key problem for Africa in this transition, is the unwillingness of many transnational and multinational companies (TNCs)[23]. Instead a mindset reset is required which more consequently recognises Africa a market huge potential. This new approach would trigger a shift away from the current dominant shareholder orientated attitude towards the development of a stakeholder-orientated strategic response. The oil sector in Africa is a typical example of exploitation for maximum profit based on undemocratic, corrupt, unsocial, and environmentally destructive conditions (Iyayi 2001, p. 3; Orok 2006, p. 253). A further issue is that the unethical nature of their business operations is frequently condoned by African governments due to the fact of effective social and environmental standards. As a result, most African jobs created by TNCs tend to be low-skilled, low-paid, risky, unhealthy, and transitional (Madeley 2003; Orok 2006, p. 258).

Moreover, although some emerging market countries are gaining ground, there exists an uneven distribution of costs and benefits in today's operating setting of economic globalisation, whereby the Northern countries derive the most benefits while Southern countries mainly bear the financial, social, and environmental burdens (Hirst, Thompson, and Bromley 2009, p. 150; Orok 2006, pp. 251, 259). Accordingly, it comes as no surprise when the turnover of the five largest global corporations surpasses the overall incomes of the 46 poorest countries in the world, most of which are located in Africa. Similarly, the turnover of the top 200 corporations worldwide equals 20 times the combined annual incomes of the 1.2 billion poorest people in the world (Craig 2003, p. 50; Orok 2006, p. 251).

These issues point to the requirement for a fundamental change in mindset not only of the corporate players but additionally of African Governments. Despite the uneven distribution of costs and benefits noted immediately above the capitalist shareholder-orientated ideology with its primary focus on profit maximisation in the exclusive interest of shareholders has nevertheless received a lot of support from many African governments thereby increasing poverty and inhumane working conditions. Moreover, even if African governments wanted to change these conditions, they cannot, as they are forced to compete with other countries for foreign direct investment (FDI) putting them in a weak negotiating position amongst competing rivals. As a consequence, they often find themselves with no other option than to re-channel their financial resources away from extending the necessary basic infrastructure towards supporting prospective TNCs, e.g., in the form of very favorable terms of taxation, lack of price controls, the right to transfer all the profits to foreign headquarters, as well as poor labor conditions. Furthermore, the bribes often given to African governments serve to help them to retain their power when they allow TNCs to exploit

[22]Please note however that the situation is slowly improving: The number of fatalities dropped over the years from over 200 in 2007 to 128 in 2010, and further down to 77 in 2015, due to a constant increase in safety measures.

[23]TNCs (Transnational Corporations) are sometimes called MNCs (Multinational Corporations). In this Chapter we adopt the term 'TNCs' to signify both types of organisational evolution.

African resources, e.g., when developing oil projects in Nigeria or Cameroon (Ndika 2004; Orok 2006, p. 254). These issues can only be changed if the prevalent philanthropic approach moves towards a more effective stakeholder-orientated version of CR based on the *Ubuntu* philosophy. In this regard, Rajak highlights the need for neutral bodies to decide on the collective good within a concept of responsibility. Right now, a predominant philanthropic approach (gift-giving) could potentially be deemed irresponsible based on the rationale that it leaves the recipient in a position of indebtedness, empowers the employer, and weakens the other stakeholders, such as local governments and NGOs. Under such conditions, the economic, social, and environmental problems at community level cannot be effectively solved (Rajak 2006, pp. 191, 195–199).

8.5 Future Role of the Private Sector in Transforming to Ubuntu CR in Africa

A strengthened stakeholder approach and African-driven solutions necessarily mean that the role of the private sector in Africa definitively has to be strengthened. Depending on their size, companies have a key function in bringing together key stakeholders on local, regional, and national levels to work on reasonable, feasible, and African-driven solutions. This is even more important given the issue that many African countries exhibit corruption or face the situation in which the state has totally failed at providing the infrastructure and the social and environmental framework typically available in functioning circumstances.

