
Introduction: A humanistic stance towards CV – taking a critical perspective on the role of business in society

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1 Corporate volunteering is more than strategic philanthropy

Moral issues in management are a cutting-edge subject in the business world as well as in society at large (Crane et al., 2008). In an age of weakened nation states and globalised societies (e.g., Palazzo and Scherer, 2006; Beck, 1999; Suchman, 1995), the notion of corporations as ‘good citizens’ is discussed for its high potential to (re-)define the relationship between business and society (Windsor, 2001).

Corporate action is increasingly demanded in the face of governmental cutbacks and challenge enterprises to act as so called ‘institutional citizens’ (Matten and Moon, 2008; Scherer and Palazzo, 2007; Beck, 1999). Simultaneously, we observe a growth of strategic management practices that reach beyond the company’s core business; notably there is a specific tendency to strategise corporate philanthropic engagement (McWilliams et al., 2006). Thus, today more than ever, companies are expected to make a virtue out of necessity and turn this virtue into strategic advantages (Windsor, 2001; Porter and Kramer, 2002). To cope with this oxymoron of ‘strategic philanthropy’, companies consequently apply management concepts, such as corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainability reports, and initiate companywide programmes in corporate citizenship (CC) (Wetzel and Rosenbichler, 2009).

Corporate volunteering (CV) as an expression of ‘good CC’ seems to be a promising management concept to achieve both high moral standards of business conduct as well as economic success (e.g., Basil et al., 2009; Peterson, 2004a, 2004b; Quirk, 1999). CV usually takes the form of local charitable projects that companies support and their employees perform (as organisational and private citizens). Therewith, this manifestation of corporate community involvement is publicly more visible and tangible than other forms of citizenship behaviour such as corporate donations or the establishment of foundations. Besides the social good, many authors follow a utility rationale and associate CV with the attainment of valued business goals such as the enhancement of employee motivation and commitment or reputational gains with regard to future

employees and clients (e.g., Herzig, 2006; Peterson, 2004b; Geroy et al., 2000; Hess et al., 2002).

In accordance with the insinuation of philanthropic activities contributing to strategic management, the academic interest in CV also gains momentum: of the roughly 17,000 articles found by the scientific research engine Google Scholar (date of origin between 1990 and 2010) the vast majority (93%) was published between 2004 and 2010.

However, we perceive the existing CV literature that mostly emerges within a functionalist paradigm, to be inconclusive. It suffers from three major deficits which impede the development of a comprehensive picture of the subject:

- *Missing theoretical alternatives:* The CV concept lacks theoretical reflection. Mostly following a functionalist, i.e., instrumental or utilitarian understanding of the relation of business and society (Scherer and Palazzo, 2007; Margolis and Walsh, 2003), CV is framed as one possible manifestation of a firm's CC-strategy that promotes its corporate image or personnel development. This perspective constricts CC as well as CV to an instrumental understanding (Matten and Moon, 2005) and thereby – in a positivistic manner – favours empirical evidence and knowledge that contributes to the stabilisation of the current economic ideology of efficiency and effectiveness (Alvesson et al., 2009; van der Voort et al., 2009). Therewith other perspectives, such as individual motives for volunteering or specific NPO-needs tend to be ignored, streamlined, or adapted to fit this line of reasoning.
- *Missing empirical foundation:* In line with the utilitarian premises on CC-activities most contributions assume the (international) growth of CV practices to be motivated by the expected benefits for diverse stakeholder groups such as society, employees, and employers. Yet, sound empirical evaluations of these benefits are scarce and if they exist, they draw a complex and often ambiguous picture of CV activities (e.g., De Gilder et al., 2005; Peterson, 2004a; Lee and Higgins, 2001).
- *Missing connectivity between scientific researchers:* Researchers publish articles on CV from numerous disciplinary perspectives and rarely build on and advance each other's works. Whereas, multidisciplinary is essential in CV research to cover the subject's breadth, the lack of a conjunct scientific community obstructs the rigorous processing of its depth. Thus, a continuing scientific discourse and the sustained development of research-based knowledge about CV become ever more difficult.

