Perceptions and Understandings of the Roles of Businesses as Corporate Citizens in a Post-Conflict Society: The Bosnia and Herzegovina Case

Submitted by Padraic McMickle to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Master of Philosophy in Management Studies in September 2012

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I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

Signature: ………………………………………………………………………….
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Abstract

This research seeks to expand the field of Corporate Social Responsibility and Corporate Citizenship by investigating the expected social roles of companies in Bosnian and Herzegovina, and what context specific conditions have helped shape these expectations. Traditional investigations within this field of study have largely focused on the roles that corporations undertake in relatively stable contexts. By challenging these boundaries, academics and practitioners can start to develop a clearer view of the expected social roles of companies and the factors that affect these expectations.

This research uses a case study strategy, using Bosnia and Herzegovina as the case boundary, informed by semi-structured interviews with actors of various responsibility levels in different sectors. These interviewees were selected due to their level of interaction with the phenomenon of corporate social responsibility and to triangulate data from different sectors in the society. Field notes of social observations and CSR networking meetings were also complied in the data set. The data were analysed using a template analysis coding method.

This research found that that instability in the Bosnian society has impacted expectations of the social roles of businesses. These impacts come from the transition from socialism to free market capitalism, the ethnic tensions and distrust, the damaged physical and economic infrastructures, the political modus operandi, and the lack of pressure for actors to be socially responsible. Companies in Bosnia and Herzegovina generally follow an ad hoc approach, and they are only beginning to incorporate strategy into their CSR activities. This is opposed to the ‘western’ expectations that CSR should be a strategic approach. Stakeholder participation is still limited, providing few chances for dialogue on expectations and defining corporate social citizenship. This research has helped highlight how abandoning the assumption of stability in a society can affect the understandings of development and expectations of corporate social roles. The factors impacting these expectations can change the fundamental premises of the business social contract in ways that are not accounted for in extant literature.

Key Words: corporate social responsibility, citizenship, post-conflict, Bosnia and Herzegovina
# Table of Contents

Acknowledgments .............................................................................................................. 2  
Abstract ............................................................................................................................... 3  
List of Figures ..................................................................................................................... 7  
List of Tables ...................................................................................................................... 7  
Chapter 1 Introduction ........................................................................................................ 8  
  1.1 Introduction .......................................................................................................... 8  
  1.2 Research Context ................................................................................................. 8  
  1.3 Research Rationale ............................................................................................. 12  
  1.4 Research Objectives and Questions ................................................................... 14  
  1.5 Method ............................................................................................................... 15  
  1.6 Structure ............................................................................................................. 16  
Chapter 2 On Corporations and Citizenship ..................................................................... 18  
  2.1 Introduction ........................................................................................................ 18  
  2.2 On Corporate Social Responsibility ................................................................... 18  
  2.2.1 On the Development of Social Responsibility for Corporations ............. 19  
  2.2.2 Strategic CSR .............................................................................................. 22  
  2.3 Corporate Citizenship ......................................................................................... 24  
  2.3.1 A Restricted View of Corporate Citizenship .............................................. 26  
  2.3.2 An Open View of Corporate Citizenship .................................................... 28  
  2.3.3 Corporations and Citizenship ...................................................................... 31  
  2.4 Business and Social Contracts ........................................................................... 32  
  2.4.1 The Business Social Contract Learning Process ......................................... 32  
  2.4.2 Understanding Rights and Duties in the Business Social Contract ........... 35  
  2.4.3 Towards a Static Business Social Contract ................................................. 37  
  2.5 Researching CSR and Corporate Citizenship .................................................... 38  
  2.6 From Socially Responsible to a Corporate Citizen .......................................... 42  
  2.6.1 Considerations for Internalising CSR Projects ........................................... 44  
  2.6.2 Engaging with Society ................................................................................ 44  
  2.6.3 Stakeholders ................................................................................................ 48  
  2.6.4 Limits on ‘Legally Required’ Social Responsibilities ............................... 52
2.7 Recontextualising CSR ................................................................. 55
2.7.1 On Corporate Social Responsibilities in an Emerging Economy .... 56
2.7.2 Factors Influencing CSR ......................................................... 57
2.8 Conclusion .................................................................................. 60
Chapter 3 Methodology .................................................................... 62
3.1 Introduction .................................................................................. 62
3.2 Research Purpose and Objectives .................................................. 62
3.3 Positioning the Study ................................................................... 63
3.4 Research Design .......................................................................... 65
3.4.1 Case Study Design ................................................................. 66
3.4.2 Implementing the Design ......................................................... 67
3.5 Data Collection ........................................................................... 68
3.5.1 Interviews .............................................................................. 68
3.5.2 Interviewee Selection ............................................................. 72
3.5.3 Field Notes ............................................................................ 81
3.5.4 Interview Lessons Learned .................................................... 81
3.6 Data Analysis ............................................................................. 84
3.6.1 Consideration for Data Analysis ............................................ 84
3.6.2 Data Coding ......................................................................... 85
3.6.3 Data Analysis Lessons Learned ............................................ 86
3.7 Reliability and Validity ............................................................... 87
3.7.1 Reliability ............................................................................. 88
3.7.2 Validity ................................................................................. 88
3.8 Ethical considerations .................................................................. 90
3.8.1 Potential for Harm ............................................................... 90
3.8.2 Informed Consent ............................................................... 91
3.8.3 Translation Issues ............................................................... 92
3.9 Conclusion .................................................................................. 92
Chapter 4 Data Analysis .................................................................. 93
4.1 Introduction ................................................................................ 93
4.2 Interview Findings ........................................................................ 94
4.2.1 Social Division .................................................................... 95
List of Figures

Figure 2.1 - Carroll’s Pyramid of CSR (1991: 42) ........................................................... 22
Figure 4.1 - Broad Themes from Interviews................................................................. 94
Figure 4.2 - Social Division Code .............................................................................. 95
Figure 4.3 – Social Division Code .............................................................................. 100
Figure 4.4 - Defining CSR Code Tree ........................................................................ 106
Figure 4.5 - CSR Actions Code Tree ........................................................................ 116
Figure 4.6 - Influences and Controls Code Tree......................................................... 123

List of Tables

Table 1 - Interviewees................................................................................................... 77
Table 2 - Organisations ............................................................................................ 79
Table 3 - Expected CSR Terms ................................................................................ 113