As mentioned before, many African governments neglect human needs. Thus, African companies—even those which do not 'officially' meet international guidelines and CR benchmarks—play a decisive role in providing healthcare, food and water supply, education, security, taxes, and income, as well as to a lesser degree human rights and environmental protection (Hayes 2006, p. 94). Such aspects should not only be part of all organisation's CR concept for operating in Africa but, based on the rationale that unhealthy workers in a destructed environment can never work productively, nor can poor customers and an insufficient infrastructure make real sales possible, they additionally play a key role as a core requirement for profits.

A potential first step could focus on the provision of basic requirements such as access to food. Once an agreement on business activities has been reached between the key stakeholders, a key responsibility of the private sector is the provision and access to acceptable/appropriate goods, such as for example the production of sufficient food and other relevant commodities in the interests of the local society. In this respect, a major hurdle is the current state of the African processing industry which lacks marketing, product quality, knowledge transfer, and finances. Furthermore, structural challenges exist with respect to the supply chain. Such deficiencies could yield the wrong variety and quantity of produce and product; low quality; insufficient reliability and late delivery, insufficient cooling, obstacles due to customs and lack of or inadequate certification. In addition, cultural obstacles, such as life philosophies, or business inexperience, including the potential lack of co-operation skills regarding business transactions may hinder progress. Differing time perceptions could also complicate matters, e.g., the fact that the life of many African people revolves more around the present than the future (Hooft 2006, pp. 217–219).

A key aim for the African economy going forward has to accordingly focus on gradually closing the gap between African production and the requirements of western retailers. This process industrialises the continent and raises the overall living standard in African agricultural areas. To achieve this aim, the African economy needs evolve to become more market and consumer- instead of production-driven, i.e., produce should be grown, packed, and shelf-stable according to acceptable world standards. Such changes should also include appropriate consultation by governments, NGOs, and trade associations to be trained in successful export strategies with links to buyers worldwide (Hooft 2006, p. 214). One positive example is certified fair trade, such as the organic fresh-cut pineapples sold in the Dutch supermarket Albert Heijn. The business agreement involves the development and certification of 70 African farmers and their pineapple production (Hooft 2006, p. 216). Another positive example is *Cotton made in Africa (CmiA)*, an international project which supports a million African farmers to produce environmentally sound cotton that is bought by clothing companies worldwide (CmiA 2016). Finally, to close the gap between African produce and the requirements of western retailers, the African contribution to agrarian production should not be limited to farming and manual labor outside, but also evolve to include the professional processing of goods leading to new jobs, as well as management positions for African nationals.

8.6 Management Structures of Transnational Corporations (TNCs)

The TNCs can be considered the torch bearers for achieving CR in Africa. Indeed, some are already putting the stakeholder approach into practice on a large scale via their entry into African low-income mass markets. Doing business in Africa in a sustainable way requires a TNC international project manager to be responsible to a wide range of stakeholder groups. This can include engaging with governmental organisations, particularly in the country where the TNC has its local office, as well as with international, national, and regional non-governmental organisations in its own international headquarters, i.e., all their African stakeholders (Boli and Thomas 1999; Egels-Zandén and Kallifatides 2006, p. 82). According to London and Hart (2004), instead of 'westernizing' corporate activities in Africa, TNCs should focus on increased 'social embeddedness' using the strengths of their local surroundings, work with local stakeholders, and thereby successfully deal with their demands. In this process, it is advisable for the international manager to co-operate with local managers on the ground who understand and are in a position to successfully interact within the local context, e.g., someone who is employed at a local African subsidiary close to the main TNC's business operations in Africa. This approach has been labeled: the dual-project-manager professional system by Egels-Zandén and Kallifatides (2006, pp. 84 and 86).