It is the objective of this special issue to attend to these deficits: firstly, we integrate the disciplinary perspectives of psychological, economical and sociological researchers on CV. Secondly, we gather various empirical studies on CV that coalesce to produce a more differentiated picture of CV by acknowledging its complexity and ambiguity. Thereby, we hope to provide an elaborated empirical foundation to the CV phenomenon that will permit a more qualified use it in practice. Thirdly, and specifically within this opening article, we offer remedy to the first-mentioned deficit of missing theoretical alternatives by promoting a critical position toward CV. Our position is based on our perspectives as work- and organisational psychologists as well as sociologists and culminates in a 'humanistic' (according to Scherer, 1998; Burrell and Morgan, 1979) stance toward CV, by:

- a focusing on the individual experience of CV

- b critically reflecting the ‘naturally’ given social structures, such as economic premises, power relations in organisations or the dominant view of the employee as a human resource that needs to be cultivated (Alvesson et al., 2009).

We thus set ourselves apart from instrumental premises to corporations’ community involvements. Taking the individual-centred view permits us to expand our view on the social complexity of the CV phenomenon. Speaking with Edward and Willmott (2008, p.405) we “bring[ing] corporate citizenship into the corporation”. In the light of a ‘critical performativity’ (Spicer et al., 2009) we focus on the role of organisational members and their possibilities to influence the implementation of CV-activities. Ergo, we call for a more differentiated perspective on specific needs and values relevant for voluntary employee engagements (e.g., personal sense-making, self-determination, etc.) as well as an elaborated concept of how the organisational conduct of such activities ought to be designed to succeed (e.g., the role and responsibilities of management and line managers for the promotion of CV). Thus, we shift the focus from the company to the individual contributing to the CV process (cf. Margolis and Walsh, 2003; Wood, 1991).

Hence, our critical position alludes to Matten and Crane’s (2005) ‘extended view’ of businesses’ role in society that scrutinises the premises made in the current debate on the effects of participation and (community) involvement by companies in post-industrial societies (Ulrich, 2008; Scherer and Palazzo, 2007).

Following these opening reflections the paper is structured in three main parts: in the first chapter, we will roughly outline the current state of theories in the field of business and society. By following the metaphor of corporations as ‘citizens’ (Moon et al., 2005; Stoke, 2002), we will offer a different answer to the question “What’s a business for?” (Handy, 2002). Consequently, this view: “(...) denies that social relations should (naturally) be thought of as exclusively instrumental – that is, in terms of maximising output from a given input” [Alvesson et al., (2009), p.11]. In the second part, we will deepen our individualistic approach from a work and organisational psychological perspective and highlight important questions and research fields for the future. We then finish our reflections with a short review of the papers that comprise this special issue.

2 From business to society

2.1 CV as a potentially integrative concept between business and society

Companies are granted their legitimacy (Suchman, 1995) and power by society in accordance with the ‘iron law of responsibility’ postulated by Davis (1973). If they fail to behave in a responsible manner, they lose their popular backing (Wood, 1991).

In this context philanthropic endeavours such as CV are promoted as innovative CC forms by which companies actively express their commitment to society in general (e.g., Matten and Moon, 2008; Schöffmann, 2001; Habisch, 2003; Porter and Kramer, 2002; Logan and Tuffrey, 2000; Halley, 1999).

Further, CV is presented not only as contributing to companies’ legitimacy (e.g., reputational gains or the employees’ commitment to the organisation) but also to foster economic success. Indeed, the potential of CV to create a ‘win-win-situation’ for all involved parties is one of the most frequently used arguments for its realisation.

As a result, the focus on efficiency and effectiveness, which is still the dominant view on the role of business in society (Ulrich, 2008; Handy, 2002), is reproduced and stabilised – even in the arena of companies' charitable engagements. Other aspects of CV, however, that are important for its successful implementation in practice are neglected: For example, the enabling of (collective) self-determination in the decision to actively take part in corporate community involvement, participatory processes in their initiation and implementation or the individual redefinition (sense-making) of the activities' profound goals on behalfs of the employees as volunteers and citizens (Alvesson et al., 2009). Additionally, the concept's integrative value for businesses and local communities is largely ignored in the literature. It will only exploit its integrative potential when the utility rationale is overcome.

In the following, we present a theoretical antidote by conceptualising corporations as 'deliberative citizens' (e.g., Scherer and Palazzo, 2007) and opt for an integrated view on the company's relation to the employees as its core internal stakeholders (e.g., Ulrich, 2008).

2.2 Corporations as 'deliberative citizens' – a procedural perspective

CSR and related concepts, such as the instrumental and descriptive stakeholder theory (cf. Donaldson and Preston, 1995) are more and more criticised for their functional and somewhat conservative understanding of business' role in society (e.g., Vogel, 2005; Margolis and Walsh, 2003). Friedman's (1970) notion: "The business of business is to increase its profits", is questioned due to its shortcomings in incorporating current institutional changes that are popularly referred to by the catchwords of globalisation, individualisation and the pluralisation of values (Palazzo and Scherer, 2006; Andriof and McIntosh, 2001; Beck, 1999).

