

What does embeddedness mean in the context of corporate sustainability?

Policy Panel and Plenary Discussion

Organized by the Center for Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability (CCRS) at the University of Zurich

Date and time: Thursday, 19 January 2017, 16.00 – 18.30 h

Venue: University of Zurich, room KOL F 117, Rämistrasse 71

Swiss-based multinational companies (MNEs) face increasing public scrutiny to demonstrate that their business activities especially in developing regions comply with social and environmental regulation and follow established voluntary ethical standards. Yet, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) should not just be about compliant reporting. It should also recognize the potential positive effects that may result from responsible investment for the local private sector as well as the local community and the environment. In this context, the ISO 26000 guidance on social responsibility points out that companies do not operate in a vacuum. It lists their possible contributions to «community involvement and development» as one of seven core subjects to be assessed. All core subjects are directly or indirectly related to an MNE's commitment to local embeddedness while strictly abiding to its sustainability standards and principles. Embeddedness reflects how the MNE is enmeshed in local culture, social networks and institutions. In this policy panel we explore to what extent a corporate commitment to local embeddedness may generate positive sustainability effects for the local economy as well as its people and the environment. Assessed positive effects may then be deducted from assessed negative effects to capture the net-impact that MNE's may have in different industries, products, and contexts.

Key questions:

- How is embeddedness related to corporate responsibility and sustainability in developing countries?
- How does embeddedness help the local private sector and the local community to become more sustainable?
- How should corporate reporting be adapted for MNEs that enjoy the advantages of global and regional markets to better share benefits with local communities through business activities rather than charity?

Welcome address by Philipp Aerni | Director, CCRS

Keynote address by Hans Jöhr | Nestlé, Head of Agriculture

Panelists

Ueli Frei | President, Fundes Latinoamérica

Christoph Müller | Chairman, Board of Directors, Inrate

George Jaksch | Chairman, Biodiversity Partnership Mesoamerica

Bilge Ogut-Cumbusyan | Managing Director, Private Equity, Partners Group

Nicole Voillat | Sustainability Director, Bata Brands SA

Moderation by Isabelle Schluemp | Head, Sustainable Impact at CCRS

Final remarks by Roberto Vega | Head, Smallholder Policy and Food Chain Relations, Syngenta International AG

Apéro

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