Within this system, the international manager is responsible for what has been termed: *structural social performance*[24] involving satisfying stakeholders' demands when formulating policies, reports, public statements, and project presentation. In addition, the local manager is responsible for implementing the *social performance output* including: installations, training, recruitment, developing a cost-effective business model, as well as working on a reasonable trade-off between the international and the local stakeholders' demands on the spot. According to Egels-Zandén and Kallifatides, this duality leads "to a hierarchical and geographic separation of the loci of control for the project's social performance" (Egels-Zandén and Kallifatides 2006, p. 87; Mitnick 2000, pp. 419–465). In this approach, the clear aim of the dual-project-manager professional system is to bridge the gap between the local stakeholders and their cultural traditions on the one hand and global standards and policies on the other. To elaborate, in practice, the local manager is frequently inclined to act according to the principle of 'expedient action' with the aim of finding practical solutions to the problems at hand instead of following any fixed moral, political, or other idea of CR. This 'fire-fighting' response can lead to a certain lack of consistency between the required structural social performance and the local stakeholders' demands. This can result in divergence between rhetoric and reality regarding for instance: the inclusion of women, environmental demands, etc. As such, because a demanding task requires the close co-operation between the international and the local managers, Egels-Zandén and Kallifatides (2006, p. 89) suggest that both functions should ideally be merged. Nonetheless, a noted problematic area for both international and local CR managers remains the question of how to reduce corruption and increase local management skills to a degree which ensures reasonable political and economic decision-making which fairly includes the interests of the African people and their environment.

Furthermore, some special characteristics need to be taken into account when doing business in African low-income mass markets typical to the operating scenario in which most African stakeholders operate. Such markets are based on an informal economy with social rather than legal contracts, very limited protection of patents and brands, and a rather unpredictable business environment with unexpected developments (Arnold and Quelch 1998, pp. 7–20; De Soto 2000, pp. 181–189; Egels-Zandén and Kallifatides 2006, p. 84; London and Hart 2004, pp. 350–370). Because these aspects span a broad field of study, it is beyond the scope of this Chapter to elaborate on these characteristics in greater detail. However, given their central importance in developing mass markets, we now turn to address the specific theme of SMEs.

[24] Referring to the requirements of the concept and communication of social performance in contrast with social performance *output* which refers to the results or output in the form of concrete activities.

8.7 Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs)

SMEs typically play a more important role as stakeholders in African developing countries which could be leveraged to promote CR stakeholder interests in line with the *Ubuntu* Principle. For example, in Botswana in 2004, there were 70,000 SMEs with less than 100 workers each providing 50% of the private-sector employment, i.e., 150,000 people. These SMEs contribute about 25% of the national GDP (Government of Botswana 2004; Tesfayohannes 2006, p. 236). This means that going forward, instead of spending a lot of money on importing goods, African states could rely more strongly on their SMEs to produce and sell these goods on a local basis.

By promoting entrepreneurship, meeting broad local demands for goods and services, and helping society to transform from an agrarian to an industrial state require development, SMEs are accordingly vital for the indigenous economy and its social structure mechanisms for generating mass employment. However, one serious problem affecting African SMEs is their lack of financial resources. They suffer from debt burdens, liquidity risks, lack of appropriate planning, and technology. A specific issue is the lack of entrepreneurial education in SMEs due to the fact that their work is often regarded as inferior to other places of work. This issue is also partly related to the perceived inferiority of some SME occupations. Moreover, SMEs often suffer from lack of experience in dealing with professional business networking and government assistance programmes (Botswana Institute for Development Policy Analysis Briefing/BIDPA 1998; Tesfayohannes 2006, p. 237). In this regard, because women are an important stakeholder group, they could increasingly play a more important role. However, this is often difficult given local perceptions which can lead to women being stuck in more traditional roles of caring for family and childcare. Assuming that these changes are possible, if SMEs could gain access to sufficient funds and knowledge, they could be important players in realising CR practice based on the *Ubuntu* philosophy.