As influential economic and societal actors, companies are pressured to actively take part in stakeholder dialogues or even the political will formation (Matten and Moon, 2005; Stoke, 2002) in local communities: "(...) the aim is to (re)establish a political order where economic rationality is circumscribed by democratic institutions and procedures" [Scherer and Palazzo, (2007), p.1097]. Whereas the goal is explicitly formulated, it is the underlying process that remains vague in the CC literature. Remedy is promised by approaches that rest upon habermasian discourse ethics: According to the concept of 'deliberative democracy' (Habermas, 1996, cited in Scherer and Palazzo, 2007) the public deliberation of free and equal citizens is at the core of legitimate political decision-making and self-government. Adapted to the business realm it follows that companies (i.e., their managements) and their stakeholders (in our case, the employees as volunteers) have to address their conflicts, share information, exchange arguments and make decisions in a discourse, i.e., a procedural way. This implies the willingness to expose one's position to validity claims and the motivation to strive for mutual understanding (Palazzo and Scherer, 2007). Thereby, the locus of morality and the possibility to gain legitimacy (Ulrich, 2008; Osterloh and Tiemann, 1995) shifts from a problem oriented focus to a more procedural one (Gentile, 2010). The appeal of deliberative democracy as a specific expression of CC therefore lies: "(...) in re-inscribing the meaning of corporate citizenship in a way that anticipates its relevance for addressing a future crisis of legitimacy and identity for corporations" [Edward and Willmott, (2008), p.415].

The concept of democratic deliberation guides the attention of the CC researcher to a combination of ideas of process, morality, inclusion, participation and openness (ibid.).

Therein, democratic deliberation may be understood as a problem solving strategy in the face of the above-mentioned institutional changes (Moon et al., 2005). As a result, it expands the defining discourse on the core elements of CC and the responsibilities of companies: deliberative democracy “serves to revive and reactivate, (...), the term, corporate citizenship’ in relation to emergent and fast-moving debates – on work-life balance or on climate change” [Edward and Willmott, (2008), p. 416f.] or CV as discussed in this paper.

In line with this point of view, the value of ‘performativity’ understood as: “a principle that subordinates knowledge and truth to the production of efficiency” [Fournier and Grey, (2000), p.17, cited in Alvesson et al., (2009), p.11], loses its primacy vis-à-vis other values that exceed the company-focused utility. Consequently companies are well advised to bargain for their legitimacy in other languages than the performance driven dialect of ‘neo-classicistish’. Deliberative corporate citizens not only assume societal responsibility beyond their self-interest, but also do so by including the interests of one of their core stakeholder groups – their employees.

2.3 *Employees as citizens – a humanistic stance towards CV*

The question: “What’s a business for?” (Handy, 2002) arises in regard to internal organisational processes when human manpower is subordinated to corporate goals. At the least since Lewin’s (1920) notion of the two faces of work the answer is usually two-fold: The one face of work is the attainment of specific goals that are set by the employer and employees contribute to their achievement (e.g., doing the job for money – even though it is hard work). Viewed from a humanistic perspective the second face emerges and circumscribes the working activity as a purpose for its own (e.g., doing the job because one is intrinsically motivated – even though it is hard work). In contrast to the first face, the second one is often associated with positive emotions and experiences during the accomplishment of work assignments. Following Leontjew (1982) and other exponents of activity theory, we value this second face as part of a successful life. Individual sense-making, i.e., the enactment of personal values and motives in the interaction with ones surroundings plays a fundamental role for the development of one’s personality and (work) motivation.

In the CV context taking, the humanistic stance results in the necessity to include the employees’ perspectives (as volunteers) in contrast to or alignment with the current performance orientation. Consequently, we claim that the focus on CV be changed: Although not losing the perspective of the company we shift our attention from the abstract human resources to the concrete and individually motivated citizens and their personal values. A major part of business’ value for society is the provision and organisation of work activities that contribute to fulfilment of the individual need for sense-making, self-determination and participation as the fundamental motivating factors of an individual’s life (Clary and Snyder, 1999; Deci and Ryan, 2002; Oldham and Hackman, 1980). These work activities are mostly mandatory but may also be voluntary in nature, i.e., comprise CV.