9 Final Considerations

9.1 Conclusion

Triggered by the serious developmental challenges faced by the African continent which the SDGs address, including in particular poverty eradication, education, industrialisation, health, and environmental protection, this Chapter traced the development of western concepts of Sustainability and CR to investigate their suitability and relevance for achieving the SDGs 2030 in an African-specific context. Following the principle: Live from the yield and not from the resources, sustainability and sustainable development were presented as key solutions for mankind's future survival. Focusing on the African context, the previous exploitative European approach to Africa highlighted in this Chapter was noted to stand in striking contrast with the African philosophy of *Ubuntu* “a person is a person through other persons” or “I am what I am because of who we are”. The qualitative review, which was based exclusively on secondary data, established the rationale for the recommendation to consider a new African concept of CR emanating from the practices inherent in the *Ubuntu* approach. Emphasing the inter-dependency of people from the holistic perspective of humanity and the over-arching intrinsic relationship between every form of life, the *Ubuntu* approach was proposed as the fundamental basis for a future African CR concept. The rationale for this choice is based on the *Ubuntu* focus on the inter-connectedness of companies with the people and the resources they employ in their value creation processes (Abdulai 2015, p. 433). Overall, because *Ubuntu* expresses the strong African belief that no individual stands alone in a strong society (Hansen and Ryan 2006, p. 43; Shuttle 1993, p. 46), it is deemed a particularly suitable approach from which to develop responsible response strategies by governments and policy makers, as well as corporations. Consequently, we conclude that following the cultural value dimensions inherent in the *Ubuntu* philosophy on the African content can contribute to meeting the SDGs 2030.

Our critical evaluation of the new SDGs 2030 from an African perspective concludes that the cultural and other differences between the CR approaches in Africa and the West presented in this chapter are essentially not explicitly addressed in the SDGs. Nevertheless, the broad scope and frequently inter-related nature of many of the SDGs (in particular relating to the themes of poverty eradication, education, industrialisation, health, and environmental protection, for instance), highlights their crucial salience for Africa. As a result, while all of the SDGs can be deemed relevant in identifying a solution to sustainable development in Africa, only Goal seventeen concretely states its relevance for developing countries. Additionally, by highlighting the key significance of partnerships when implementing sustainable solutions with its focus on the aim to “Revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development”, goal seventeen is most directly linked with the holistic inter-connectedness inherent in the *Ubuntu* philosophy. More specifically Goal Seventeen states:

> Urgent action is needed to mobilize, redirect, and unlock the transformative power of trillions of dollars of private resources to deliver on sustainable development objectives. Long-term investments, including foreign direct investment, are needed in critical sectors, **especially in developing countries**. (United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2018)

Furthermore, the aims stated in goal eight are also deemed particularly salient in the quest to solve the African dilemma via achieving the SDGs 2030. Goal eight focusing on progress at the grass roots level of the people states:

> Roughly half the world’s population still lives on the equivalent of about US$2 a day. And in too many places, having a job doesn’t guarantee the ability to escape from poverty. This slow and uneven progress requires us to rethink and retool our economic and social policies aimed at eradicating poverty. A continued lack of decent work opportunities, insufficient investments and under-consumption **lead to an erosion of the basic social contract underlying democratic societies: that all must share in progress**. The creation of quality jobs will remain a major challenge for almost all economies well beyond 2015. Sustainable economic growth will require societies to create the conditions that allow **people** to have quality jobs that stimulate the economy while not harming the environment. Job opportunities and decent

working conditions are also required for the whole working age population. (United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2018)

Given the resources and size of the African continent, a prerequisite for achieving the SDGs on a global scale will require that governments, policy-makers, and corporate decision-makers pay active attention to all seventeen SDGs (and their related eight MDGs) when considering Africa. The authors reason that the new *Ubuntu* approach proposed in this Chapter facilitates a practical, and applicable response to the SDGs 2030 suited to the particular context of the African environment and culture. In practice this implies that the strategies of governments and policy makers, as well as the Corporate Responsibility of business in Africa can contribute to meet the SDGs 2030 if they are adapted to suit the cultural value dimensions inherent in the *Ubuntu* approach.

Finally, the examination of the applicability of western sustainability and CR concepts presented in this Chapter leads to five specific conclusions for achieving sustainable development and thereby meeting the SDGs 2030 on the continent:

First, because the western concept of sustainability had been practiced by large parts of the African population up to the 20th century (mainly in the form of subsistence farming), there was no real need in the past for the development of a particular Africa-specific concept for sustainable development or CR-specific practices. Since the onset of African industrialisation which started much later than in Western countries, this is now changing in particular in light of globalisation. This means that a new corporate response for sustainable development to meet the SDG requirements is now required for the African continent.