In sum, taking a critical perspective on CV as one manifestation of companies acting according to their citizen status implies, procedurally speaking, a deliberative approach to the implementation of CV and the individual rather than the company to be in the focus of the voluntary work engagements. The humanistic view and its focus on the motives and needs of individual actors enables us to perceive and sharpen, analytically as well as

empirically, important frictions and power inequalities between the different actors participating in specific CV-activities. We elaborate on consequences and questions resulting from the critical perspective on CV in the next section. But before we discuss the role CV can potentially play in (post-)industrial work environments.

3 From society to business

3.1 CV in the changing work life – new targets for research

Within the debate around post-industrial employment markets attention has been given to the fact that this new societal contract comes along with new psychological contracts between employers and employees (Raeder and Grote, 2005). Employees nowadays operate as managers of their (wo-)manpower (Voß and Pongratz, 1998). As organisational citizens they are asked to sustain their employers' interests beyond job-inherent expectations that are formalised in job descriptions (e.g., van Dick et al., 2006). They need to be permanently ready for change – preparing by lifelong learning and educating oneself (Rifkin, 1995) – ever ready to being relocated for the sake of career advancements, reacting quickly to work-related demands beyond traditional working hours resulting in the spreading of work into private life and vice versa. In sum, work realities are changing in that individual lives – in volume and in relevance – are increasingly becoming part of the professional roles (Rifkin, 1995; Mutz, 2002).

Work and organisational scientists are mandated to understand and humanely design the changing work environments. Therein, researching the individual orientation towards CV opens up a promising learning environment as volunteering has been suggested to be a psycho-social resource that may contribute to a successful work-life-integration, learning and social life at the work place, development and expression of personal values, and provide further meaning to one's job (e.g., Peters et al., 2008; Mojza et al., 2010).

Moving from organisational benefits to an individual-centred approach to CV has implications for the targeted values and hence, the argumentation for, against, and about CV. Researchers in the realm of CSR, CC and CV up to now tend to argue for a business case of the – from their perspectives – valued corporate behaviour [among recently published works are e.g., Pelozo et al. (2009), Darigan and Post (2009), Bocalandro (2009), Sen et al. (2006)]. This means in turn, that responsible behaviour is deemed successful depending on its organisational return-on-invest. However, this logic is bound to fail – and along with it research efforts must flop that focus solely on the financial success of corporate responsibility: Within the utilitarian rationale, we focus on outcomes rather than on antecedents or employees' experiences of CV; consequently, economic promises are made that are unrealistic to be kept. Outcome variables such as job satisfaction, organisational commitment, retention, high-potential attraction (and these are limited to the ones relevant for an individual-centred approach, not to mention image and branding effects, networking, etc.) depend on many more and much more potent factors than a company's CV programme, as e.g., personal traits, tenure within one organisation, leadership styles, justice perceptions, salaries, and not least – alternatives (Williams et al., 2006; Judge et al., 2004; Meyer et al., 2002; Judge and Bono, 2001; Colquitt et al., 2001; Cohen, 1999; Hom and Griffeth, 1995; Bateman and Strasser, 1984). Ergo, conceptionally and statistically, the potential positive effects of CV activities on these outcomes are necessarily going to be very small.

Although we do not deny potentially positive effects of CV on profitability in the short- or long-run, we plead for refining our concept of a successful CV initiative. Economically relevant benefits are only likely to come into being if individual needs are respected: First and above the individual voluntariness of CV is central to the concept. Being open towards the irritating effect of the new, fundamentally different actions to be performed within the professional role may stimulate individual cogitation about one's role as employee and the relationship with the employer as well as the community in which it operates. That given, CV may serve as a learning environment to help us understand more about the motivation to perform within and beyond one's professional role, the effects a CV experience may unfold for working teams, the potentially differential consequences of top-down decreed versus bottom-up supported CV for corporate culture, or the company's understanding of leading and following when not every single process is to be monetised.

3.2 Putting the 'V' first: questions raised by a re-dimensioned CV concept

Taking the critical position debunks most of the existing research in the CV field to be spuriously bound to the utility rationale from an organisational perspective rather than focusing on the individual employees. Therefore, we see the requirement to re-dimension the CV concept. The first step on this way is to strengthen the individual 'V' over the organisational 'C'. Secondly, it is necessary to introduce alternative research objectives that go beyond the utilitarian logic of the business case.