Second, given the very different historical, economic, political, social, environmental, and cultural framework specific to African states and their people, the Chapter set out to address the question of whether western sustainability/CR/etc. theories are applicable. If at all, the authors propose that current philanthropic company efforts, i.e., the Charity Principle and the Stewardship Principle, need to evolve towards the stakeholder approach. We further suggest that concepts such as: Corporate Social Responsiveness, Corporate Social Performance and Corporate Citizenship at the moment appear to best fit to an African-specific concept based on the rationale that they lie closest to the African philosophy of *Ubuntu*. To further develop and support the implementation of the African-specific CR approach a transformed corporate mind-set is required supported by clear Corporate Governance. This new approach would replace the current zero-sum concept with a new corporate attitude in which the interests of all relevant stakeholders involved, including the African communities strongly affected by business operations are regarded. Given that social and environmental aspects are so strongly linked in Africa, within the TBL concept, social concerns are clearly promoted, and environmental issues are additionally given more priority in the future.

Third, at all levels, both locally and internationally, in order to continue reaping the profits, TNCs have to finally become accountable not only exclusively for their economic interests, but additionally more inclusively for the social and environmental implications of their operations in developing countries. We propose that a CR stakeholder approach based on applying TBL principles via the *Ubuntu* philosophy to the seventeen SDGs could help African countries to optimally achieve sustainable development.

Fourth, on a practical level, evolving to the new form of inclusive corporate responsiveness, the SDG-focused responsibility outlined in this Chapter has serious implications for both African, as well as international companies. Within Africa, because African states often fail to function optimally, the private sector plays a very special role, particularly SMEs, in promoting sustainability and CR. The challenge for TNCs on an international level remains to bridge the gap between local cultural traditions in Africa and global CR standards and policies. To meet this challenge, the dual-project-manager professional system noted previously might prove successful.

Fifth, this Chapter has shown that when doing business in Africa, decision-makers have to be aware of the extreme complexity and uniqueness of the setting, particularly regarding social and environmental concerns. One cannot automatically blame business for all the global problems. The reasons may lie on a more fundamental level. However, the main argument in favour of adopting CR practices based on SDGs is that, in a world with weakened nation states, particularly in Africa, and growing international corporations with huge financial means have huge potential to effectively deal with some of these global problems.

This Chapter concludes that by inclusively taking all stakeholders‘ concerns into account, the African *Ubuntu* concept of CR could offer an African-specific solution to solve African problems. To address the complexity of the African-specific context, the authors advocate that Africa's challenges can best be mitigated within a future framework of efforts and solutions closely connected with the concept of sustainable development based on the SDGs 2030.

9.2 Outlook

There are two key arguments for why sustainability/sustainable development, the SDGs, and CR practices in Africa could become even more important in the future: First, given the extremely difficult circumstances for the majority of the population, in line with the concept of *Ubuntu*, social issues are by far the most important on any CR decision-maker's mind in Africa (Hayes 2006, p. 95). Second, while concern for the environment is currently relatively low on the African agenda, going forward it should be given more attention for a variety of reasons, including the nature of the African continental economy, the relationship between poverty and the environment, as well as between the link between social well-being, health, and the environment.

Implementing a future stakeholder approach in line with the SDGs 2030, will require a review of the recommendations offered by African institutions and networks. For instance, to address the challenge of corruption, which is strongly inhibiting African progress towards CR, the *Commission for Africa's report from 2005 entitled: Our Common Interest* suggested that a pre-condition for increasing overseas trade should be improved internal governance in Africa. They highlighted the requirement for ECAs (Export Credit Agencies) to demand high government standards as a prerequisite for receiving loans, guarantees, or insurances. This report includes further recommendations, such as facilitating vocational and tertiary education with incentives for students not to locate elsewhere following the completion of their studies but instead to stay and work in Africa. It also mentions that property rights, ownership of assets, money, and markets in Africa should be given to the African stakeholders, as the report notices a development of inter-African trade networks (Commission for Africa 2005, pp. 87, 151, 181, 257, 305). A further approach suggests strengthening African control of multi-national TNCs in order to gain power over African financial resources (such as taxes, etc.) which could be channeled towards solving social and environmental problems in co-operation with African governments and civil society (McIntosh 2006, p. 264).