In spite of millions of examples proving that independent from corporations volunteering serves as a pillar of national economies, company initiated or supported volunteering efforts are unimaginable in the absence of the individual willingness of volunteers' to participate in CV (cf. Van Schie et al., in press). Surprisingly, so far both, the CC and CV literature suffer from a lateral neglect of the profound role of employees in CV and focus almost solely on its corporate facet. Similarly, one of the reviewers who contributed their expertise to this special issue praised one of the papers for its consideration "of a key stakeholder group in corporate volunteering that has very largely been ignored in the academic literature to date – employees". In sum – missing from the contemporary academic CV discourse is a clear-cut focus on the individuals who are the principal contributors to the corporate side of the CV medal. These are the employees – voluntarily investing time, knowledge, and mental as well as physical effort – and the leaders from lower to top management who need to comply with the CV idea and promote it internally.

Research efforts that do take into account the individual perspective are motivated by gathering insights on how organisations may benefit from the individual CV engagement: When considering volunteers' motivation to engage in CV, scientists aim at increasing recruiting ratios (e.g., Peterson, 2004a); when interested in the individual experience of CV activities research focuses on the potential to create personnel development synergies (e.g., De Gilder et al., 2005).

Truly taking an individual-centred perspective on CV results in qualitatively different research questions and approaches:

Volunteering activities are by definition characterised by a high degree of autonomy – as is their success dependent on (Cnaan et al., 1996) – how does the pronounced individual discretion of the employees, that CV relies on, relate to the otherwise mandatory nature of employees' working behaviour? Does the company address potential

volunteers as employees or citizens? Further, CV programmes need to be implemented and communicated differently according to the company's expectations toward their CV programmes and their employees' readiness to participate in them. Means of clarification are so far missing as is a taxonomy that helps classify different CV approaches and guide future organisational behaviour [for tentative efforts cf. the studies of Pelozo and colleagues, e.g., Pelozo and Hassay (2006)].

Associated questions pertain to the implications for the voluntariness by which employees' may accept or decline CV offers when it is communicated that the entire team is expected to participate. Also, hierarchical issues need to be elucidated: are supervisors expected to promote CV? And if so, is managerial CV support voluntary (i.e., do they act in their role as community member) or demanded from their respective supervisors (i.e., act in their role as employee of their organisation)? The crucial role of managerial support in CSR is subject to debate, e.g., Werre (2003) argues for the necessity of top-management support (cf. Pedersen, 2010) and demands their support be a determinant of performance appraisals, whereas authors as van der Voort et al. (2009) or Stukas et al. (1999) take a stand for preserving the voluntariness of CV and its support.

Which motives of being active within the organisation do CV offers meet? On the one hand, it is known from research on private volunteer work that personally perceived meaningfulness sustains this kind of work whereas regular work is rather persevered in the presence of other factors, such as security, payment, or career options (Peterson, 2004b; Clary et al., 1998). Adding C-like considerations to volunteering – as phenomenologically suggested in the 'CV' semantics – may result in a volunteering riddled or weakened of personal meaning (Wehner et al., 2006). In other words, promises and expectations to learn job relevant skills, to network, or to increase promotion chances will corrupt the original intrinsic motivation to volunteer as well as the standards against which the activity is appraised (Wehner et al., 2006; Tschirhart and St. Clair, 2008). Conversely, adding 'V' to one's corporate behaviour may be compensatory and donate further personal meaning to the organisational living domain (Wehner et al., 2006) as we know it, e.g., in the form of organisational citizenship behaviour (van Dick et al., 2006) or extra-role behaviour (Borman and Motowidlo, 1993).

4 This special issue

4.1 The call for papers

In conclusion, a critical perspective on CV brings into focus different research objectives than have mainly been pursued in the past. Therefore, alternative and advanced research questions constituted the call for papers for this special issue. Potential authors were invited to contribute articles dealing with:

- the national and international status quos in the CV practice to improve the empirical basis of the future CV discourse in the first place
- the strategic and organisational implementation of CV by highlighting decision processes within organisations, internal and external communication efforts to various stakeholders, and measures taken to bring the employees on-board
- leadership and CV

- the critical evaluation of often-hypothesised benefits of CV for all kinds of stakeholders (e.g., challenge the business case for profit organisations; challenge CV contributions to employee morale, etc.)
- differences and semblances between CV and private volunteering efforts of the employees, informal volunteer behaviour at the workplace, such as OCB or extra-role behaviour, as well as other forms of corporate philanthropic engagements, such as sponsorships corporate giving, and fundraising.

We further invited interested authors to critically reflect CV out of theoretical perspectives and discuss coordination and goal setting processes between corporations and their non-profit partner organisations.

4.2 *The response*

The reception of our CFP was quite cold and not many manuscripts reached us – indicating that mainstream CC research still deals with other issues than CV and, moreover, that little is to be learned from temporary CC research and debate for the developing field of CV studies. However, we are happy that the works incorporated in this special issue each contribute uniquely to the aforementioned gaps in research and theorising:

Van Schie et al. make the beginning by presenting a conceptual article that deals with the phenomenon of voluntary work within a mandatory environment; in other words, the authors illuminate the ‘V’ in the CV acronym. Novelty lies in the transfer of definitional core elements of the work psychological understanding of private volunteer work (i.e., volunteering as action as opposed to the social psychological notion of prosocial behaviour). Practitioners will benefit from the declination of the multi-functional approach in which the authors offer design recommendations for CV activities in reference to a variety of motivational considerations that employee engagements may be based on.

Mary Runte and Debra Basil empirically approach a similar question when they present survey data on the motivational bases of Canadian employees who engage in volunteer work privately as well as for their employers in CV initiatives. This paper valuably contributes to the critical discourse on CV by its profound empirical composition that yields the main result that both, private and CV, are strongly motivated by the intrinsic value of the activities; in private volunteering activities the intrinsic motivation is even more important than in CV.

Whereas, the first two works rest upon the multi-functional approach put forth by Clary and colleagues (e.g., Clary et al., 1998), Teague and Peterson opt for a divergent approach in an interview study that qualitatively assesses issues that are relevant for CV participation among employees. The genuine contribution in this work lies in the generation of motivational topics that exceed the well-known spectrum of the multi-functional approach. For example, employees display the need to redefine the value of their contribution in a sense-making manner and the often-recommended managerial support for CV is less important than interpersonal relations and asking.

Similarly, close to implementation issues, however, focusing on the manager as another major player in CV is Louise Lee in her article on leaders’ perceptions of volunteering activities in relation to the core business. Her qualitative approach generates valuable insights in the dilemmas that leaders find themselves in when implementing CV

programmes: they are bound to the economic logic of making a profit and at the same time strive to sustain their companies community involvement; they see the necessity of directives to reduce friction losses and simultaneously wish for an intensified inclusion of employees.

This special issue concludes with our own article that probes the questions raised by the Wood (1991) model of corporate social performance in the context of CV, i.e., why, how and to what ends do Swiss companies pursue CV? The main contribution of our first study is its comprehensive database. The second part of the article extends the portfolio of concepts that are relevant when studying the process and results of CV activities on a theoretical foundation and outlines a possible evaluation design.

5 Conclusions

This special issue is an attempt to combine disciplinary as well as methodologically diverse approaches to CV as an emerging management reality. The process of establishing the special issue in itself contributed to our understanding of CV as each step further sharpened our CV concept:

- Outlining and formulating the call for papers revealed the necessity to invite many disciplines to contribute their genuine knowledge and interests. It also forced us to structure the problem space that unfolds around the issues of CC and CV when tackled from a work and organisational psychological and sociological perspective.
- Having the manuscripts move through the peer review process disclosed that scientists in the field nowadays transcend CV further to neighbouring concepts. For example, we perceive researchers to be more aware of the interconnections between volunteer work performed by private citizens and companies than it used to be the case.
- Having to decline submitted manuscripts is always frustrating for the authors, but also the editors and reviewers who have already invested considerable efforts. Yet, refusing specific articles further enhanced our position and the CV concept put forth in this special issue; e.g., to the effect of elaborating the utility rationale by moving beyond shortcoming linear causality assumptions or naïve promises of salvation to organisational problems on abstract levels.
- Although our call for papers was articulated broadly to evoke contributions from diverse disciplinary perspectives, it met with only little response. Thus, CV still seems to be an academic niche product that needs further critical discussion. By taking a critical perspective on the issues of CC and CV, we offer a specific and well-defined view.
- Finally, our critical perspective on companies' engagements is intertwined with and results from many of the ideas expressed by the authors of the various papers presented here. Thus, the academic discourse underlying the establishment of this special issue served as a communicative and social validation of our core assumptions and encouraged us to express them in a more pronounced way in this advanced editorial.

Therefore, we express our profound gratitude to the authors of both accepted and declined manuscripts and the reviewers who made this *IJBE* special issue possible.

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