Despite these recommended improvements, the question nevertheless remains whether corruption can at all be effectively addressed. Notwithstanding this challenge, stakeholders in Africa and around the world, particularly international consumers and NGOs have become more powerful due to the constant improvement of information technology and communication systems. As a result, global activities and related mistakes of companies are already quite transparent and will be even more so in the future. The increasing pressure posed by these developments by the international stakeholder public can take the form of boycotts of certain products, as in the case of Nike (Breuer 2011, pp. 1, 6; Lin-Hi 2009, p. 11). Even for the individual stakeholder, in particular Web 2.0, with its possibilities to actively use the Internet (Weblogs, Podcasts, Social Networking Sites, etc.) is already playing an important role in this context. This means that going forward, given the immediate access of consumers and other stakeholders to pressure groups, the stakeholder influence and their frequently critical stance of global, social, and environmental problems cannot be underestimated.

When addressing the demands of stakeholders, such as NGOs, consumers, pressure and other groups, in order to demonstrate concrete and calculable CR, companies increasingly use professional reporting methods based on the triple-bottom-line approach (Orok 2006, p. 255). In that way, companies can become more attractive by improving their reputation via demonstrating to their stakeholders how they not only focus on their economic interests of profit-making but additionally take social and environmental concerns into account. This trend is also true in an African context.

Nevertheless, attempting to be sustainable and practice CR remains a complex task because even with the best of intentions, something can always go wrong. The release of Nile Perch[25] into Lake Victoria is only one example of how good ideas of CR can turn into a disaster when sustainability aspects and the perspectives of experienced stakeholders are not properly taken into account (Kambewa et al. 2010, p. 228; Smith, Bhattacharya, Vogel, and Levine 2010, p. 4). Influencing forces such as globalisation and climate change pose further complications. As the globalisation process becomes increasingly more dominant, the role and responsibility of both

[25]The introduction of the Nile Perch, a giant food fish, into Lake Victoria contributed to the destruction of native fish populations, the environment, and living conditions of the local population alike.

TNCs, as well as indigenous companies becomes prevalent, particularly with regard to avoiding the mistakes which foreign companies can make when doing business in a totally unknown environment. Climate change is another reason why the promotion of African-specific CR practices in favour of sustainability is so pressing. Because Africa has high levels of poverty, a very special geography, a particularly vulnerable climate and a poor infrastructure, climate change is threatening Africa to a larger degree than other continents (McIntosh 2006, p. 265). Its effects have so far been most strongly felt in African countries and are related, for example, to a lack of water security on a continent where two thirds of the rural and one quarter of the urban population already lack access to safe drinking water (International Institute for Environment and Development/IIED 2005; Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change/IPCC 2001).

This Chapter could be the starting point for further in-depth field research in Africa and other continents. Subsequent research of different indigenous and international companies operating in a variety of African countries could yield insightful data via case studies of how CR works in practice and how African companies in different industries and countries not yet applying CR can be supported in its implementation. Within this context, future research should find and analyse the reasons why the many approaches mentioned in this Chapter have not yet been realised. With regard to the implementation of CR in Africa, competition related to the special case of the Chinese and their strong business interests in Africa triggers questions relating to how such business operations can strengthen or inhibit the spreading of sustainability. Such questions, as well as the climate change issues noted above clearly require special investigation. In this context, the further, more general question arises of how the competing interests between companies, countries, and individuals can be leveraged to help instead of hinder sustainable CR in Africa in general and how specifically these issues influence Africa's contribution to meeting the worldwide UN SDGs 2030.

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